

# Help Your Students Build Upon Their Ideas With an Idea Canvas

# What is an Idea Canvas?

An idea canvas is a diagram that is used to design the strategy needed to execute an idea.

There are nine interdependent sections on a typical idea canvas. In each section, there is space to describe a different factor that affects how the idea could be developed and deployed.

The concept of an idea canvas has its roots in the work of Alexander Osterwalder and Ives Pigneur. These academics turned entrepreneurs developed the "Business Model Canvas," which has become an essential tool for entrepreneurs bringing a new idea to market.

# Why is it Valuable?

- It is a highly visual, easy to use road map for how to improve and implement an idea.
- It provides structure and direction without being overly prescriptive. This is because it is organized around a series of fluid questions and relationships rather than rote instructions.
- It focuses attention on the influence of the context in which the idea will be viewed and used.
- It encourages discussion around the multiple forms of value offered by the idea.

#### **VIDEO RESOURCE**

<u>Click here</u> to see the Business Model Canvas explained in 2 minutes.

## Idea Canvases in Your Classroom

Use an idea canvas to structure brainstorming sessions.

- This works particularly well in the early stages of group projects.
- Have students fill in a blank canvas, or use it to structure a discussion.

Post a copy of an idea canvas in your class.

• Use it as a reference point when leading class discussions - do the ideas raised in the discussion consider the larger context outlined by an idea canvas?

Work with your students to customize an idea canvas.

- What new ways of organizing ideas can you come up with as a group?
- Ask your students to consider the importance of how they generate ideas.

Plan one of your lessons using an idea canvas.

- Use this exercise to carefully consider the different forms of value you are offering your students.
- What new insights can you arrive at using this approach?







by

# Sample Idea Canvas

# Provide students with a diagram like the one below.

- Download a blank template for this idea canvas here.
- It is also useful to recreate this diagram on a large piece of chart paper or a whiteboard to allow for greater collaboration as it is filled in.

#### **KEY PARTNERS**

Who can you ask to invest their time and energy into helping your idea?

- Teachers
- Peers
- Parents
- Subject experts
- Potential customers

What can you offer them in return for their investment?

#### **KEY ACTIVITIES**

What do you need to invest most of your time doing to execute your idea?

#### **KEY RESOURCES**

What materials should you invest in to help develop your idea?

- software?
- physical prototypes?

#### YOUR IDEA

Depending on what you're using the canvas for, this could be a:

Project idea

Thesis Statement

Hypothesis

Business idea

Lesson idea

Value Proposition

#### AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIPS

What type of relationship do you want to build with your audience?

#### CHANNELS

Consider different ways of presenting or distributing your idea.

Are some ways more valuable than others?

#### AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

Who is your idea for?

What are the values and needs of this group?

Why would this group find it valuable?

#### THE COST OF YOUR IDEA

The entire left side of the canvas describes what you need to invest to get your idea off the ground. Summarize that investment in this box. This could include:

- <u>Time investment</u> (How much time will be required to execute this idea? How is this time best spent?)
- <u>Human resources</u> (Which collaborators should you invest in? How will they be compensated?)
- Monetary costs (What financial costs will your idea incur?)

#### THE VALUE OF YOUR IDEA

The entire right side of the canvas explains how your idea creates value. Summarize that value in this box. This could include:

- Social value (does the idea solve a social problem?)
- Academic value (why is this intellectually interesting?)
- <u>Monetary value</u> (how would you generate revenue from this idea?)

INSTRUCTIONS: Start by filling in "Your Idea".

The order in which the other boxes are filled in is up to the people using the canvas.

### What Success Looks Like

#### Relationships between ideas are understood

• Each time they add new information to the canvas, students discuss how it influences other sections.

#### Ideas change throughout the activity

• Rather than simply filling in each section, students continually refine their ideas in response to new information added to the canvas.

#### The process is evaluated

Students describe which aspects of this activity worked well for them, generate hypotheses regarding why some aspects didn't, and propose new ways of using the activity to make it more effective for their purposes.