

So how do I use this thing?

At EDesign Lab, we keep a vigilant focus on designing digital learning **experiences**, or activities, not just technological **tools**. This distinction between experiences and tools is an important one: by learning experience, we mean a larger activity that allows students to take agency over their own learning. This prototype is a tool to help you create that experience!

Experience vs Tool: Educator as Designer

A learning experience is a way to frame an objective or need within a compelling, authentic context or narrative. Learners use a tool to problem solve, try out certain skills, reinforce knowledge, create content, and more. A tool in its purest form doesn't tell learners how to use it; the experience of using it is designed. This is where you come in – as an educator, you design learning experiences around learning objectives everyday. This guide will walk you through designing an experience through Because. Put on your designer hat and let's get started!

Let's recap.

A learning experience...

- **frames learning** by **making connections** to the relevant objective or need
- **facilitates learners to activate skills and knowledge** from one context to another
- **makes it meaningful**: scaffolds context that allows students to sense-make by forming opinions, trying out strategies, and creating meaning
- **blurs the boundary** between the classroom and the real world, interests and other disciplines

Resources

Prototype Overview <http://edesignlabs.org/prototypes/because/>

Prototype Walkthrough <http://youtu.be/VZicPmUBomY>

Prototype Website <http://bit.ly/edesign-because>

STEP 1: Consider the learning objective.

REAL-TIME COLLABORATION

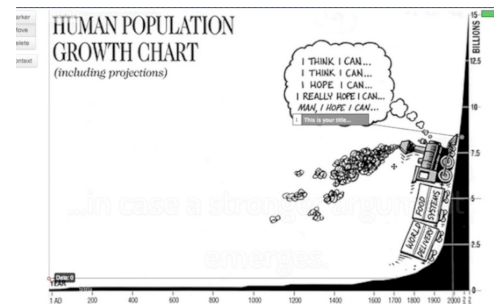
Many of today's discoveries require social learning, teamwork, and crowd wisdom. The development of real-time collaborative editing software like Google docs enables peer-to-peer learning and encourages learner led inquiry. By having a shared synchronous digital space, learners can collect, reflect on, and synthesize ideas while cultivating essential collaborative skills.

Because empowers students to find data about events and interrogate causal relationships in a collaborative exploration space. Collaborative editing helps students to collectively understand causal relationships.

Context and a critical eye are important for getting a complete understanding of a given event. Because enables learners to investigate and generate insights into how different subjects, events, data, and objects relate to each other. It addresses two major skill groups: (1) improved understanding of charts, graphs, and other informational images through annotation of causal factors, and (2) analysis of the cause and effect relationships between events and the data that is surfaced and visualized. As you consider your learning objective in the context of your content area, think about how you can embed the inquiry process within the activity.

Questions to ask yourself

- What image or graphic representation of data best captures the essential idea of the lesson?
- What big idea should learners take away? What should they discover?
- How will you differentiate learning styles and levels?



STEP 2: Plan the activity.

LEARNER-GENERATED DATA

Another powerful Context for Because is using learner-generated data. Situating Because in a larger project of data collection and hypothesizing or storytelling will empower learners to seek deeper connections and examine relationships more critically. Here are some examples:

Experimental Data: Students in a science class could generate graphs based on data they collected in experiments.

Self Assessment: Students can reflect on their learning based on graphs generated from their own grade data.

Currently, users can only insert images via a URL, but future iterations will be able to pull from various dataset formats.

There are multiple scenarios in which you can employ Because to facilitate learning, both in and out of the classroom. It is important to consider how you can build Because into a unit or larger activity, instead of thinking of it as a discrete, one-off lesson.

The primary learning objective behind Because is to engage students in identifying and understanding causal relationships. The first thing to consider is the frame for learning, or what we will call the "Context." The Context includes the big question learners should be able to answer by the end of the activity and annotate the graph, chart, or image to guide their inquiry (see below). Next you should consider the setting of the activity: will this take place in the classroom, outside of it, or both? Because was specifically designed to allow for both synchronous and asynchronous work.

For example, learners could work together as an entire class or as a group in the classroom and continue adding to it at home. Learners could then exchange and comment on other groups' markers and final conclusion. Learners could even design Because docs for each other to generate a series of interactive primary source graphs, charts, or images all containing embedded information for analysis.

Questions to ask yourself

- How will you use it?
- What experience do you want your students to have?
- How will you introduce them to it?
- How will they enter and exit the learning experience?

STEP 3: Design the content.

CONTEXT

To start, you need to create a Context. The Context guides learners to examine different variables and hypothesize how these factors might be related. It includes the Title or Question and the Instructions.

Below are two example contexts that have been tested in two NYC public city schools.

EXAMPLE CONTEXTS

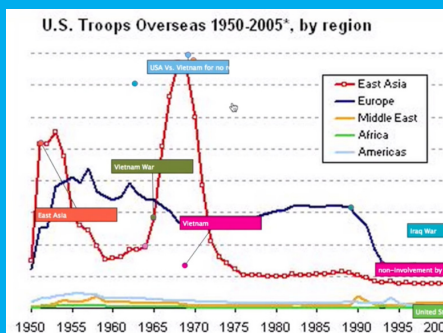
Haiti & Dominican Republic Border

Haiti is on the left and the D.R. is on the right. Create one marker about what the image makes you think.



U.S. Foreign Troop Deployment

Place a marker on a place on the graph that you think is interesting. Then add information to the marker about what historical event is connected to your place on the graph.

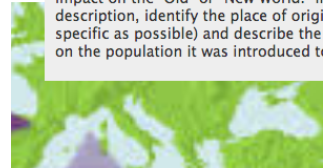


The amount of information you give learners is key. How much data will they have to work with? What gaps will they be expected to fill in? Keeping this and your learning goals are key as you begin to fill in your Because doc.

TITLE OR QUESTION. What is the event or theme?

INSTRUCTIONS. What should learners DO? Be explicit about the number of markers or comments.

Place a marker on one of the arrows showing a crop, animal, disease, or idea that had a major impact on the "Old" or "New World." In the description, identify the place of origin (be as specific as possible) and describe the impact it had on the population it was introduced to.



BECAUSE The Columbian Exchange

Place a marker on one of the arrows showing a cr...

Marker
Move
Delete
Context

Potato

Smallpox

Line Start
Line Start

MARKERS. Markers allow students to annotate the graph or image with a title, text, and citation URL. Identifying and labeling important intersections and points enables students to improve their understanding of charts and graphs.

COLLABORATION. All the users currently editing the document are displayed on the right-hand side, just like a Google Doc. Users can also see each other creating markers in real time.

A feature will be built-in in the future that allows administrators to control that visibility function.

POINT. Visual of where the marker appears on screen

TITLE. What appears in the marker.

URL. Add a citation.

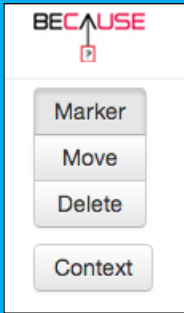
DESCRIPTION. Why is this place on the graphic significant?

COMMENTS. Have learners comment on each others' work.

Title
Smallpox
URL
ange.weebly.com/smallpox.html
Description
Smallpox was a disastrous introduction to the Americas. Since they had no resistance to it, smallpox was responsible for killing much of the population in North, Central, and South America.
Comments (click to show)
Close Save

MARKERS

Create a Marker. Click "Marker" on the left-hand side. Place a marker on the graphic, then double click to start editing it. You can edit it at any time by double-clicking.

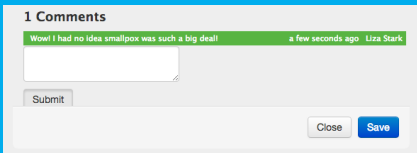
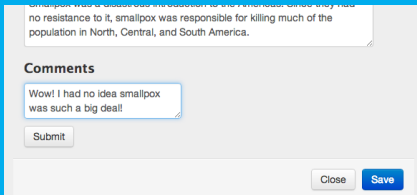


Move a Marker. Click "Move." Click and drag the dot or the label to a new position.

Delete a Marker. Click "Delete" then click on the marker you want to delete.

COMMENTS

Learners can comment on each others' markers. To do this, click on a marker, then click on Comments.

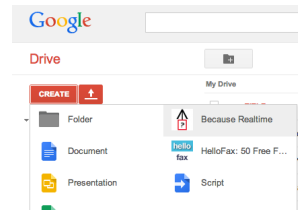


Type in your comment and click Submit. The full comment will show up in the marker description and the number of comments is displayed in the label.



STEP 4: Create the Doc.

Creating a Because Doc is just as easy as creating a Google Doc. Below are the steps to make it and share it.



1 Create a Because Document. Because is a Google Drive App, just like a regular Google Doc, Spreadsheet, or Presentation.

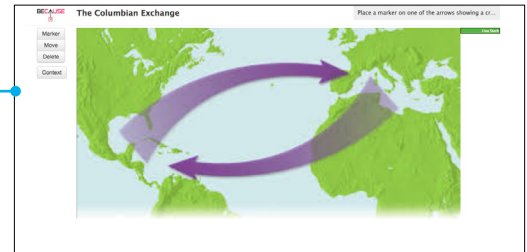
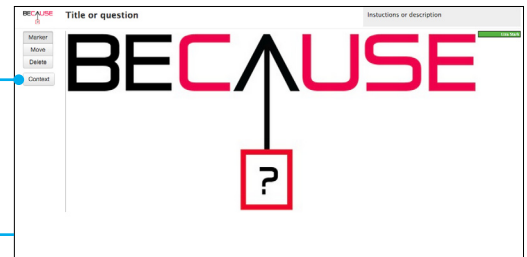
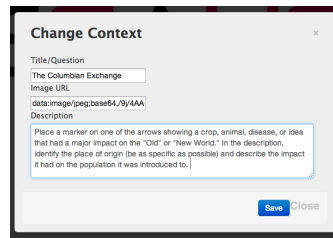
2 Click "Accept." You will see the screen below.

of service and privacy policies.



Click "Context." Add a title, instructions, and graphic.

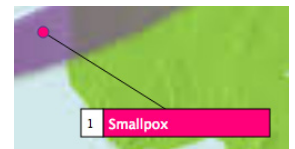
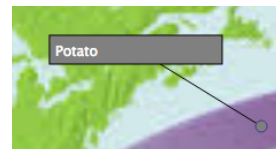
3



4 Share it! Use the Share settings in Google Drive to share it.



5 Make some Markers! See the left sidebar.



6 Add a comment. See the left.

Comments

Wow! I had no idea smallpox was such a big deal!

Submit

Visit the Because page on the EDesign Lab website for the most current version and be on the lookout for it in the Google Apps Marketplace!