

TO WHAT DEGREE IS SCHOOL WORK A TASK TO COMPLETE RATHER THAN A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED?

How real and important is school work?
Which skills and dispositions promote democracy
and which promote authoritarianism?

Task (noun) a particular piece of work that is assigned, especially one that is unpleasant or difficult; (verb) to burden somebody excessively with work or duties; to assign a task to somebody

To complete a task,

- Follow instructions accurately, literally
- apply formulas or protocols

Problem (noun): a difficult situation, matter, or person; a question or puzzle that needs to be solved; (adjective) difficult to discipline or deal with

To solve a problem,

- Identify a question to be answered
- gather facts
- develop a hypothesis
- test hypothesis against facts, revise hypothesis (several times)
- Act upon an answer (revise it against experience)

“Solving problems isn’t just a mechanical procedure; it calls for more than a set of skills. It requires attitudes and dispositions – like the courage needed to acknowledge the existence of a problem that has to be dealt with; the patience and persistence required when a problem isn’t easily resolved; a willingness to risk, to seek help and to give it, to accept personal responsibility, and to admit error”

Don Arnstine, *Democracy and the Art of Schooling*, SUNY Press, 1995; p. 129