“At the upper elementary grades, engineering design engages students in more formalized problem solving. Students define a problem using criteria for success and constraints or limits of possible solutions. Students research and consider multiple possible solutions to a given problem. Generating and testing solutions also becomes more rigorous as the students learn to optimize solutions by revising them several times to obtain the best possible design.”

(NGSS 2013. Appendixes, Appendix I, page 105)
“At the middle school level, students learn to sharpen the focus of problems by precisely specifying criteria and constraints of successful solutions, taking into account not only what needs the problem is intended to meet, but also the larger context within which the problem is defined, including limits to possible solutions. Students can identify elements of different solutions and combine them to create new solutions. Students at this level are expected to use systematic methods to compare different solutions to see which best meet criteria and constraints, and to test and revise solutions a number of times in order to arrive at an optimal design.” (NGSS 2013. Appendices, Appendix I, page 106)
“Engineering design at the high school level engages students in complex problems that include issues of social and global significance. Such problems need to be broken down into simpler problems to be tackled one at a time. Students are also expected to quantify criteria and constraints so that it will be possible to use quantitative methods to compare the potential of different solutions. While creativity in solving problems is valued, emphasis is on identifying the best solution to a problem, which often involves researching how others have solved it before. Students are expected to use mathematics and/or computer simulations to test solutions under different conditions, prioritize criteria, consider tradeoffs, and assess social and environmental impacts.”

[NGSS 2013. Appendices. Appendix I, page 106]
The Engineering Design Process

Ask
What is the problem?

Imagine
What are some solutions?

Plan
Draw a diagram.

Create
Follow a plan and create (test) it.

Improve
Make your design even better (test it).

The Goal

Credits: Engineering is Elementary, Museum of Science, Boston