Florida Literacy Coalition
Health Literacy Project

"Project-Based Learning Overview"

Definition
Project-based learning (PjBL) is a collaborative approach to teaching in which learners are placed in situations where they must use authentic language to accomplish whatever is needed to complete the project objectives.

The best projects are those, which have an impact outside of the classroom so students feel they are part of an effort that will make a difference for others.

Benefits
As a natural part of the process learners plan, work on complex tasks, negotiate work details, volunteer or are assigned duties and assess their performance and progress. Learners can conduct all aspects of project planning and implementation with the teacher acting as a facilitator and resource. The sense of accomplishment felt by all who participate in a meaningful project has a real impact on self-esteem. Many of the teachers who contributed projects noted that students frequently told them that they were surprised, pleased and proud of themselves by what they were able to accomplish. Teachers who have consistently used PjBL have noted the following benefits about this teaching method:

- Overcomes the dichotomy between knowledge and thinking, helping students to both "know" and "do."
- Supports students in learning and practicing skills in problem solving, communication, and self-management.
- Encourages the development of habits of mind associated with lifelong learning, civic responsibility, and personal or career success.
- Integrates curriculum areas, thematic instruction, and community issues.
- Assesses performance on content and skills using criteria similar to those in the work world, thus encouraging accountability, goal setting, and improved performance.
- Creates positive communication and collaborative relationships among diverse groups of students.
- Meets the needs of learners with varying skill levels and learning styles.
- Engages and motivates bored or indifferent students.

Class Time
It is recommended that teachers allow students to start working on their projects during regularly scheduled "project class time". Project teachers reported that once the projects got started students began working on them out of class often completing tasks that could not be finished during "project time."

Getting Started

General Procedures for the conduct of project-based learning activities have been developed to assist teachers who are making a first attempt at infusing project activities into the classroom. These guidelines are designed as a starting point.

1. General Introduction of Project-Based Lessons:
- Discuss need to gain experience using English to accomplish a real goal.
- Explain that the class will be divided into "teams" for the project.
- Emphasize that teams are widely used in corporate America where they are known as "Quality Work Teams".
- Discuss several possible class projects with the class and encourage your students to contribute their own ideas. This may be given out as a homework assignment so that students can have enough time to brainstorm outside of class before sharing with the rest of the class. Together choose a project that is likely to produce a tangible benefit for the class members, their families, friends or communities at large. They must "buy in" to the project.
- Projects that are very involved such as the planning of a center-wide event can involve the whole class with "teams" working on different aspects of the event as "committees"

2. Developing Teams:
- 4 or 5 members on each team works best.
- Each team should appoint a Chair and Co-Chair to keep the team on task, manage conflict and report to the whole class when necessary.
- Each student will be held accountable for individual responsibilities as well as attainment of success as a team.

4. Starting Off:
- Class is divided into "Teams" either randomly or by matching abilities or gender.
- Teams chose a project (or Committee)
- Team decides what needs to be done to complete project.
- Action plan is developed to include: 1) Task to be accomplished, 2) Who is responsible, and 3) Deadline dates.
- Future meeting(s) are scheduled along with agreement on assignments to be completed according to the Action Plan.

Ground Rules include: "Everybody Works" (including Chair), English only during teamwork, activities include interaction with native speakers of English.

6. Follow-up Meetings:
- Groups meet to report progress and revise plans.
- Teacher helps where necessary and is a resource for all teams.

7. Evaluation:
- Teacher schedules whole class weekly reports on progress.
- Teacher will evaluate the "Teamwork" of each group member.

➤ Overall project evaluation is completed.

Examples of culminating projects:

Students should be encourage to collaborate in a group setting to create a hands-on product such as a:
* video/documentary
* powerpoint presentation
* song/theatrical piece
* recipe book
* flyer/pamphlet
* week-long healthy menu and main dish to be shared
* health fair (at center/school, in neighborhood, at community center, etc.)
* … and more!

These final products should treat health-related topics by using information discussed in class and expanding its application to the students' own "real world", benefiting community members who might not be a part of the class (ie. Family members and friends, students from other classes, community members at large, future ESOL students, etc.)

Students might choose to:
* interview community members or health-professionals about health-related topics/habits and then present the responses in the form of a video documentary, a series of graphs and charts, a pamphlet to be distributed within their communities, etc. Examples of topics they could decide to research/educate about within their communities are: incidence and management of chronic diseases, nutrition habits, prevention strategies, healthcare access, insurance coverage, reasons for stress and ways to manage stress, incidence of smoking, etc.
* create a week-long menu of healthy foods and recipes that include both traditional American dishes as well as dishes from their homelands, paying attention to serving sizes and nutritional values
* create a healthy recipe book that incorporates healthy variations of American and traditional recipes from their homelands
* create an educational powerpoint presentation which teachers could use for future ESOL classes
* create flyers/pamphlets about healthcare resources such as free clinics, government-funded programs, online resources to be shared with community members
* create an interactive website that provides information on free and low cost health services in the community written in English as well as their native language
* …and more!

Students should be encouraged to be creative, think outside the box, use different media, and more than anything truly create a product that can be shared with and thought of as useful/informative by other community members who did not attend the health literacy course.