SESSION 4: PROBLEM BASED LEARNING

Introduction | PBL Project Structures | Look Ahead

Introduction

Everybody is motivated by challenge and solving problems, and we don’t make use of that in schools enough… Project-based learning gives everybody a chance to sort of mimic what scientists do, and that’s exciting. And it’s fun if it’s done well.

— Alberts president NAS, see Curtis (2001)

Overview
The Web can be a great tool to use in the classroom to support discussion and dialogue. While the Internet allows us to talk to individuals all over the globe through telecollaboration, it is extremely important that our students learn to talk to one another. Besides WebQuest activities, many classrooms are using Web resources for project-based learning. In project-based learning (PBL) projects, “real world” problems are used as a context for developing critical thinking and group problem-solving skills.

Objectives
By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Select and analyze a project-based learning project through online discussion.
- Design and plan a project-based learning project to be used with your students.
- Discuss the implementation of problem-based learning activities in the classroom in your online journal.

If you have not done so already, download and print the Assignment Checklist to keep track of your assignments for this session.
Exploring Project Based Learning

In the article "Start with the Pyramid", author Diane Curtis lays a foundation for understanding project-based learning. She gives examples of ways teachers are using PBL in their classrooms and explores some of the benefits of using this approach with children.

Read “Start with the Pyramid” and then use the resources listed in the article to explore 3-5 PBL projects. Share with learners in the discussion forum one of the PBL projects that appeals you.

Consider the following criteria:

Does the project:

- Include a driving question that sets the scene for the project?
- Include culminating presentation by students?
- Incorporate cooperative learning?
- Create a community of inquiry?
- Use technology to facilitate the completion of the project?

In addition to your evaluation, reflect on the following:

- The reason this PBL project appeals to you.
- Ideas for how you would use it in your classroom.
- Questions or concerns you have about how to implement this activity in your classroom.

Respond to the posting of two other learners who have not been responded to twice. Share additional ideas and/or information you gained from their postings. Refer to the discussion rubric to review some expectations for participating in online discussions in this course.

Next, consider the following statement and then respond to the question below in your online journal.

“Everybody is motivated by challenge and solving problems, and we don’t make use of that in schools enough… Project-based learning gives everybody a chance to sort of mimic what scientists do, and that’s exciting. And it’s fun if it’s done well.”

— Alberts president NAS, see Curtis (2001)
How realistic is it to implement project-based learning in the classroom?

Justify your statements by referring to your own experiences, the article, and the reviews of the projects in the discussion forum. Refer to the online journal rubric for expectations in completing journal entries.

Developing PBL Project Ideas Assignment: Final Project Part 3

In her article "Launching a PBL Project" Diane McGrath provides a framework for teachers interested in creating a PBL project. She breaks down the important features of a PBL project and gives examples for each feature. She also provides useful online resources. This article should help you to get started on your own PBL project.

Read the article and then come up with 3-4 ideas for your own PBL project. Consider the following:

- What will be your “driving question?”
- What will students produce/construct to answer the question?
- How will you create a community of inquiry?
- How will you differentiate instruction to meet the needs of multiple learning styles?

Submit your PBL project ideas to the facilitator. You may want to use one of these ideas for your final project design. Refer to the Final Project Rubric – Part 3 to review expectations for completing this assignment.

Reference
Look Ahead

Remember, you will need to choose one of your telecollaboration, WebQuest, or project-based learning ideas to further develop for the final project. If you have questions or would like some advice, this is a good time to ask your facilitator.

In Session 5 of this course, you will design and develop one of the project ideas you have created in Sessions 2, 3, and 4. You will share this fully developed project idea with your peers for review and feedback before submitting it to the facilitator.

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