

SED 509 – Project Based Learning Practicum

Instructor Ron Gray Phone 503-351-7707
Office Weniger 241 E-mail grayron@onid.orst.edu
Meeting Times Mon & Wed @ 11-12 and Thurs @ 1-3 in Weniger 247 (first 2 weeks only)



Project based learning is a constructivist pedagogy that intends to bring about deep learning by allowing groups of learners to use an inquiry based approach to engage with issues and questions that are rich, real and relevant to their lives. Compared with learning solely from textbooks, this approach has many benefits for students, including deeper knowledge of subject matter, increased self-direction and motivation, and improved research and problem-solving skills.

Required Texts: Readings will be provided.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities:

Course adheres to all OSU Academic Regulations as found in the Schedule of Classes. Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

Course Description:

This course is designed around a practicum that will give you an opportunity to work closely with middle and high school students on independent or small-group projects. The goals for this course are three-fold:

1. To expose pre-service teachers to the possibilities and challenges of project-based learning;
2. To provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to observe classes and work with students on a small-group or individual basis, so that they can focus more on the students and less on whole-class management;
3. To provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity to conduct an action-research project for SED 511.

Central to this course is the practicum in a classroom setting in which you will engage students in project-based learning. The practicum will also serve as the laboratory setting in which you will conduct an action-research project. During the practicum, you'll be required to keep a journal in which you record your observations and reflections. You will also be required to discuss at least one reading every other week on the Blackboard Discussion Board. Most weeks the readings will not be

assigned. Instead, you will choose articles and websites of interest to you that you find through your own research. These readings will be discussed in light of a specific topic. The topic for the first week is "What is project-based learning?" The cohort will be divided into "communities of practice" for the purposes of the Discussion Board, with each community focusing on a particular research question.

At the end of the term, the reflections and observations in your journal entries and Blackboard posts will form the basis for your own claims about teaching and learning. You'll use this evidence to develop a set of guidelines for establishing successful project-based learning experiences. You will also be responsible for a final presentation on the challenges and successes of your project as well as a final project that we will determine as a class.

Although you will only participate in one practicum, you will have the opportunity to learn about other projects. During the second week, you will do a presentation on your project for the rest of the cohort.

In addition to the regular practicum, everyone will participate in the Middle School Challenge sponsored by the SMILE program (The Science and Math Investigative Learning Experiences Program). This all day event is a unique opportunity to interact with students from traditionally underserved and underrepresented groups. (For more information, visit the SMILE website at http://smile.oregonstate.edu/aboutUs_index.htm) This event will also provide us with a chance to all work together on a common project.

Goals:

By the end of the course, I expect that you will:

- Understand the benefits and difficulties associated with project based learning.
- Have designed and implemented a project in your placement.
- Understand the complexities of assessing students during projects.
- Compared and contrasted PBL and traditional teaching techniques from both the student and teacher perspectives.

Expectations:

As a community of learners, each of us has a responsibility to contribute to the learning process in this course. Each of us has had prior experiences that give us a unique and valuable perspective regarding the content of this course. Sharing these ideas and experiences enriches the learning environment for everyone. For this reason, your active participation in the course is extremely important. Active participation includes attending all classes, completing all assignments on time, collaborating with your colleagues, and contributing to in-class and on-line discussions. It is crucial that all readings and assignments be completed by the due date.

Because we have few meetings during the term, and because each class involves either group presentations, guest speakers, or both, it is expected that only an emergency or severe illness will prevent you from missing a class. If this were to occur, please let me know in advance. You will be expected to make up any work that is missed during your absence. The exact nature of the make-up assignment will be determined in consultation with me.

Assignments:

Project-Based Learning Practicum: The practicum begins during the 3rd week of the term and runs through Week 10. During this time, you are expected to log a minimum of 30 hours in your practicum. The actual times and days will vary with each practicum, but it is expected that you will spend approximately 3 hours each week at the practicum site. I won't be tallying up hours, and in some cases it may be a stretch to complete the 30 hours. However, I ask each of you to approach this requirement in the spirit of the affirmation, "I get out what I put in!" You will also be required to turn in lesson plans for your project two days before they are taught.

Group Presentation on your Practicum Project: Each practicum group will do a presentation to the rest of the cohort about the project with which they are involved. The presentation should be visually engaging and intellectually stimulating. Each group is responsible for creating a scoring guide for their presentation that will be filled out by all members of the cohort (including members of the group itself).

Weekly Blackboard Post: Every other week you will be required to discuss one reading on the Blackboard Discussion Board. Most weeks the readings will not be assigned. Instead, you will choose articles and websites of interest to you that you find through your own research. These readings will be discussed in light of a specific topic.

The cohort will be divided into "communities of practice" for the purposes of the Discussion Board, with each community focusing on a particular research question. Each person is expected to read one article or review one website every other week, and is also expected to post something thoughtful and relevant in regard to that reading. However, rather than specifying the number and types of responses, I will leave this decision up to each community. You may also choose to all read and discuss the same reading each time, or to read and discuss different readings. The main objective is for each community to share resources and to engage in an intellectually stimulating and thought-provoking dialog through the Discussion Board.

The topic for the first week's discussion is "What is project-based learning?" Unlike your other responses which will be posted directly to the Discussion Board, this assignment will be collected in class at our second meeting.

Guidelines for Successful Project-Based Learning Experiences: At the end of the term, you will review your journal entries and Blackboard posts for evidence as to what criteria you feel are necessary in order to create successful project-based learning experiences for your students. This will be an in-class project that will be turned in for a grade.

Final Project: During the first weeks of the course, we will create the final project as a class. It will be due finals week.

Final Presentation: Your group will be responsible for a final presentation outlining the challenges and lessons learned in implementing and assessing your project. Presentations will occur during finals week.

Middle School Challenge: In addition to the regular practicum, everyone will participate in the Middle School Challenge sponsored by The SMILE Program (The Science and Math Investigative Learning Experiences Program). This **all-day event** is a unique opportunity to interact with students from traditionally underserved and underrepresented groups. (For more information, visit the SMILE website at http://smile.oregonstate.edu/aboutUs_index.htm) This event will also provide us with a chance to all work together on a common project.

Evaluation:

The grading system consists of 12 grades (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, and F). You will be evaluated in the following way:

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| • Lesson Plans | 20% |
| • Practicum Project Group Presentations | 10% |
| • 5 Weekly Blackboard Posts | 15% |
| • Guidelines for Successful Projects | 15% |
| • Final Project | 25% |
| • Final Presentation | 15% |

*Late assignments will be docked 3 points off the total number of possible points. In order to receive a grade for the course, **all work must be completed** at an acceptable level.

Discussion Board Topics:

Week 1: Defining PBL

- According to the PBL Handbook from the Buck Institute of Education, what are some of the essential components of Project-Based Learning?
- On page 5 of the handbook, it states that students are “pulled through the curriculum.” What does that mean to you?

Weeks 2 & 3: Fostering Collaboration

- A key element of PBL is that it involves different types of collaboration. Students may collaborate with each other in groups, groups may collaborate with community members or representatives from government agencies or private businesses, and students may collaborate with the teacher or other mentors in designing their projects. Yet this is not an easy thing for most students to do. The ability to successfully collaborate with others is a skill that we need to teach explicitly.
- In this post, you'll focus your attention on strategies and structures for fostering collaboration so that our students can be successful in their projects.

Weeks 4 & 5: Designing and Managing Projects

- One of the major challenges in PBL lies in the design and management of the projects. How do we design (or help students design) projects that will be successful? How do we ensure that we are meeting standards and covering required curriculum in the process? How do we manage multiple projects – particularly in crowded classrooms? How do we provide useful feedback to our students in a timely manner? How do we keep all students motivated and on task? How do we fit it all in?
- Your postings can address any of the issues described above.

Weeks 6 & 7: Assessing Student Learning

- This discussion focuses on assessment issues in PBL. It's hard enough to assess what students actually understand on an individual basis. But how do we assess learning when students are working in groups – or when each student is working on a different project? How do we hold students accountable for group projects, and how do we evaluate each student's contributions to the learning process?

Weeks 8 & 9: Open Forum

- In this discussion, you may focus on any issue that is of interest to you.

Course Schedule

Monday, January 7th (11-12)

- Guest speaker – Jon Yoder

Wednesday, January 9th (11-12)

- Week 1 Blackboard Posting due
- Course Introduction
- What is PBL?
- Examples of PBL
- Group work session

Thursday, January 10th (1-3pm)

- Group work session

Sunday, January 13th

- Project proposal forms due

Monday, January 14th (11-12)

- Design final project
- Group work session

Wednesday, January 16th (11-12)

- Group Project Presentations
- Lincoln Elementary Groups – Present electives to students

Thursday, January 17th (1-3)

- Middle School Challenge Discussion with Ryan
- Schedule Week 6 Meeting
- Group work session

Friday, January 25th

- Week 2/3 Blackboard Posting due

Friday, February 8th

- Week 4/5 Blackboard Posting due

Friday, February 22nd

- Week 6/7 Blackboard Posting due

Thursday, February 28th

- Middle School Challenge

Thursday, March 6th

- Middle School Challenge

Friday, March 7th

- Week 8/9 Blackboard Posting due

Tuesday, March 18th (Time TBA)

- Final Presentations
- Final Project Due
- Guidelines for Successful PBL Experiences due

***Reminder** – Lesson plans are due two days before they are taught. Late lesson plans will be docked points.