

Trends in Education

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Mission of Early Field Experience Program

To promote a quality training program to benefit aspiring teachers at Sul Ross State University and teacher and students in the local and regional school districts.

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Focus: Project Based Learning (PBL)

In 2012, faculty in the undergraduate Teacher Educator Program at Sul Ross State University established the Early Field Experience Program with teachers and administrators in the nearby school districts for the mutual benefit of those professionals and the SRSU students in Education. As part of the Early Field Experience Program, SRSU teacher candidates visit teachers' classrooms to observe how those experienced educators implement the pedagogical and professional competencies required for Texas Educator Certification. By the time the SRSU students complete their teacher education courses and are ready for their student teaching, they have created multiple lesson plans and taught several lessons, with the guidance of classroom teachers. All of these experiences are extremely beneficial for SRSU students, and teachers report that they find the Early Field Experience Program to be highly rewarding, too.

At the end of each semester, all teachers who hosted

SRSU students are asked to complete a Survey Monkey evaluation of the program and provide suggestions and comments. That feedback is very valuable, and the Early Field Experience Program has improved as a result.

In December 2014, some participating teachers and administrators made the request that SRSU students share techniques and instructional strategies they are studying with them. In response to that request, the Teacher Educator Program will be publishing the newsletter, *Trends in Education*, each semester, and it will include descriptions of programs and practices that they have studied.

The trend for spring 2015 is Project Based Learning. PBL is a very robust approach to learning that engages students in content, 21st Century skills, inquiry with guided questions driven by students' need to know. PBL results in an authentic product to be presented to an audience (McIntush, Taube, Forester, 2014). Over the

last 25 years, PBL has been successfully implemented in many school districts in Texas and around the country. One of the leading trainers for Project Based Learning is the Buck Institute for Education.

Students in Education 3301 *Curriculum and Instruction for Classroom Teachers* read articles and viewed videos about Project Based Learning, and they wrote the following reflections. The SRSU students are very grateful for the outstanding experiences that they have had this semester in classrooms and schools, and they hope that this newsletter on Project Based Learning will be of value to those teachers and administrators.

Jeanne Qvarnstrom

Marilyn Samaguey Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

It's a way to learn using projects. Students will be challenged during projects by answering complex question and problems. These projects will help them learn to plan carefully, manage themselves and working effectively. By receiving feedback from students and teachers, during and after projects, students will grow in their understanding.

Benefits for students:

Hands-on
They are in control of what happens
Critical thinking
Creativity
Communication
Collaboration- working together in groups - feedback
Manage themselves better; can speak out for themselves; self- discipline
Students don't get bored
Emotional connection with projects and specified teacher
Learn skill for real world situations
Long term memory knowledge

Benefits for teachers:

Clear rubrics can help assess students better
Facilitator - presenter - feedback
Students are better engaged
Encourages students to discipline and manage themselves and be effective
Emotional connection with students
Never a dull day

Maile Hoyt Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

Instead of just a lecture setting, kids do most of their learning with projects. They gain a deeper understanding of the concepts.

Benefits for students:

Hands-on
Fun & inviting
Challenging
Thinking outside the box
Group work
Collaboration
Can relate projects to real life

Benefits for teachers:

Can be partnered with other subjects and teachers
Rewarding
Can see provide assistance and support more effectively

Dania Rocha Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

Project based learning is an extended process of study for students in collaborative groups. This experience is a fun challenge for the students spending several weeks working on projects to grasp the concepts in more depth.

Benefits for students:

PBL benefits the students, because they understand what they're learning more. They don't just skim through the material; they actually spend weeks working on projects that have real world application. They get to work together in teams in a very student- centered teaching environment. They do projects that require critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Benefits for teachers:

Teachers may partner with other teachers or get help from the community to create the rich learning experiences for students.

Alicia Delgado Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge.

Benefits for students:

Students are more active and involved with their lessons. They are able to understand the lesson objectives better and get the opportunity to interact with fellow students and the teacher.

Benefits for teachers:

Project Based Learning allows teachers to work more closely with active, engaged students doing high-quality, meaningful work, and, in many cases, rediscover the joy of learning alongside their students. It makes teaching more rewarding when the students are able to understand the lesson in greater depth.

Kyle Morin Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

Project Based Learning is basically going beyond the questions you ask or answer. The conventional 20th century teaching shows a student how to just answer a question. The 21st century PBL shows students how to create, criticize and collaborate to solve problems. PBL pushes students to work in the real world, learning how to learn, discovering how to shape questions and create. PBL is an innovative idea that engages students in long term goals. This creates relevance to their everyday life. This makes the students have a true connection to the real world with the content that is taught.

Benefits for students:

I would say that PBL is very student-centered, and I believe it allows students to have a voice. It also gives them the opportunity to become more decisive in life. In all, it helps gather the attention of diverse students. It allows room for creativity and maximizes all forms of communication by listening, group work, and assigning presentations. In the end, we give the students a chance to form new ideas and go beyond the normal questions we have always asked.

Benefits for teachers:

For teachers, I feel that PBL gives them the opportunity to learn as they teach. With the technology and methods of instruction, teachers are innovators in creating their own long term lesson plans for students. I feel like it's a benefit for both teachers and students to improve and create new ideas through Project Based Learning. PBL also allows teachers to integrate subjects throughout lesson planning.

Ysenia Sanchez Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

Project based learning is an engaging approach to teaching. Students are allowed to explore and engage in hands-on activities based on real world situations. This approach is intended to teacher significant content and creates high-quality experiences for students.

Benefits for students:

The benefits of Project based learning are that they deeply engage students and give them meaningful experiences that help them get a better understanding of what they are learning.

Benefits for teachers:

Teachers are able to work collaboratively with outside references such as universities and organizations of the community, in order to bring the outside world into the classroom in order to give students real life experiences to prepare them for life.

Anna Cruz Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

It's a teaching method where students gain knowledge and skills by working for a period of time on projects that address complex problems or questions.

Benefits for students:

They better understand the complex, dynamic systems that they are studying in the classroom. They can transfer skills and knowledge to future situations.

Benefits for teachers:

Provides a student-centered instructional setting.

Provides experiential and authentic learning.

Maylee Chambliss Reflects on PBL

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

Project Based Learning is where students go through an extended process of inquiry in response to a complex question, problem, or challenge. The inquiry results in a group project that gives students both voice and choice in their own learning.

Benefits to students:

Helps students learn key academic content and practice 21st century skills.

Helps students create high-quality, authentic products and presentations.

Benefits for teachers:

Helps the teacher teach significant content material.

Helps the teacher have "in-depth" learning in the classroom.

Project Based Learning Planning Steps

- Project Idea:** summary of the issue, challenge, investigation, scenario, or problem
- Driving Question:** pose problem or question that engages students with core subject knowledge
- Timeline/Milestones:** list the key dates and important benchmarks for this project
- Create Cooperative Groups:** determine student groups to foster successful collaboration
- Strategies for Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners:** consider differentiated instruction
- Major Projects and/or Performances:** What will students do, write, create, or build?
- Learning Goals:** select the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills to teach and assess
- Presentation:** How will students present/exhibit work and what will be the authentic audience?
- Assessment:** describe the criteria for exemplary performance for each product

(Crowell, Lohse, & Cavazos, 2014)

Project Based Learning Resources

- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2013). *Project-based learning and the 21st century* (DVD). Alexandria, Virginia.
- Bucks Institute for Education. Retrieved March 30, 2015 from <http://www.bie.org>.
- Crowell, Caryl, Lohse, Kathy, & Cavazos, Rebecca. (2014, July) Changing ourselves and our Communities: A project-based, systems thinking approach to teaching and learning. Speech presented to 2014 Whole Language Umbrella Literacies for All Summer Institute, Pasadena, California.
- McIntush, Karen, Taube, Sylvia, & Forester, Tiffany. (2014). Strengthening university-school partnership through project based learning. *The Texas Forum of Teacher Education*. 2-18.
- Tamin, S.,R. & Grant, M.M. (2013). Definitions and uses: Case study of teachers implementing project-based learning. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning*, 7(2). Retrieved March 30, 2015 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1323>.

*We welcome your input. Let us know how you have been using Project Based Learning.
If you have trends to suggest for future issues, please
email jqvarnstrom@sulross.edu*

Many thanks to all of the classroom teachers participating in the Early Field Experience Program from
the 2015 SRSU Teacher Candidates



(Left to Right): Maile Hoyt, Kyle Morin, Alicia Delgado, Maylee Cambliss, Ysenia Sanchez.

Students not in photo: Anna Cruz, Dania Rocha, Marilyn Samaguet

