Defined **Academy**

Professional Learning
to Support Outstanding
Project Based Learning

MICROCREDENTIAL PROGRESSION

MICROCREDENTIALS

The following provides a progression for educators and schools to address fundamental project-based learning design elements, teacher practices, and student activities that promote deep learning to support all students. Each microcredential provides an opportunity for teachers to demonstrate competence in a critical aspect of Project-Based Learning teaching and learning. The microcredentials promote teaching and learning activities to support student learning in every classroom, regardless of whether the classroom teacher is utilizing a project-based learning mindset.

MICROCREDENTIALS

Designing Authentic Tasks

When students are engaged in authentic learning, they are more likely to develop a deep understanding of content and skills, take responsibility for their learning, and become intrinsically motivated to do their best work. Teachers who design authentic tasks can select projects that use realistic scenarios, customize learning tasks based on what their students care about and develop tasks designed to meet school and community needs.

Infusing (5Cs, 21st C, Workplace, SEL) Skills

Infusing skills beyond academic standards adds rigor and relevance to traditional coursework. A variety of skills are needed to accomplish real-world tasks. Students must be able to flexibly use 21st Century skills, career and workplace readiness skills, and social-emotional learning by the time they graduate from high school. Students must be provided with real-world scenarios to practice these skills authentically. They also need feedback on their progress as they develop these skills.

Planning for Student Voice and Choice

Providing students with voice and choice activates learning. Every student is different. Students have different needs and interests. They are also empowered in their learning when they have an opportunity to make an academic choice and reflect on its success or failure. Teachers can provide choices in content, product or process. They also provide opportunities for students to co-create projects as they become more experienced and confident in their choices.

Purposeful Grouping

Using purposeful grouping practices makes Project-Based Learning (PBL) experiences manageable for instructors and students. In classrooms where students are learning collaboratively, effective facilitators of PBL experiences incorporate purposeful grouping practices. Purposefully grouping students for efficiency, shared interests, or maximum growth can help create a rigorous and engaging learning environment. Teachers can group students for entire projects or different parts of a project, simulating a real-world work environment.

Using GRASP to Frame a Task

The GRASP (Goal, Role, Audience, Situation, and Product) model provides opportunities for students to use and grow their 4C skills - critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity- to prepare students for living in an increasingly interconnected world. The model also serves as a planning framework for teachers designing high-quality project-based learning tasks.

Formative Assessment- Checking In

Formative assessment is a vital element of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Effective facilitators of PBL constantly evaluate student knowledge and understanding by informal questioning, exit tickets, short quizzes, and conferences. The results of these assessments inform instruction and guide student learning throughout a project.

Summative Assessment- Making Sure

Summative assessment is often associated with the final product in Project-Based Learning (PBL). When evaluating student mastery, the summative assessment can be used in a variety of ways. In addition to the products students complete during PBL, Teachers can use reflections, portfolios of work, or student conferences as summative assessments. In PBL, summative assessments provide formal feedback to students and allow teachers to grade student work, often after numerous formative checks for understanding. Summative assessments for one project can also be used as formative assessments for the next project.

Rubric Design

A rubric is an open-ended and responsive tool for providing feedback to students during Project-Based Learning (PBL) activities. Rubrics can show current levels of understanding and give the students an insight of how they can improve their performance in the future.

A Culture of Reflection

Reflection is a powerful practice for students to understand what they are learning, particularly during process-based experiences like Project-Based Learning (PBL). Classrooms that establish a culture of reflection help students realize that thinking, talking, and writing about learning are often more impactful than the products they create. Building opportunities for reflection into the regular classroom routine empowers students to use reflection flexibly throughout the learning process.

Meaningful Feedback

Meaningful feedback provides actionable guidance for students to improve their work that mimics evaluation systems in the real world. Critique and revision are an essential part of any Project-Based Learning (PBL) experience. Students must learn to respond to feedback, even criticism, in productive ways to improve their products and demonstrate their knowledge. Meaningful feedback provides actionable guidance for students to make meaning and transfer understanding of knowledge and skills in significant ways.

MICROCREDENTIALS

Providing Scaffolding

PBL is appropriate for all learners. Engaging in PBL allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in authentic ways. Students who may struggle with traditional instruction and assessment often thrive while completing PBL tasks because they are engaged and motivated to succeed. Teachers can scaffold content, process, or product to create engaging learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their level of readiness.

Creating an Environment of Sustained Inquiry

Inquiry, the simple act of asking a question and seeking its answer, can be a powerful motivator and increases engagement in the classroom. When students learn to ask their questions, the learning environment becomes dynamic. Teachers become influential in student success when they teach the students the tools to seek out the answers to those questions to learn to apply the content and skills in meaningful ways.

Effective Facilitation/Coaching

Project-Based Learning (PBL) requires students to be self-directed and actively transfer knowledge and skills into authentic contexts. Sometimes this requires direct instruction, but more often, it requires effective facilitation from the teacher. Effective facilitators or coaches ask probing questions, listen, provide feedback, encourage reflection, gradually release responsibility to the students, and demonstrate trust through affirmation.

Critique and Revision

Tolerance for critique and revision comes from repeated practice and quality results. Students (and teachers) are increasingly intolerant of critique and revision. Many assignments are focused on completion rather than quality. However, when students are faced with creating a high-quality product, critique and revision are essential for the best possible outcome. Teachers who provide multiple opportunities for critique and revision during a Project-Based Learning (PBL) experience help students understand the importance of developing products that improve with effort.

Guiding Research

Nearly every Project-Based Learning (PBL) experience includes some form of research. Teachers who guide research effectively teach students how to research while also helping them seek answers to engaging questions. Guiding research may consist of explicit teaching, modeling and/or meaningful feedback before, during, and after the research process.

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