Project-Based Learning Pilot

May 13, 2021

A REIMAGINED MODEL OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- All students involved demonstrate mastery of content and skills. These include curriculum standards in all subject areas, plus “soft skills” such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and social-emotional development.

- All students involved engage in work that is personally relevant and meaningful, seeing themselves as connected to what they are learning.

- All students involved have opportunities to demonstrate their learning by creating instead of receiving knowledge.

- All students, teachers, and families involved form a community partnership built on critique & feedback, exhibition of work, and authenticity.

NOT “ENRICHMENT & CHALLENGE” SUPPORT (not ECS)

- The project-based learning pilot is a “way of being.” The model operates as THE academic experience of the team.
- There is an ongoing thread of feedback and making thinking visible throughout the school year.
- Students will be assessed on the standards and will receive progress reports based on their work.
- All students on the identified teams will participate fully. The specialist is a full member of the team for the whole year.
- Public exhibition of student work will be the norm.

PROJECT-BASED TEAM

- follows the district curriculum while operating in a full-scale project-based, experiential approach
- aligns learning to the content standards and follows scope and sequence of courses with intentional integration of subject areas, including the arts
- functions as somewhat of a “school-within-a-school”
- uses design thinking as an approach to develop solutions to problems
- involves the adult community to provide feedback to students and connect the learning to real work in the field
- conducts regular public exhibitions of student work
- is facilitated by a Project-Based Learning Specialist (who is a full member of the team)

The Project-Based Learning Specialists will

- Co-design project-based learning experiences that align with grade level curriculum
- Integrate content areas, including the arts, to align content and practice standards
- Dedicate common planning time to support and refine the model
- Develop systems for documenting student learning, reflection, and critique
- Develop objective-based assessments
- Consult with Curriculum Coordinators on scope & sequence and curriculum standards
- Collaborate with other stakeholder colleagues (EdTech, library, art, etc.) to enhance integration
- Research and develop ideas that could lead to authentic PBL experiences
- Operate each school's makerspace and provide guidance to all grades K-8 on its use
- Facilitate tuning protocols to reflect on and refine project design

How will we measure the effectiveness of this pilot?

- Regular surveys of students on engagement, rigor, self-regulation, and knowledge/skills
- Regular surveys of teachers on professional practice and meeting students' needs
- Regular surveys of parents on engagement, relevance, attitudes, and personal connectedness
- Student portfolios representing their body of work (process and product) over time
- Assessment of content standards relative to traditional model
- Assessment of "soft skills" using PBL rubric
- Public exhibitions of student work
- Regular SEL components built into lessons/assignments, such as student reflection

IMPACT on Students

- All students have the opportunity to bring individual strengths and skills to the classroom community and make an authentic contribution
- Students develop strong communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills
- Students approach school work with passion, enthusiasm, and a strong sense of purpose
- Students experience the joy of creativity while mastering content
- Students feel a sense of empowerment and autonomy by participating in feedback protocols and project tunings with peers and teachers related to project outcomes and design

IMPACT on Teachers

- Teachers bring passion and creativity to their practice
- Teachers teach the “whole child” more than content
- Teachers get more of a chance to see their students’ individual strengths and build on those strengths
- Teachers will get the opportunity collaborate more closely with colleagues to build on each other’s skill sets and establish common practices
- Teachers will engage in ongoing regular professional learning that promotes a culture of continuous improvement
- Teachers elsewhere in the district are able to learn about future possibilities that could strengthen their practice and impact more students
- Teachers develop a reflective practice as they participate in project tunings and receive feedback from students and staff

IMPACT on School

- Pilot serves as research model that can grow within the district
- Team involved serve as teacher and student leaders who can promote the benefits of the experience and model the characteristics of 21st century learning
- Building leaders have enhanced capacity as instructional leaders, and can better support restorative practices, social-emotional growth, asset-based child development
- Increased awareness of student work and individual student talent through exhibitions
- School develops a stronger sense of community cooperation as all members are involved in project feedback and tuning

IMPACT on Community

- Greater involvement of adults that strengthens the home-to-school connection
- Greater awareness of student learning that is connected to the world outside of school walls
- Increased opportunities for adults in the community to serve as role models for children who wish to learn about careers in different fields
- Recognition that PSB is paving a vision for 21st century learning through research-based innovation, teacher leadership, and equitable practices

Examples

What is urban ecology? How can humans create sustainable and efficient modern urban ecosystems?

Students will understand:

- Characteristics of sustainability, efficiency, and modern cities
- How green building methods and techniques work and can be implemented
- How to write, revise, edit, and publish a magazine article
- How to be part of a magazine production team
- How to create and design artwork to accompany their article

How have my stories defined me? How has my neighborhood taken shape over the years? How can we use statistics to understand a community?

Students will:

- Write a personal narrative about a significant moment in their lives
- Examine the history of their neighborhood
- Collect and analyze data to understand their community
- Create photographic and written art that represents the student and neighborhood
- Create a digital magazine that includes the personal narrative and visual display of class data