

# Teacher Checklist for Student-Driven Projects

## Prepare for Projects (3 to 6 weeks prior to entry event)

This is always the busiest time for a project-based teacher. With planning most projects go well, if not exactly where you thought they would. This is normal and expected in student-driven project-based learning environments.

- Review project materials, standards, and teacher support pieces.
- Organize a local guest speaker, videoconference, or a phenomenon for the project's Entry Event. Arrange space for public presentations of learning products if appropriate, and invite audience. Arrange speakers, adult mentors, and transportation for off-site activities.
- Contact teachers from other departments and propose partnerships.
- Perform a safety survey of any outdoor sites involved with the project.
- Prepare for "just in time teaching" by reading the project's *Teacher Guide*.
- Identify mutually reinforcing activities from existing curriculum guides.

Most importantly, prepare students for collaborative work, self-assessment, and sense-making conversations. See Create a Culture of Inquiry discussion in the Teacher Support reading titled *Organizing for Student Success*.

## Launch Projects with an Engaging Entry Event (first week of project)

Your primary task when launching the project is to ensure a truly engaging entry event. Be sure that your speaker is prepped, knows how to connect to teenagers, and has visual aids or activities that prompt need-to-know questions. If quality speakers can't be found consider videos or video conferencing. Students receive the *Invitation to Engage* reading, *Rubrics*, and their *Student Checklist*; followed by the *Asking the Right Questions* reading.

- Help students interact with guest speaker, video, or a natural phenomenon. Introduce the Challenging Question.
- Encourage discussion of science, engineering, and policy viewpoints as students will be assuming these roles.
- Check for prior knowledge and build place-based connections
- Post the Challenging Question and create a calendar with student tasks. Use or revise the *Student Checklist* provided with the project or develop your own. (The *Student Checklist* and selected other documents are available in Word on the *Coastal Voices Website*, [www.coastal.ca.gov/coastalvoices](http://www.coastal.ca.gov/coastalvoices).)
- Review the procedures for creating group contracts and personalized learning plans, if you are using them. Assign teams and create contracts. Make students aware of your grading procedure. One option is for groups to agree that they will be the ones responsible for dividing up points based on the level of work each student does on the group project.
- Define the major learning products, which are typically the project notebook and a public presentation.

### Manage the (Potentially) Messy Middle of Projects (3 to 4 weeks long)

This period of time is a cycle of questioning, knowledge building, explaining, revising understanding, and reflecting. Rarely is the middle of a project linear or predictable. Students may need all sorts of support ranging from direct instruction in process skills such as evaluating resources for bias, validity, and authority, to structured homework activities to clarify significant science concepts.

- Distribute the readings: *Claims, Evidence, and Reasoning*, followed by the field experience reading, *Tips for Effective Communication in Public Settings*, and any readings specific to the particular project. An additional reading is available titled, *Students Taking Action on Science & Policy and Communicating to Public Audiences*.
- In the second week, have students perform self assessment and write plans of improvement.
- Use a Daily Phenomenon (as described in the Teacher Support piece, Organizing for Student Success) to build shared knowledge as needed.
- Review project notebooks as often as time allows to ensure your ability to provide frequent feedback to students. Use exit tickets to track content knowledge and progress. Evaluate with rubrics.
- Have content resources ready that relate to students' "need-to-knows" and personalized learning plans. Deliver when students ask. Resist the impulse to front load or deliver lectures. Remember, this is "just in time" instruction.
- Perform weekly check-ins with groups using Habits of Mind descriptions. Perform additional team building activities as needed, however students should manage their own groups. In week three, meet with each group for debriefing on group work.
- As you get to week three increase the frequency of formative feedback. Be sure to review drafts of any written products and especially the project notebook.
- Use gallery walks as foundations for self- and peer-review.
- Provide frequent opportunities for students to practice.
- Confirm arrangements for public presentations and further adult mentoring opportunities. Send reminders to invited audiences.

### Celebrate Student Work in Public Settings (last week of project)

Your primary role towards the end of the project is to facilitate reflection, support accurate student thinking by formally correcting when needed, and to celebrate the growth that you have noted during your regular formative assessment sessions.

- Perform system checks on any technology that will be used in presentations at least two days prior.
- Review rubrics, personalized learning plans, and performance expectations.
- Review the questions created at the beginning of the project.
- Have students perform self-assessment, lead reflection discussions, and write plans of improvement.
- Meet with each group for debriefing on group work. Have students divide points per original contract agreements, if applicable.