

Staying on the Front Edge: Project-Based Learning

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The face of education is changing before our very eyes. Gone are the days of the teachers standing before the class lecturing about some discreet fact or working some problems from a math text book. Rather than having students pump out yet one more worksheet packet, our teachers are looking to engage the students in meaningful learning experiences that are highly motivating that lead to the students taking control of their own learning.

Throughout Longhorn Land we have a variety of project-based learning experiences taking place. These activities focus on engaging the students in activities that all come together to achieve the creation of something tangible and meaningful to the students. Now, there is no ONE way of doing this, but there are common parts to this orientation to learning.

First, the teacher must be certain of the learning objectives surrounding the project being addressed. In order to accomplish that, the teachers must deconstruct the ideas on which they are focusing their learning time. This is necessary as the steps to produce the project – whatever it may be – must follow logically with the proper completion of the project and also remain tied to the academic standards being addressed.

Equally important as the de-construction phase, the teacher must carefully create the learning environment that allows the students to tap into their respective learning styles and into their interests. Not everyone goes about learning in the same way. Some people learn best by reading, some by hearing, and some by actively moving. Given this reality, the teacher works to create situations where all the learning styles have a chance to shine.

As I intimated earlier, one of the advantages of this approach to education is the sky is the limit regarding the different sorts of learning experiences the teachers are able to create for their students. Toward that end, we have a variety of different sorts of projects taking place here in Holcomb. For example, the first grade is engaged in planning to build a sandbox for the playground; the third grade is looking into creating the Longhorn Learning Corral (an outside learning space); fourth grade has created a school newspaper; and, the environmental sciences class at the high school is in the process of rejuvenating the pond area between the high school and the middle school. These are but a few of the exciting learning activities taking place here in Holcomb. There are many others.

Please do not hesitate to travel to the various learning environments we have here in Holcomb to see all of the wonder and excitement that exists in our schools. We truly want a deep and lasting relationship with the families of our students, so we welcome you to join us. J