

# Project-Based Learning Final Report

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PCEP Michigan Department of Education Models of Proficiency Grant

**1. Unit/Course Title:** Blog Portfolios / 9<sup>th</sup> Grade SLC (Mainly English 9 Focused)

**2. Driving Questions taken directly from 9<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Standards :**

- Who am I?
- How do my skills and talents help define me?
- What evidence do I have that I am committed to learning?
- What purposes does writing serve in the real world?

**In addition:**

- What image do I want to project to the business and college world for future endeavors?

**3. Project Summary:**

See the comments regarding portfolios at:

<http://www.windwardhigh.org/academics/portfolios.html>

<http://biology.wsc.ma.edu/portfolios/>

<http://www.cortland.edu/flteach/mm-course/digital-portfolios.html>

**Digital Portfolio** — Requirements adapted from <http://www.windwardhigh.org/academics/dp> -- Directions and requirements to be adapted and solidified further through summer research and planning.

**Sections:** Your digital portfolio will be divided into **three main sections:**

- **Profile** - a brief **bio (your life story)** and your **resume**.
- **Projects** - Samples of **projects** that you complete during your time at Canton HS. You must have samples from all curriculum areas and from each semester of 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The center piece of each project page is the **reflective essay**.
- **Plans** - **Educational goals, Career goals and Personal goals**.

## Projects

- Each student is required to include a teacher designated amount/type of **portfolio pieces per semester** in the Digital Portfolio.
- Projects should represent a **student's best work** at that point in his/her high school career by the end of the school year as directed.
- **Projects** are typically larger assignments or learning experiences that require a student to demonstrate higher order thinking, organization, integration and analysis.
- Students will reflect upon the projects through the writing of a reflective essay. In these essays students will **answer four reflective questions** - **Backward** Looking, **Inward** Looking, **Outward** Looking and **Forward** Looking Questions. [View Questions](#).

Section	Possible Items to Include in your Portfolio
Profile	Brief Bio (your history) Picture of you Resume
Projects	Poetry Essays Short Story

Video Project  
 Flash Animation  
 Web Site/Page  
 Photo Essay  
 Drawing/Painting  
 Research Paper  
 3-D Model  
 Brochure or other advertisement  
 Description of a community service project with pictures  
 Audio Recording  
 Animation  
 Sculpture  
 Computer application  
 Community Service Project  
 Internship  
 ETC.

**Plans**

**Educational Goals** (what you'd like to study and where you would like to go to school)  
**Career Goals** (what you'd like to do for a living. If you're not sure, list a couple of possibilities or interests)  
**Personal Goals** (things you'd like to accomplish 5 and 10 years beyond high school besides career & education goals. For example - learn to play the guitar, compete in a triathlon, travel to \_\_\_\_\_, get married, etc.!)

**4. Teaching Team:**

**Teacher Name**

1. Dayna M. Lang

**Course/Dept.**

English 9: World Literature

**School**

Canton H.S.

**5. Duration:** initially in the 2009-10 School year

**Approximate dates:** from Sept/Oct to May

**Student Data:**

**Total number of participating students:** 95

**Estimate of participating students who are at-risk:** 8

**7. Learning Goals and Strategies**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies include multiple modes of instructional content, multiple ways for students to express what they know, and multiple ways to engage students.

**Content Standards**

Students will answer questions pertaining to the 9th Grade Focus: *Inter-Relationships & Self-Reliance* as per [ELA 9 Michigan Merit Curriculum Course](#) Requirements, Page 8

- Who am I?
- How do my skills and talents help to define me?
- How do I relate to my family, my community, and society?
- How do I build networks of people to support me?
- How am I a reflection of my relationships?
- How do my relationships within and across groups affect others?
- What influence do class, religion, language, and culture have on my relationships and my decisions?
- What can I contribute as an individual?
- What is my responsibility to society?

- **Standard 2. Meaning and Communication** - All students will demonstrate the ability to write clear and grammatically correct sentences, paragraphs, and compositions.

3. Plan, draft, revise, and edit their texts, and analyze and critique the texts of others in such areas as purpose, effectiveness, cohesion, and creativity.

- **Standard 4. Language** - All students will use the English language effectively.
  1. Demonstrate how language usage is related to successful communication in their different spoken, written, and visual communication contexts, such as job interviews, public speeches, debates, and advertising.
- **Standard 6. Voice** - All students will learn to communicate information accurately and effectively and demonstrate their expressive abilities by creating oral, written, and visual texts that enlighten and engage an audience.
  4. Document and enhance a developing voice with authentic writings for different audiences and purposes. Examples include portfolios, video productions, submissions for competitions or publications, individual introspections, and applications for employment and higher education.
- **Standard 7. Skills and Processes** - All students will demonstrate, analyze, and reflect upon the skills and processes used to communicate through listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing.
  4. Demonstrate flexibility in using strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing complex texts in a variety of genre, and describe the relationship between form and meaning. Examples include preparing text for publication and presentation and using strategies appropriate for purposes, such as editorializing an opinion, and developing and justifying a personal perspective on a controversial issue.
- **Standard 8. Genre and Craft of Language:** All students will explore and use the characteristics of different types of texts, aesthetic elements, and mechanics—including text structure, figurative and descriptive language, spelling, punctuation, and grammar—to construct and convey meaning.
  5. Describe and use the characteristics of various oral, visual, and written texts (e.g., debate, drama, primary documents, and documentaries) and the textual aids they employ (e.g., prefaces, appendices, lighting effects, and microfiche headings) to convey meaning and inspire audiences.
- **Standard 12. Critical Standards:** All students will develop and apply personal, shared, and academic criteria for the enjoyment, appreciation, and evaluation of their own and others' oral, written, and visual texts.

### UDL Strategy(s)

Students will be representing themselves and a body of their work in various formats including audio, video, and written work. Students will also become more familiar with technology and digital resources. This meets both online learning standards and future needs for the working world while addressing different modalities.

### Project Activity(s) to Specifically Address the Content

1. Reflective journals will be based on reflective questions created for Windward High. Students will be able to complete their reflections via video, audio, or written performances as follows:

### Reflection of Learning Questions (<http://www.windwardhigh.org/academics/dp/reflectionquestions.html>)

Each project in your digital portfolio must include a thoughtful answer to each of these types of questions. Choose one backward looking, one inward looking, one outward looking and one forward looking question to answer.

#### Backward-Looking Questions

- What process did you go through to produce this piece?
- Have you done a similar kind of work in the past (earlier in the year or in a previous grade; in school or out of school)? How is this piece similar or different from the previous work?
- Compared to past experiences with this kind of work, how have you improved?
- What problems did you encounter while you were working on this piece? How did you solve them?
- What resources did you use while working on this piece? Which ones were especially helpful? Which ones would you use again?
- Does this work tell a story? Describe how this piece tells that story.

#### Inward-Looking Questions

- How do you feel about this piece of work? What parts of it do you particularly like? Dislike? Why do you feel this way?
- What did/do you enjoy about this piece or work?
- What were your standards for this piece of work? Did you meet your standards?
- What were your goals for this piece of work? Did your goals change as you worked on it? Did you meet your goals?
- What does this piece reveal about you as a learner? What did you learn about yourself as you worked on this piece?
- Have you changed any ideas about yourself or your learning as you worked on this subject?
- Find another piece of work that you did at the beginning of the year to compare and contrast with this. What changes can you see? How did those changes come about? What does that tell you about yourself and how you learn?

### Outward-Looking Questions

- Did you do your work the way other people did theirs? In what ways did you do it differently? In what ways was your work or process similar?
- If you were the teacher, what comments would you make about this piece? What grade would you give it? Why?
- What's the one thing you particularly want people to notice when they look at your work?
- What do your classmates particularly notice about your piece when they look at it?
- In what ways did your work meet higher standards for this assignment? In what ways did it not meet those standards?
- If someone else were looking at this piece, what might they learn about you?
- What work would you save to remind you or someone else of what you are like now?

### Forward-Looking Questions

- Finish this sentence, "One thing I would like to improve upon (with this or other work) is ..."
- What would you change if you had a chance to do this piece over again? What will you change in the next revision of this piece?
- What's the one thing that you have seen in your classmates' work or process that you would like to try in your next piece?
- As you look at this piece, what's one thing that you would like to try to improve upon?
- What's one goal you would like to set for yourself for next time?
- What would you like to spend more time on in school, either in general or specifically?
- What might you want next year's teacher to know about you (what things you're good at, what might you want more help with)?
- What work would you show your teacher next year to help him/her understand something about you?

## 2. **Compiling and editing of the blog/e-portfolio throughout the year with the various modes of expression.** Portfolios will be adapted and loosely based on e-portfolio guidelines from Windward High.

### Collecting Evidence of Learning

- Students must have a **set number of designated postings and types per semester.**
- Portfolio entries will include entries from *in-school activities* and *out-of-school activities*, but must represent a **learning experience.**
- Evidence must be in a digital format and can be in the form of Word documents, Power Point presentations, photographs, scanned documents, videos or other multimedia files that are able to be uploaded and embedded in Blogger.
- All evidence must be **saved on a student's G: drive** in a folder called Portfolio Collection (**G:\Portfolio Collection**).

## 3. **Students will view and comment on fellow students' blogs/e-portfolios.** Proper commenting will need taught and monitored if possible.

### “Grabber” Activity to Generate Interest

I will compile a collection of portfolios, web sites, and social networks from the web that represent students and adults in order to demonstrate ways we are represented in the online environment. Pulling up the designated sites to show students should lead to a discussion of both positive and negative representations, the audiences of these representations, and what can be obtained from personal “identity management”. This “grabber” discussion will include topics such as employers looking at facebook and

MySpace to assess future employees, college students, etc. Students will be directed to come up with ideas about how they want to represent themselves and for what purpose.

## **9. Formative Assessments and Tentative Timeline**

Check points will be created along the way to assess whether students have posted the appropriate items on the blogs. Certain postings will be required and will have to be labeled in a set way so that it is easy to find and access the assignment(s) each time. For example, when it is time to check in a reading log, students will post it to the blog site.

Much later in the term, students will look at their postings in groups and edit/remove postings that are not their best work in order to leave the best representation of themselves for the e-portfolio. For example, by the end students will only have one reading log that represents the best summarizing and thinking analysis he/she did that year. Each student may have one critical analysis essay, one compare and contrast write-up, etc., so that what is left will be a solid representation of his/her edited work across the curriculum. Designated pieces to include will be guided by the teacher. A concrete teacher's list of expected writing and project pieces will be established in prep work done during the summer of 2009.

## **10. Summative Assessment/Culminating Product**

Students' final assessment will be based on the final blog/e-portfolio. How polished is each piece that was chosen to remain on the site? Did the student keep the number/type of pieces directed to in order to give a full picture of the year of development? Did the student embed video, podcasts, links, etc. as directed throughout in order to show a range of their talents? Does the portfolio include the completed reflective essay piece, and does that piece answer the retired types of questions for each piece? Etc.

## **11. Resources/UDL Supports Requested and Budget**

### **Materials and estimated cost:**

Ideally, additional computer time will be available above what is normally needed for English 9, to give students the opportunity to work on portfolios at least once a month while in school.

Ideally, the grant would fund a classroom set of headphone microphones in order for students to record podcasts to add to their sites. However, a set is currently being borrowed from a Plymouth teacher and might be available for continued use next year. The Audacity program can be utilized for podcasting among other resources. Audacity is already on the Share Drive at each Park High School.

Ideally, the grant would also provide a couple of flip video cameras for classroom use so that students could record and post experiences from the classroom; the videos would include recordings of themselves presenting class projects. There are currently video cameras available to be checked out from the library but they are not always available when needed. At least one video camera would be nice, but it would be ideal to have three cameras available (one for each class in the SLC). If this is not available, I will do my best to utilize current library resources or purchase at least one video camera myself.

A large file size capability for moodle will need to be made available to me and my classes. I will try to post video and audio within moodle if the upload size is not limited to a small amount. This will allow me to videotape an entire class period then post the results to moodle for students to download, edit, and share the portion of the video that includes their work/presentation. Videos can be edited within Microsoft Movie Maker which is on the school computers and Windows computers. On MACs, the equivalent program is iMovie.

Students may also need to be granted additional file storage space for backing up video and audio files on their G Drives and/or personal folders.

I will suggest that students purchase a 2GB flash drive for file transfer purposes. The library is currently offering these at a reasonable rate of \$10.00. Information about this can be added to the letter I distribute to freshmen parents in September.

**Training/Planning/Subs and estimated cost:**

I would like time to train my SLC partners in all that is available via blogging/e-portfolios and to further develop/solidify ideas of how to utilize this means with the class. I would like a day or two to meet with my SLC team to discuss initial inclusion of cross-curricular items and later to access use of the blogs during the school year and make adjustments as needed.

I will need to spend time this summer to further develop the exact plan for implementing and guiding of blogs/e-portfolios throughout next school year. I would like a summer stipend. The stipend might also be made available to my SLC partners if they become more involved. I am open to an amount that seems fair and equitable for all grant participants equally.

**Field Trip(s) and estimated cost:** I would like to spend a day with the people at Wayne RESA that have developed the “23 Things Teachers Need to Know about Web 2.0” to develop a similar plan for guiding students’ development in use of blogs throughout the school year.

**Total funding request:** anywhere from \$0 to \$3,000

**Flip Mino Video Camera(s):** \$180 - \$230 each (may be able to get a discount by ordering via the Library Media Specialist. **\$230 X 3 = \$690 maximum cost**

**Additional Moodle/Personal Folder Space:** No Cost

**Student Flash Drives:** Cost incurred by students is around \$10 each.

**Stipend: ?**

**Wayne RESA visit cost: ?**

**Subs for 1 or 2 release days for self and/or SLC: ?**

**Headphones with Mics:** \$40 X 35 = \$1,400

**\*\*Minimum request** most desired includes one flip mino camcorder, one trip to Wayne RESA, and a stipend.

**12. Should this proposal be selected for funding, we agree to participate in**

- **two one-hour planning sessions with the grant committee**
- **two meetings with the Hamtramck teachers to share our project experiences**
- **one one-hour session to share PBL unit/course with PCEP staff**
- **the completion of an end-of-project evaluation form (June 2010)**
- **posting of PBL unit/course on ePark**

**Results:**

- Of the 95, all but three students posted their writing pieces and had a solid understanding of how to reflect on and evaluate their own writing and growth in writing throughout the year. This was assessed via individual writing assignments in which students reflected on their writing/blog pieces and critiqued

themselves. It was evident, in a way that it has not been previously, that students had learned and improved in their writing and understanding of the required skills throughout the year. Plus, normally there are end of year problems with reflecting on writing pieces because students have thrown them out and didn't have an electronic copy anymore. This is the first time where all students (except the three mentioned), were easily able to pull up all of their writing pieces to reflect, compare, and contrast.

### **Describe how students with special needs benefited from the project:**

- This project helped students keep track of all of their writing pieces, because they were posted in one place and easy to refer back to throughout the year.
- Students saw their pieces several times instead once when they wrote it and once when they got it back with my comments on it.
- Students learned from looking at classmates' writing pieces on the same topics. Classmates' writing pieces were available to students anytime they had access to the internet, from home or at school.

### **What did you learn from your experience with Project Based Learning?**

- This was different from the other types of project based learning that I've done because it did not give project choice. I think some students would have chosen to display/collect their work in a different manner if given the choice. Some students really liked blogging.
- There is a much higher stake involved when they know time is built in for peers to look through their sites. Students worked harder to make their sites look interesting as a result. Students peer edited and made comments about every two months. Surprisingly, students didn't seem concerned at all about the possibility of an unknown public interacting with their pieces.

### **What student or teacher challenges were faced in the implementation of the projects (i.e. peer issues, technology issues, time problems, etc.?)**

- Some students would forget to update their blogs so patience, understanding, and extensions were needed along with regular reminders.
- Some students created blogs, then left them alone for so long, that they forgot their passwords and had to create new blogs or request their password reminders from blogger. Though both are simple processes, some students needed reminders about how to do this or needed walked through the process individually even though the instructions are on the blogger site as well. This could have easily taken up a lot of classroom time if I had let it, but I forced students to have some independence with this.
- It is often assumed that we are dealing with a tech generation, but the reality is that students only know technology they find useful or relate to such as iPods or facebook. Therefore, the expectation that students would know about blogging and be comfortable with it, was a mistaken notion. Most students were using blogger for the very first time and had not spent much if any time looking at other people's blogs. None of the students had any idea of how blogs are being used in businesses and marketing today nor did they have any idea that money could be made from blogging and/or other internet services. The majority of students only went to the computer to use Microsoft Word or PowerPoint for school. The only other uses were for their entertainment as mentioned previously.
- Also, it is disappointing to think they worked so hard on these blog portfolios only to not have any follow-up with them in the next three years of high school. It would be great if some of the students continued to develop their portfolios, but I do not have the time or means to assure this happens.
- Keeping up on the grading/checking in of the blogs is only realistic about once a month at best since it has to be worked in around regular grading for the class.
- A few students needed monitored to keep their sites "school appropriate," but the majority did not.
- Sometimes we were not able to get the computer lab for everyone to look through their writing pieces.

**Additional Comments:**

- I'm not sure I would do this again in the same way. I do like having all the pieces posted to reflect on, but I think I'll use the blog feature in ePark/moodle next year to compare/contrast pluses and minuses within the two programs.
- I ended up presenting on my blog portfolio to my peers at The Park. They were very interested in how it went and how blogging could be useful for their classrooms. I received quite a bit of positive feedback.
- I like that this incorporated a real world aspect for the students.