An Exploration of Project-based Learning Models

PRESENTATION TO THE RVSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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MANOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Expeditionary Learning

• Expeditionary Learning is a whole school approach to teaching and learning that provides students with a highly engaging, relevant, and purposeful approach to education.

• This non-profit organization partners with schools, districts, and states to build teacher capacity in service of a more ambitious vision of student achievement: one that joins academic rigor, high quality student work, and character education/service learning.

• Learning is centered around long-term, inquiry-based units of study called “Expeditions”.
History of Expeditionary Learning

• Founded in 1991 in collaboration between Harvard Graduate School of Education and Outward Bound.

• Over the last 25 years, the EL network has expanded to 165 schools in 33 states, serving 4000 teachers and 53,000 students.

• In 2013, Expeditionary Learning was awarded a $12 million Investing in Innovation Grant from the Federal government to demonstrate a PD model that is scalable across the country.

• Results in a variety of studies indicate positive impact on student achievement in Expeditionary Learning Schools. For more info visit: http://elschools.org/our-results
EL’s 4 Big Ideas

Character & Culture – “Crew”

Project-based Learning Approach – “Expeditions”

Student-engaged Assessment and High Quality Student Work

Teachers as Leaders and Learners
EL Design Principles

1. The Primacy of Self-Discovery
2. The Having of Wonderful Ideas
3. The Responsibility for Learning
4. Empathy and Caring
5. Success and Failure
6. Collaboration and Competition
7. Diversity and Inclusion
8. The Natural World
9. Solitude and Reflection
10. Service and Compassion
In Expeditionary Learning schools...

- **Learning is active.** Students are scientists, urban planners, historians, and activists, investigating real community problems and collaborating with peers to develop creative, actionable solutions.

- **Learning is challenging.** Students at all levels are pushed and supported to do more than they think they can. Excellence is expected in the quality of their work and thinking.

- **Learning is meaningful.** Students apply their skills and knowledge to real-world issues and problems and make positive change in their communities. They see the relevance of their learning and are motivated by understanding that learning has purpose.

- **Learning is public.** Through formal structures of presentation, exhibition, critique, and data analysis, students and teachers build a shared vision of pathways to achievement.

- **Learning is collaborative.** School leaders, teachers, students, and families share rigorous expectations for quality work, achievement, and behavior. Trust, respect, responsibility, and joy in learning permeate the school culture.
Five Dimensions of the Model

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Culture & Character
- Leadership
Core Practices - Curriculum

1 - Curriculum

• Centered around Common Core Standards
• Curriculum Mapping K-5
• Learning Expeditions
  - Compelling Topic
  - Guiding questions
  - Case studies
  - Field work, experts, and service Learning
  - Final projects and products
• Emphasis on high quality work
Examples of Expeditions

First Grade
2013-2014

EXPEDITIONS

DIGGING OUR WAY TO CHINA
&
GOT WATER

Teacher: Mary Lehmberg
2013/2014
4th Grade

Expeditions:

Bills and Gills:
Organisms, Energy & Ecosystems

Tales & Trails:
California & Its History
Guiding Questions

Title: Got Water?
Curriculum Connection: Science
Guiding Questions:
1. What is the water cycle?
2. How do Meteorologists predict the weather?
3. How is having water important to my life?

Title: Digging Our Way to China
Curriculum Connection: Social Studies
Guiding Questions:
1. How has everyday life changed and stayed the same for the people living in China??
2. What was it like to be an immigrant in Nevada County
3. Where in the world is China and how do we get there?

Culminating Project:
Five Chinese Brothers
Mini-Musical
Original Story by Claire Huchet Bishop and Kurt Wiese; Play by Holly Dovetz;
Music by Greg Wolf

Culminating Project:
Field Work

What is drought? Tell, then sketch it!

A long time of very dry weather.

Empire Mine
Fieldwork Learning Targets

I can observe the rocks, the mine shaft, the mine yard, and other features of Empire Mine.

✓ I can document my observations with sketches, labels, and sentences.

✓ I can think about and imagine the miners that came to our county and the work they did with rock.

✓ I can listen and follow directions.

✓ I can be responsible for my own belongings.

✓ I can use respectful behavior at all times while on our fieldwork.
2 – Instruction

- Students talk and think more. They take responsibility for their learning.
- Lessons have specific purpose guided by learning targets.
- Reading and writing across disciplines.
- Culture of differentiation at all levels.
- Culture of high achievement.
- Integration of technology for instruction, student research, and projects.
Example of Learning Targets

**Earth’s Rotation**

1. I can read, watch, listen, and act out movement, to gain understanding.

2. I can persevere through challenging tasks.

3. I can record my thinking using words, illustrations, and labels.

**I can label the structures of a salmon.**
Core Practices - Assessment

3 – Assessment

- Student-engaged assessment practices.
- Setting purposeful learning through learning targets.
- Self-assessment through reflection, critique, rubrics, public exhibitions, and critical feedback.
- Staff engaged in ongoing data analysis to improve student learning.
- Portfolios and Student-led conferences.
- Growth mind-set.
Student-engaged Assessment
Core Practices – Culture & Character

4 – Culture and Character

• Building a culture of respect, responsibility, courage, and kindness.
• Commitment to quality work and citizenship.
• Fostering relational and performance character.
• Structures and traditions: Crew, community meetings, exhibitions, service learning.
• Engaging families in school life.
• Creating beautiful spaces for learning.
• Promoting adventure.
“We are crew, not passengers…”

Dear Crew,
Welcome back! We will continue our journey to understand colonial times through non-fiction text and our fiction read, Blood on the River. I wonder how you feel about the first chapter... the boy? the setting? the problems? Further, the locket is around your neck, hidden under my shirt. One night, was the author doing it here? Have a marvelous week!

Mary
5 – Leadership

- Clear school vision and 4 year strategic plan.
- Collaborative leadership model.
- School wide structures to support teacher learning and leadership.
- Aligning standards, curriculum, and assessment K-5.
- Data inquiry teams.
- Professional culture of continuous learning.
Sample Cost and Services

**Planning and Development** - $65,000-$80,000 (negotiable – possible to combine this year with YEAR 1)
- Orientation of board and school leader.
- Development of core school documents (handbooks, etc) and curriculum tools.
- On-site and Off-site Professional Development for all teachers.

**Implementation: Year 1** - $65,000-$80,000
- Development of School Leadership Team, Vision, and 4 year strategic plan.
- Design Coach for on-site planning and coaching.
- Development and implementation of project-based Learning Expeditions.
- Support for implementation of Morning Meeting, Community Meetings and related structures for creating school culture.

**Implementation: Year 2** - $65,000-$80,000
- Creation of portfolio and student-led conference structures.
- Design Coach for on-site planning and coaching.
- Additional support based on specific needs identified through data analysis and Implementation Review.

**Implementation - Year 3** - $65,000-$80,000
- Customized work plan based on specific needs identified through data analysis and Implementation Review.

**Implementation - Year 4** - $65,000- $80,000
- Customized work plan based on specific needs identified through data analysis and Implementation Review.
Role of Design Coach

Provided by Expeditionary Learning as part of the package.

On-site coaching which includes:

- Strategic planning and data analysis.
- Full staff training.
- Small team coaching sessions.
- Leadership coaching and support for the School Leadership Team.
- Curriculum planning with individual teachers.
- Presentations to various constituent groups.
- Ongoing assessment of Expeditionary Learning implementation.
Additional Resources

- Multi-day National Institutes and other off-site professional development opportunities.
- Access to a network of EL schools through EL Commons.
- Access to on-line resources and collaboration tool called Common Ground.
- Access to Center for Student Work.