

Project-Based Learning Policies, Procedures, and Practices

The purpose of this tool is to show how a state and district developed policies, procedures, and practices to initiate project-based learning approaches in schools.

Consider This Sample Scenario

The state encouraged school districts to incorporate project-based learning as a part of classroom instruction and as an indicator of school quality. Leaders developed procedural advice for districts to follow that address the following questions:

- Are students investigating questions in a meaningful way?
- How are projects featured in a real-world context?
- What standards are being used to ensure academic quality of projects?
- How are teachers incorporating student agency/voice in project-based learning assessments?

To provide districts with resources on project-based learning, state leaders established an optional summit where district staff can learn about different forms of project-based learning and are provided with resources to start developing their own project-based learning model.

District and school leaders determined how schools might address project-based learning. One district created a Presentation Week, where project-based learning assignments are presented to teachers and classmates, parents, business and/or community leaders, and other relevant groups. District leaders support teachers with criteria and/or indicators of quality. District staff provided professional development opportunities bimonthly for the first month of the academic calendar to teachers, during which they share different project-based learning exemplars.

To create a sense of immediacy for project-based learning, school building leaders established a staff expectation that the deadline for extended-performance project remains visible in the classroom at all times. School building leaders also created an expectation that at department meetings teachers must provide information on the progress of extended-performance projects.

Discussion Questions

- Is project-based learning used in your district? If yes, what types of project-based learning are being used?
- If your state were to incorporate or incorporates project-based learning, what opportunities and challenges would your district face in initiating or expanding this approach?
- How should project-based learning be assessed? What skills should be measured?
- Does your district have flexibility in the curriculum to incorporate project-based learning? If not, what policies can be implemented to change this?
- Will district professional development change to support teachers in using project-based learning? If so, how? What types of changes are needed?
- How will the district ensure that traditionally underserved student subgroups and students with disabilities receive support with project-based learning?
- What barriers will your district encounter when trying to implement project-based learning?

