



Calendar of Events:

- 1/1-1/3—Winter Break
- 1/18—Martin Luther King Day, **School in Session**
- 2/15—President's Day, **School in Session**
- 3/5—Family Gathering, School Dance
- 3/12-3/28—Spring Break, No School



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Project Based Learning Scott McCreery

Traditional education typically relies on teachers presenting information to students who passively receive it. Students are asked to repeat what they have learned or memorized through regular testing. Teachers then assign grades based on test performances, with grades serving as extrinsic rewards and punishments.

In contrast, Skyview School believes in a project-based approach to learning where students are actively engaged in their learning through a compelling, interactive, and dynamic curriculum. While Skyview School has been using project-based learning for the past fourteen years, it has recently gained a greater foothold in classrooms around the world as researchers have documented what teachers have long understood - students become more engaged in learning when they have a chance to dig into complex, challenging, and sometimes even messy problems that closely resemble real life.

Project-based learning goes beyond generating student interest. Brain research supports the use of well-designed projects that encourage active inquiry and higher-level thinking. Students' abilities to acquire new understanding are enhanced when they are meaningfully making connections through problem-solving activities.

What is project-based learning?

Project-based learning is an instructional model that involves students in investigations of compelling problems that culminate in authentic products, which we refer to as celebrations of learning. Projects make for stronger classroom learning opportunities and can vary widely in subject matter and scope, and can be delivered at a wide range of grade levels. Nonetheless, they tend to share defining features. Projects grow out of challenging questions that cannot be answered by traditional rote learning. Projects put students in an active role such as: problem solver, decision maker, investigator, group leader, and much more. Projects serve specific, significant educational goals; they are not a diversion or an add-on to the "real" curriculum.

How does project-based learning relate to inquiry?

Inquiry encompasses a broad range of activities that give reign to our natural curiosity about the world. Within the context of education, inquiry takes on a more specific meaning. Teachers who use inquiry as a strategy typically encourage students to raise questions, plan and carry out investigations, make observations, and reflect on what they have discovered. However, this is not a static definition. Even within a single classroom, inquiry activities may be taking place along a contin-

uum, from more structured and teacher-directed on one end to more open-ended and driven by student interest on the other.



What's more, the central activities of a project involve inquiry and the construction of new knowledge by the student. Students typically have a choice when it comes to designing their project, which allows them to pursue their interests and engage their curiosity. In the course of answering their own questions, students may investigate topics not identified by the teacher as learning goals.

How does project-based learning relate to the Multiple Intelligences?

Students help choose their own projects and create learning opportunities based upon their individual interests and strengths. Projects assist students in succeeding within the classroom and beyond, because they allow learners to apply the multiple intelligences in completing a project. Our society values individuals who can solve problems creatively, using multiple thinking strategies, so why shouldn't we encourage students to do the same? However, traditional teaching strategies tend to focus on verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligences alone. This can create frustration or boredom for people who are comfortable with or yearn for less traditional learning pathways, such as kinesthetic, visual, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, or naturalist.

Project based learning allows the teacher to incorporate numerous teaching and learning strategies into project planning and implementation. Assisting students in developing all of their intelligences will make learning a part of living, not just a preparation for it. The theory of multiple intelligences offers eight ways of teaching and learning styles. In this regard, armed with the knowledge and application of the multiple intelligences, teachers can provide enough variety in the activities they use so that the greatest learning potential of each student can be tapped.

Project Based Learning *continued...*

What are the challenges facing teachers?

Teachers who are using project-based learning overwhelmingly love the approach and see first-hand the positive benefits it has for students. This is not to say that there are not significant challenges teachers must address in order for the learning to be meaningful and engaging for the students. Teachers who use project-based learning must have the capacity to think on a big scale and take the time to “map” out how all of the multiple layers will be integrated seamlessly. Teachers need to also be comfortable taking on many different roles, such as a guide or facilitator, in order for the process to be authentic. They must do more coaching and modeling and less “telling”, allowing for students to take “wrong turns” en route to completing a project. Indeed, teachers may have to be willing to take risks to overcome initial challenges and may find they are learning alongside their students as projects unfold. This does not mean that traditional instructional strategies are never used, only that teachers need to be exceptionally versed with multiple teaching styles and approaches. Most teachers in pre-service are never provided this level of training in college and enter the profession using direct-instruction methods exclusively that rely on textbooks, lectures, and traditional assessments.

Specific challenges facing teachers include:

- Recognizing situations that make for good projects.
- Having the time and resources to “map” out a compelling project that is academically rigorous.
- Selecting and integrating a variety of instructional strategies.
- Structuring problems as learning opportunities with student choice.
- Collaborating with colleagues to develop interdisciplinary projects.
- Managing the learning process over a nine to eighteen week timeframe.
- Integrating the multiple intelligences where appropriate.
- Developing authentic assessments.

The founders of Skyview School fully understood the challenges teachers face with both the planning and implementation phases of project-based learning when they were writing the Charter. They realized in order for the teachers to create meaningful projects they would need the time to plan and prepare the activities. This is a main reason Skyview School has a four-day week, with two weeks off for each break. Without this essential planning and preparation time the curriculum would fall flat, resulting in reduced student engagement and academic outcomes. The four-day week and school calendar also provides vital rest time for the teachers, almost like a mini sabbatical, in which they can return refreshed and charged with new ideas and energy. Ultimately, for project-based learning to be successful on a scale the founders aspired, we need the teachers to be fully present and engaged with the students.

What are the benefits of the project-based learning model?

Project-based learning offers a wide range of benefits to both students and teachers. A growing body of academic research supports the use of project-based learning in schools to engage students, cut absenteeism, boost cooperative learning skills, and improve academic performance.

For students, benefits of project-based learning include:

- Increased attendance, growth in self-reliance, and improved attitudes toward learning.
- Academic gains equal to or better than those generated by other models, with students involved in projects taking greater responsibility for their own learning than during more traditional classroom activities.
- Opportunities to develop complex skills, such as higher-order thinking, problem solving, collaborating, and communicating.
- Access to a broader range of learning opportunities in the classroom, providing a strategy for engaging diverse learners.
- Overcomes the dichotomy between knowledge and thinking, helping students to both “know” and “do.”
- Encourages the development of habits of mind associated with lifelong learning, civic responsibility, and personal or career success.
- Integrates curriculum areas, thematic instruction, and community issues.
- Assesses performance on content and skills using criteria similar to those in the work world, thus encouraging accountability, goal setting, and improved performance.
- Creates positive communication and collaborative relationships among diverse groups of students.
- Meets the needs of learners with varying skill levels and learning styles.

For many students at Skyview School, the appeal of this learning style comes from the authenticity of the experience. Students take on the role and behavior of those working in a particular discipline. Whether they are making a documentary video about an environmental concern, performing a play to highlight the historical significance of their community, or designing habitats on local animals they have studied, students are engaged in real-world activities that have significance beyond the classroom.

- As we enter the second half of the school’s fourteenth year in operation, Skyview School has been among the leaders in the state proving that high academic outcomes are accomplished when project-based learning and the multiple intelligences are woven together to create a rich learning experience for the students. Through an active approach to teaching and learning students over the years have assumed greater responsibility for their education and their lives. In this way, in addition to developing

study habits that will serve them well for years to come, students are also developing important life skills as family and community members and as informed and active citizens.



What is Quality Physical Education Terri Masto, Teacher

At Skyview School, I am emphasizing what I call “Triple Play”, using the mind, body and inner self. I have developed a program that gives the child a knowledge base to acquire healthy habits such as making smart food choices, understanding appropriate portion size and how to create fun and balanced meals.

Emphasis is also placed on children becoming more physically active through fun daily fitness, including activities to be active and moving. Training will also include The President’s Challenge.

In keeping with the school’s philosophy, interpersonal skills, positive behavior and good character development through social recreation programs and activities are also emphasized.

Studies show that children who exercised regularly were “far better” at remembering than their peers who did not exercise at all. The results of the Dustman research in Utah were clear cut: “The aerobic exercisers showed an improvement in short-term memory, had faster reaction-times and were more creative than non-aerobic exercisers.” Increased



blood flow to the brain does help students think better and be smarter.

Here are some important things to consider: The activity should not be intimidating or embarrassing for any of the players. Many games favor and reward the strong, athletic players while humiliating the less-skilled or less fit players. Our program helps every player feel SUCCESSFUL. The games and activities are developmentally and grade-level appropriate and provide progressive skill development based on Arizona standards. The program provides lead-up games and non-traditional variations of traditional sporting activities. We will teach sports skills with an emphasis on fun and success for all.

Triple Play includes cognitive concepts and character building as well as health, wellness, nutrition, fitness, acceptance and respect for self and others, conflict resolution, sportsmanship integrity and honesty.

At Skyview, the focus will be on the whole experience—not just skill development. Movement will be relevant and rewarding for every student.

Mystery Festival: What is Science? Pam Robbins, Middle School Teacher

The chalk outline of a body lay surrounded by numerous artifacts of evidence within the perimeter of crime scene tape. What happened? What was going on? Look at those footprints! What is that? Is that blood?

This was what our middle school students walked into the first day of second quarter and our new investigation in the interdisciplinary study of mystery was off to an exciting start. The students gathered around for instructions and were placed into forensic partnerships. They proceeded to work through the processes as trained scientists to solve a crime, step by step, making detailed drawings, from the whole crime scene to their individual numbered area, and then each piece of evidence within their area. Then each team recreated the entire scene with detailed expertise onto a crime scene map. This map was used for the entire week’s study.

After they studied the crime scene, they conducted crime-lab tests on the evidence, analyzed the results, and solved the mystery! The forensic science activities were conducted in 10 learning-stations. The key content areas emphasized the importance between *evidence* and *inference*, as the “detectives”, having four suspects, made their inferences based on evidence at the end of each session. Some of the crime-lab procedures included thread tests, powder tests (ph levels), DNA comparisons, chromatography, and fingerprinting. Along with exciting, fun and careful experimentation, the students used their logical mathematical intelligence and many made a real-life connection to forensic science.

During humanities, we looked at how DNA is currently being used to over-turn convictions of innocent people in prisons. We also learned that DNA is used as an element of mystery writing in short stories, novels, and screenplays for TV. Many of the students were able to begin to make a correlation between science and how detectives work to solve crimes, as well as authors who take the science of crime and create art.

Partners then wrote their own short stories and enjoyed watching a *Monk* episode, both excellent tools for assessing and evaluating learning. One other correlation of learning was watching an episode of *CSI Miami*. The crime depicted in the episode was one of environmental impact rather than their usual story line. The students were able to apply their knowledge of environmental issues and health, made detective inferences based upon facts, and ended up solving the mystery with or even before the CSI team.



Glimpses of the Past Kathryn Miedema, Intermediate 3-4 Teacher

Glimpses of the Past was a successful play where students demonstrated a variety of their multiple intelligences. Throughout the creation of this production, students endured a lengthy process of research, creating a timeline, outlining a storyboard, and finally play writing. The highlight of this study was our performance.

The process of preparing for a performance entails multiple aspects; memorizing lines, costume design, set pieces, backdrop, props, rehearsals and acting. The intermediate 3/4 students worked diligently for weeks on end to master the art of performing. Although this is a lengthy process, each student glowed with personal pride after performing for their parents and fellow Skyview students.

Next semester, we will look at Prescott's current population and development. We will investigate the significance of sustaining local, regional, national, and world populations through agriculture. We will utilize local farming resources to guide us in our study of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of agriculture.



Lots of Study in the Intermediate 5-6! Michelle Jennings, Dance Teacher

Students have adjusted very well to the changes in the Intermediate 5/6 classroom. With new teachers, a new schedule, and new curriculum, all students seem to have adapted quite nicely.

We have been starting each day with a creative writing assignment. The students are given a prompt to work with and silently write for about 20 minutes each morning. An example is, "Imagine that every time someone told a lie, they turned purple. Do you think this is a good idea? What do you think the world might be like if this really happened?" After they write, a few students share what they have written to the class. They have come up with the most entertaining and wonderful ideas and I look forward to sharing them with you. We will be continuing this process next quarter and they will soon be choosing their favorite stories to edit and publish in a book of their own.

We started the quarter off with a novel by Laurie Anderson, called *Fever 1793*, which is about the yellow fever epidemic that took place in Philadelphia during 1793. The students are currently working on articles to publish in a 1793 newspaper they will be creating with their crews. They have also been studying the Revolutionary War and are in the midst of doing research on a particular person during that era. They will be creating a Chautauqua presentation (an educational method of

bringing historical characters to life), which takes the place of a traditional book report or research paper. The students will embody the historical figure and come to school dressed like that person. They will do a presentation and give the audience a real-life example of what that person wore, what they accomplished in their lives, as well as any other information they discovered.

We have also been studying America's National Parks. Each child has chosen a national park to investigate further. They are in the process of researching information and will be making booklets, brochures, and posters to present their chosen National Park to you. All of these projects will be finished toward the end of the third quarter, so keep a look out for our Celebration of Learning.

During all of this, the students have been very busy helping Ms. Nita with the mosaic project out by the play structure. They created most of the designs and have been mixing cement, smashing tiles, and creating masterpieces. Please check out their work next time you are on the playground.

Thank you all so much for welcoming me into your child's school life. It has been such a wonderful pleasure to work with each and every one of your children!

It's a Wonderful Web! Mary Layman & David McNelly, Primary Teachers



This quarter, the Primary students have completed the first half of the "It's a Wonderful Web" investigation, answering the guiding questions "Are animals like us?" and "Are we really stuck in a web?"

Our studies have focused on life cycles, habitats, and the functions of structures of living things. The class has studied and drawn cicadas, spiders, snails, bats, leaves, apples, pumpkins, and more. Students have learned how to draw carefully and realistically. They can distinguish between realistic and non-realistic things and between fiction and non-fiction. They have studied Arizona animals and written beautiful interactive books about them. We invite you to come and learn from the animals in their habitats at our celebration of learning on Thursday, January 7 from 5:00-6:30 p.m.

“I’m in the Play Center!” Emeline Phipps, Kindergarten Teacher

Small voices shout as they disperse to centers throughout the classroom. What is play and why is it so important? When children play they are developing their executive function, which is the cognitive ability to regulate behavior and adapt to new situations. Through imaginative play, both alone and with others, children learn to plan by making goals and following them through, creating and following rules, taking on roles, problem solving, and negotiating.

Play in humans and animals stems from a need to work though their place in the world. Wild cats, monkeys, and other animals raised in a familial structure instinctively roughhouse to develop their abilities to protect themselves in the wild. Similarly, children role-play “family” or “school” to develop a sense of self and place.

It is important that this playtime is relatively stimulus-free. Howard Chudacoff, a cultural historian at Brown University, says “when I would think of play in the 19th century, I would think of *activity* rather than an *object*.” However, during the second half of the 20th century, when “TV and toys begin to supply children with ever more specific scripts and props for their stories the size of children’s imaginative space begins to shrink.” Music and art lessons, sports, and summer camps can also take up children’s imaginative playtime, as parents are increasingly concerned that their children are not stimulated or entertained enough.

We at Skyview believe in the importance of play. The play center in a Skyview Kindergarten classroom is not the only opportunity the children have to play and learn self-regulation. Through the acting of stories, the children are learning the roles of the characters, and how that influences their actions and reactions in different scenarios. They may

choose to have the character come out of the context of the story and have to deal with new situations. In the building center, children create farms and cities. After watching a play performed by the 3rd and 4th grade classes involving multiple set changes, the children returned to the Kindergarten classroom, and those in the building center built a set with blocks and acted out their own play.

The first half of the year in kindergarten is focused on imaginative play, exploration, and interpersonal communication. As the students build a solid foundation with their community of learners and in the classroom, we continue to learn through play while also directing time to more focused activities in reading and writing.

As we become more academically focused in school, please remember the value of free time for your children at home. Turn the TV off this winter break and play with your children. Let them play by themselves, and allow them to create something to do. Remember, the

concept of “boredom” is an adult construct: let them be “bored”, and you will see their creative abilities continue to emerge.

As reporter Alix Spiegel pointed out in “Old-Fashioned Play Builds Serious Skills”, “it seems that in the rush to give children every advantage — to protect them, to stimulate them, to enrich them — our culture has unwittingly compromised one of the activities that helped children most. All that wasted time was not such a waste after all.”



What I’m Grateful For Dianne Jacobson, Operations Manager

It has been a unique finish to a great quarter here at Skyview School. At first glance, one might think that the wind and snow storm that visited Prescott in early December brought chaos and destruction. On the contrary, for me it brought a few reminders of what is really important.

One, we are at the mercy of nature, no matter how hard we try to be the Big Man/Woman on Campus: Mother Earth is the boss!

Two, we are a community here at Skyview School. The support from the parents and students who came in on Tuesday and Friday mornings, grabbed brooms and mops, hauled furniture and office supplies, made what seemed a monstrous task manageable. We could not have accomplished so much without you!

Lastly, I am constantly reminded of the kindness and goodness that live at the heart of all those I know. From parents and students, from staff and board members, from family and friends, even from community members outside of our small circle, everyone’s response has been overflowing with support and concern.

This holiday season, I am filled with gratitude! Blessings and have a safe, warm, and happy holiday!





Skyview School

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Mission Statement

Skyview School's mission is to enrich the lives of students and ensure that future generations are well prepared to live their lives with meaning, dignity, and the ability to work together for a better world. Respect and responsibility toward self, others, and the natural environment are our guiding principles. We believe that children possess a blend of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983) and, drawing on "the best practices in education" (Daniels, 2000), we celebrate each child's uniqueness and tailor education to develop the fullest potential of each learner. Encouraging a sense of competence and self-motivation, classroom life is interwoven with community life through practical experiences.

We are on the Web!
www.skyviewschool.org

The Calendar for the Next Two Quarters

Please remember, we have to make up two days in our calendar for the days lost in December. These days are Martin Luther King Day, January 18th and President's Day, February 15th.

January 1 - 3 - Winter Break, No School

January 15 - No Staff Report Day - MLK Day observed

January 18 -

SCHOOL IN SESSION, MAKE-UP FOR DECEMBER 9TH

January 19 - Board Meeting, 3:20 pm

February 12- No Staff Report Day- Presidents' Day Observed

February 15-

SCHOOL IN SESSION, MAKE-UP FOR DECEMBER 10TH

February 16- Board Meeting, 3:20 pm

March 5 - Family Gathering, School Dance

March 9 - Board Meeting, 3:20 pm

March 12-28 - Spring Break, No School

April 2 - No Staff Report Day, Intercultural Day

April 12-15, 20 - AIMS Testing

April 20 - Board Meeting, 3:20 pm

May 18 - Board Meeting, 3:20 pm

May 26- 27, Parent/Teacher Conferences

May 28 - No Report Day

May 31 - Memorial Day, No School

June 1-2 - Parent/Teacher Conferences

June 3 - LAST DAY OF SCHOOL, End of the Year Celebration, & 8th Grade Graduation Ceremony