SMMUSD Definitions for
PBL-Related Instructional Approaches and Models

PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES

EARLY LEARNING AS A FOUNDATION

SMMUSD believes the strength and success of a student lie upon the foundation of early learning experiences. At its core is an assumption that relationships are central, and play is one of the primary contexts for learning. Intentional teaching enhances children's learning experiences and family and community partnerships create meaningful connections.

As part of the early learning foundation, Reggio Emilia Inspired Environments serve to foster curiosity, critical thinking and collaboration. From the layout to the intentional selection of materials, students are seen as competent, responsible and contributing members of the learning environment. Students are owners of their own learning through exploration and discovery utilizing a self-guided, yet facilitated, curriculum.

Examples:

PK and TK classrooms
Creative curriculum and Provocations/Inquiry learning experiences
Seaside PK and Bridges TK programs at Edison, Grant and Cabrillo

WHOLE CHILD APPROACH

A Whole Child approach emphasizes each child's potential as a whole person, rather than focusing solely on specific areas of academic achievement, talent, or ability. This model also addresses the social and emotional needs of individuals through programs that teach skills related to problem solving, risk-taking, interpersonal relations and self-esteem.

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PROJECT BASED LEARNING (PBL) is an authentic learning experience achieved through deep engagement with high interest, relevant, real-world, curriculum-related projects over an extended period of time. Students then demonstrate their knowledge and skills through a public product or presentation. It is often interdisciplinary and/or interest-based with differentiation existing in instruction, demonstration, and content.

PBL can be…

- Individual or Collaborative
- Driven by interests, inquiry, and/or individuals' strengths and needs

INTEREST BASED LEARNING

Interest based learning is an instructional approach where students' interests drive curriculum decision-making. Instruction can be with individual learners and small groups.

Examples:

Genius Hour
20% time
Mini projects
Other passion based strategies facilitating student voice and choice

INQUIRY BASED LEARNING

Inquiry-based learning is a teaching and learning approach which prioritizes questions, ideas, analysis, and creative problem solving to drive instruction and / or reach a conclusion. Inquiry can be student or teacher generated.

Examples:

Case studies
Group projects
Research projects
Field work / scientific research

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

Individualized learning is an instructional approach to curriculum decision-making, technology, and instructional pace are based on students' needs.

Examples:

Rich, self-paced curriculum
Around-the-clock, anywhere, anytime access
Technology that enriches the learning experience
Learning environments that adapt to students' needs
Frequent skill checks that guide programs

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Parent Partner
One-on-one teacher and student interactions

BLENDED LEARNING

Blended Learning is a formal education approach in which a student learns at least in part through digital and online media with some element of student choice and control over time, place, path and/or pace. Blended Learning includes exploration into flexible seating and purposeful use of data driven digital tools that allow students and teachers to personalize learning.

Examples:

Rigorous personalized curriculum
Technology that increases student engagement and enhances the learning experience
Learning environments that adapt to student needs
Small group teacher and student interactions

SPECIALIZED / CAREER LEARNING

Specialized / Career Learning are pathways that combine academic and career-oriented instruction (could be considered "work-based learning").

Examples:

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Programs
STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) Programs
STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medical) Programs
Career Technical Education pathways
Leaving to Learn opportunities (field experiences)
Internships
Apprenticeships
Mentorship
College / Career Exploration (Field trips, guest speakers)