A TEACHER PLANNING GUIDE FOR Project-Based Learning

Developed by: Sarah Pack, NBCT

Below is a small sample from a teacher's planning guide for a genius hour project that is based on the Buck Institute's Gold Standard **Project Design Elements** and **Teaching Practices**. If you want to access the complete planning guide, click **here**.

Although developed for a genius hour project, the planning guide is a resource for planning any project/problem-based activities in your classroom. If you are new to project/problem-based learning and this planning guide starts to feel overwhelming, start by choosing one category to focus on improving each year; you do not have to be perfect with each phase of the project. Give yourself and your students permission to make and learn from mistakes—you may find the wisdom you and your students produce from those mistakes become your favorite type of learning opportunity!

Below is a table that represents only one of many phases in the planning guide. At each phase, you decide which "I want" statements best reflect your preferences, choosing as many statements that you wish. Then, use the bullet points below those statements to help you plan how you'll carry out that "I want" statement.

PROVIDING STUDENT VOICE AND CHOICE			
I want the students to be who designs every element of their project.	I want to put some limited restrictions on the student projects, such as the format, length, and/or the citation requirements, etc.	I want to provide students with a menu of pre-planned projects to choose from.	I want to provide students with the context and then allow students to choose their project for the context.

• Consider this: The frontal lobe, which is responsible for executive functions like planning, is not fully developed until a person's mid-20s.
• Consider providing students with a planning template. Click here and here for examples or give them one from the far-right column.
	• How do the restrictions you want connect to the standards addressed by this project?
	• Can students propose exceptions to these restrictions for your approval?
	• Consider adding authenticity and rigor by restricting real or hypothetical budgets/ supplies.
	• Consider using competitions or competition restrictions like these:
	  ◦ National History Day
	  ◦ Invent Washington
	  ◦ Poetry Out Loud
	  ◦ MESA Day
		• There are 5 ways to modify a task for a menu (see below). Click here and go to pages 6 and 7 for examples of each way.
		  ◦ Content
		  ◦ Context
		  ◦ Process
		  ◦ Product
		  ◦ Resources
		• Consider using one of the formats presented here and here.
		• Consider providing these project ideas:
		  ◦ Pinterest list
		  ◦ Edutopia list
		  ◦ ISTE list
		  ◦ Minds in Bloom list
			• Consider using one of these graphic organizers to help plan and/or present the context you want students to work with:
			  ◦ GRASPS
			  ◦ WHERE TO
			  ◦ RAFT (leaving the F blank)
			  ◦ SOAPSTone
			• Consider adding more rigor by providing a real-world problem/context to address such as:
			  ◦ UN's list of Global Issues
			  ◦ UN's Sustainable Development Goals
			  ◦ Global Children's Issues. Also see this site for kids.

STUDENT CONTRACTS FOR Individual & Group Projects

Student contracts for individual and small group projects and tasks can be an important tool for developing executive functions. These skills include organizing complex projects into small and more manageable tasks, time management, self-regulation, and collaboration.

Section One: Contact Information

SECTION 1: CONTACT INFORMATION

You must provide as much contact information as possible for your group members.

Name:	
Home Phone:	
Preferred E-Mail:	
Cell Phone:	

Name:	
Home Phone:	
Preferred E-Mail:	
Cell Phone:	

Name:	
Home Phone:	
Preferred E-Mail:	
Cell Phone:	

The first section students encounter in a group or individual behavior contract for projects is the contact information section.

This gives the document a sense of authority to begin with. Students should only be required to share information they feel comfortable sharing. For group projects, this section becomes a valuable resource for students right before the deadline!

Section Two: Timeline and Deadlines

The second section is usually a calendar students fill in. At times the deadlines are already filled in for the student, but it can be left blank for the students to determine their own deadlines, too. Students plan their daily activities so they know what they are supposed to do throughout the project.

SECTION 2: TIMELINE AND DEADLINES

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Week 1 10/22-10/26						
Week 2 10/29-11/2						
Week 3 11/5-11/9						
Week 4 11/12-11/16						
Regional Contest!						

Section Three: Responsibilities

SECTION 3: GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES

Consider assigning each group member a responsibility below. It is suggested that you have timekeeper/task manager who make sure that everyone is focused on the task and completing the task on time, a reporter who will speak on the behalf of the group when asked, and a recorder who will record group discussions and type documents on behalf of the group.

Name of Group Member	Responsibilities

For group projects, students can negotiate their roles among themselves, or you can have this section pre-written.

With individual projects, a student only fills this section out if s/he has a project with choices to make and/or justify.

Section Four: Agreements and Norms

This section in the individual behavior contracts tend to have less scenarios to plan and prepare for than the group contracts. For the individual contracts, you may include questions such as:

- When you are absent, how will you get the information about assignments?
- What responsibilities will you have when you are gone? Are there any special exceptions?
- What will you do if you become confused, frustrated, or ready to give up?
- What does responsible participation look like with this project?
- How will you know if you're not participating?
- What consequences will you face if you are not participating?
- When will these consequences take effect?
- How will these consequences be carried out?

SECTION 4: AGREEMENTS

Complete the following sections in complete sentences. Try to restate the question in your response so your agreements are as clear and easily understood as possible.

Attendance and Absences	
How will you get information about the assignments when you are gone?	
What responsibilities will you have when you are gone? Are there any exceptions to these responsibilities?	
Support	
What will you do if you become confused, frustrated, or ready to give up?	
Participation	
What does responsible participation look like?	
How will you know when you are not participating?	
Non-Participation	
What consequences will you face if you are not participating?	
When will these consequences take effect?	
How will these consequences be carried out?	

There are four parts to agreements section: attendance, support, participation, and non-participation. Above: Individual contract example of this section. Below: An example in a group contract.

This section in the group contracts will usually include additional questions to help the groups be proactive about dealing with any conflict which may arise. Below are examples of additional questions a group contract might include:

- What does it mean to be a helpful or contributing group member?
- How will you know if someone is not contributing fairly to the project?
- What will you do to help group members who are absent?
- How will the group support any one who starts struggling with their work?
- How will the group make sure that everyone is recognized for his/her contributions?
- What are the acceptable uses of technology during group work time?
- What are acceptable ways for group members to express disagreement?
- How should the group confront a non-participating group member?

SECTION 4: GROUP NORMS

Use the question prompts below to make decisions about what expectations you have for one another during your collaboration. Try to restate the question in your response so your agreements are as clear and easily understood as possible. As teachers, feel free to add, change, or eliminate any of the questions below:

Definitions	
What does it mean to have a productive meeting? What would this look like/sound like/feel like?	
How will you know when the meeting is not being productive?	
What does it mean to be a contributing group member? What would this look like/sound like/feel like?	
How will you know when a team member is not contributing adequately?	
What does it mean to arrive prepared for a team meeting? What would this look like/sound like/feel like?	
Attendance and Absences	
How will an absent team members get information and assignments from the other team members?	
What responsibilities do absent team members have while they are gone? Are there any exceptions to these responsibilities?	
Support	
How should the group support one another when someone becomes confused, frustrated, or feels like giving up?	
How will the team ensure that accomplishments are recognized and celebrated?	
Agreements and Commitments	
How will agendas be determined for team meetings?	
What are acceptable uses of technology during team meetings?	
What expectations of privacy should team members expect for things discussed during team meetings?	
What are acceptable ways of expressing disagreement?	
How will you communicate what is happening in your classroom or with shared students?	
Non-Participation	
How will the group confront non-participating group members respectfully?	
What consequences will non-participating group members face?	
When will these consequences take effect?	
How will these consequences be carried out?	

Section Five: Signatures

You will likely encounter issues with the terms of the agreement such as: vague agreements around personal and/or group accountability, unclear procedure for when, who, and how conflicts will be managed, unrealistic estimates of time needed to complete certain tasks, etc. Always ask students sign their contract after you, as a teacher, are satisfied with the terms of the agreement.

Do not let perfection be a barrier to progress, though. It is recommended that you encourage students to revise the terms of the contract when they are vague and may not be sufficient to resolve future issues, but do not ask students to do more than one or two drafts before you agree to sign. Whatever issues may be left unresolved in the contract at that time can be addressed when problems arise and provide great learning opportunities around revising our writing for precision and clarity of language.

It is strongly recommended that guardians sign these contracts when used for individual project work—especially if the student has a high degree of independence, or if this project is an alternative to the activities of the rest of the class. In these circumstances, it is recommended that you include a clause above the signature line that if the terms of the contract are breeched, the student returns to class and continues regular classroom activities.

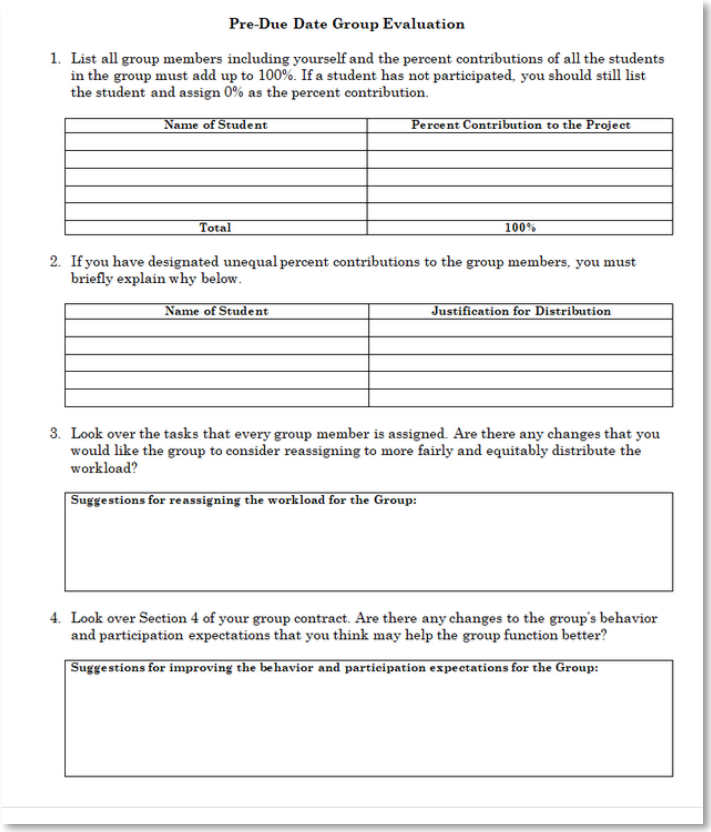
These signatures play an important role in successful implementation of these contracts. Not only do the signatures give the contract a sense of authority and consensus, it can also encourage students to have a stronger sense of obligation to carry out the terms of these contracts.

Sticking to the Agreements

Insufficient terms of the initial contract can be addressed in pre-due date evaluations. These evaluations can not only provide teachers with a progress report, it can be an important social and emotional assessment that can lead to important interventions and mini-lessons.

In group contracts, each student fills out the form on the right anonymously and submits it to the teacher. The teacher uses these forms to assess whether or not a group needs additional supports or interventions to function more collaboratively.

For individual contracts, instead of listing group members and assigning a percentage of their contributions, ask for a list of tasks the student needs to complete (i.e., a to-do list for completing the project) and assign a percentage of completion.



Pre-Due Date Group Evaluation

1. List all group members including yourself and the percent contributions of all the students in the group must add up to 100%. If a student has not participated, you should still list the student and assign 0% as the percent contribution.

Name of Student	Percent Contribution to the Project
Total	100%

2. If you have designated unequal percent contributions to the group members, you must briefly explain why below.

Name of Student	Justification for Distribution

3. Look over the tasks that every group member is assigned. Are there any changes that you would like the group to consider reassigning to more fairly and equitably distribute the workload?

Suggestions for reassigning the workload for the Group:

4. Look over Section 4 of your group contract. Are there any changes to the group's behavior and participation expectations that you think may help the group function better?

Suggestions for improving the behavior and participation expectations for the Group:

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References and Resources

This packet is a synthesis of multiple resources found or created by Sarah Pack, Highly Capable Teacher on Special Assignment for Pasco School District. The contents of this document are either direct references of the materials listed under "Works Cited or Consulted" and/or are inspired by the contents therein.

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Resources for PAGE ONE

WORKS CITED OR CONSULTED:

- Project Design Elements from Buck Institute for Education: https://www.pblworks.org/blog/gold-standard-pbl-essential-project-design-elements
- Project Based Teaching Practices from Buck Institute for Education: https://www.pblworks.org/blog/gold-standard-pbl-project-based-teaching-practices
- Genius Hour Planning Guide—developed by Sarah Pack based on her experience with Buck Institute for
- Education's Essential Project Design Elements: https://www.pblworks.org/blog/gold-standard-pbl-essential-project-design-elements

Resources for PAGES TWO-FOUR

WORKS CITED OR CONSULTED:

- Group Contracts—The group contract format was created by Sarah Pack based on materials provided by Ann Wright-Mockler, Science and Engineering Education Consultant for Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, during the 2012-2013 school year.

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