



Credit Options: Projects

This document provides information about using projects (e.g., locally designed assessments) as a part of awarding credits. For more information about awarding credit, please see [Division 22, OAR 581-022-2025](#) and Oregon Department of Education's [Credit Options webpage](#).

Projects

Projects have three primary strengths:

- **Student Voice and Choice:** Students select a problem, question, or topic that has meaning to them, and they play an active role in determining the design, creation, and presentation of the project.
- **Committed Engagement:** Students maintain a deep level of engagement into their topic through recording and reflecting upon their processes, questions, and explorations.
- **Application:** The project incorporates authentic, real-world concerns in the students' lives or communities and draws upon student funds of knowledge and skills.

What is Project-Based Learning?

Project based learning is an instructional method that asks students to undertake sustained investigations as they respond to an authentic problem or question.

What Might a Project Look Like?

A project is an attempt to solve a problem or answer a question that is meaningful to students. Projects can be created by students of all ages. Taking into consideration current challenges and limitations facing students and their communities due to the extended school closure, some examples of projects follow.

- Researching the impact of quarantine on environmental issues related to climate, pollution, resource management, wildlife habitat, etc. and propose a plan for maintaining beneficial practices post-quarantine
- Creating designs for art in shared public spaces such as murals and sculptures
- Developing an online or phone-based community reading program for readers and listeners of all ages
- Exploring historical movements from the past and connecting them to current challenges
- Designing a community website or guide, with contributions from a wide variety of citizens
- Investigating how the arts can improve and enrich our lives
- Creating a stress reduction guide with specific examples for various age groups

Projects should be scored by rubrics that clarify for students the criteria that the evidence will need to meet. At their best, projects will offer students an opportunity to become more reflective and self-directed. Through the use of rubrics and peer and educator feedback, students have a much better idea of how to improve and students can continue to extend their learning when they have an opportunity to revise the evidence they submitted.

Student Choice and Flexibility

Key to this process is the inclusion of student choice, student voice, and flexibility; including open-ended projects as a part of earning course credit *is* student-centered learning. At its best student-centered learning will provide every student the chance to identify their unique strengths and challenges, and cultivate their cognitive and emotional growth, reaching their own highest outcomes.

The options for extended projects allow for deeper, authentic learning while taking into account the learner's skills and interests, thereby fostering a sense of ownership over their learning experience. When students have the opportunity to shape and guide their own learning, more meaningful connections are made to the content and students are able to reach their own highest outcomes.

When discussing options for student creativity or flexibility with students, educators should help the student make the connection between different creative options and the criteria so students know what the educator will be looking for when the collection is scored as a whole. Although

group work may be incorporated, the parts of the project the student uses to demonstrate proficiency should represent what the student independently knows and can do.

Rubric Development and Scoring

To develop a strong project, educators should either start with the rubric or write the rubric early in the process of development. A high quality rubric assists educators in identifying the:

- purpose of the project, and
- knowledge and skills students will demonstrate at each level of performance/achievement (criteria).

The [SCALE Checklist For Quality Rubric Design](#) is a helpful resource for evaluating and creating high quality rubrics.

Whenever possible, the student's teacher of record should score the project.

Student Reflection

Including student reflection as a part of a project will deepen the value of the project and cultivate ownership and metacognition. Guiding questions, such as those listed below, may help students reflect on their experience building the collection; students could answer the questions in narrative reflection pieces or present a reflection in another format.

- Which parts of your project give you the most pride? Why?
- As you completed your project, what kinds of challenges did you face? What did you learn from those challenges?
- What new skills did you develop? In what ways might you continue to use them?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Public Presentation

Including a public presentation (which could be in-person or virtual) as a part of a project will add significance to the learning through increasing student ownership and visibility. Consider the following components when planning a student presentation.

- Before the presentation, the student helps create the guest list, which might include students from other grade levels, parents, community members, etc.
- During the presentation, the student presents a summary of the process steps, including attempts at overcoming obstacles and answers questions posed by the audience.

Example of the Process of Building a Project: *Middle School Social Studies*

Following is an example of how a middle school social studies teacher could support project-based learning with a student.

Nature of the Project: Students investigate and create a family historical timeline around events that have changed society. Students reflect upon:

- The historical events that have taken place during their relatives' lifetimes
- Broader connections of these events to other places
- Implications of these events to their families, communities, countries and world

Project Elements

- What questions do students have about these historical events?
- How can students find answers to these questions? Interviews? Questionnaires? Research? How might their families' experiences of the events differ from textbook accounts?
- How can students create a visual and/or auditory representation of the family historical timeline?
- How can students share artifacts from this investigation?

Connecting the Project to Standards

- The student, in consultation with the teacher, selects the standards this project will explore and develop

- The teacher will review the rubric/scoring guide with the student to ensure the student understands the evidence that must be present in order to achieve at a specific level

Sample standards below are from the Oregon Department of Education [Content Standards for 7th Grade](#)

- 7.5 Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies and promoting the common good. (Civics)
- 7.25 Identify issues related to historical events to recognize power, authority, religion, and governance as it relates to systemic oppression and its impact on indigenous peoples and ethnic and religious groups, and other traditionally marginalized groups in the modern era (bias, injustice, anti-Semitism, discrimination, stereotypes) including individuals who are American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, or Middle Eastern descent and traditionally marginalized groups (women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, religious groups, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender). (History)
- 7.15 Explain how the physical and human characteristics of places and regions connect to human identities and cultures.
- 7.16 Explain how changes in transportation and communication technology affects the spatial connections among human settlements and the diffusion of ideas and cultural practices.
- 7.19 Determine and explain the interdependence of people around the world during significant eras or events.

Note: This project can easily incorporate standards from other content areas such as ELA, art, science, math, etc.

Resources

For additional resources, please visit the [ODE Credit Options web page](#).