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Project-Based Learning in Distance Learning High School Courses

Alison Davis

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Project-Based Learning in Distance-Learning High School Courses

Alison B. Davis

PIM 74

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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Advisor: Karen Blanchard
ABSTRACT

Project-based learning (PBL) is a teaching methodology that focuses on student-led inquiry that answers a larger question or project completion. Curricula are scaffolded in such a way that a general theory or practice is introduced by the instructor, who demonstrates the necessary skills and presents relevant information for students to experience the topic first hand in a professional context. Students formulate their own questions related to the topic, or design a project that explores the topic in a manner of their choosing. Students then complete their project or solve the larger problem with support, guidance, and feedback from the instructor. PBL often incorporates peer collaboration, and assessment usually involves peer review and presentation of the final project or artifact to a larger community audience.

To examine how PBL courses would be most effective in a distance-learning environment, like the one which Oak Meadow School uses for its accredited high school program, I used phenomenology to explore students' learning preferences, focusing on a central question: How do Oak Meadow high school students view PBL?

The method of inquiry employed a combination of an anonymous survey and email interviews. Of the 40 students invited to take the survey, twelve responded. These survey responses were then combined with Kolb's learning cycle, in order to determine how best to proceed in designing PBL courses for Oak Meadow's distance-learning high school, in all subject areas. While there are challenges in executing PBL in an asynchronous global setting, OM students are amenable to peer collaboration, answering larger questions or solving real-world problems, and believe that meaningful education involves learning new skills and exploring new perspectives and ideas that can apply to future experiences.
Acknowledgements

I dedicate this capstone to the mentors who have guided me through the last few years: To Karen Blanchard, a constant source of reassurance; to my parents, whom I cannot thank enough; to Josh Steele and Chris John of Vintage Steele, without whom my life would not be the same, and who gave my need for concrete problem-solving and thirst for knowledge a never-ending outlet; to JMR, who pushed me to do great things.
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Student name: ______ Alison B. Davis ______

Date: _____________ April 16, 2017 _____________
Terminology

OM
Oak Meadow

PBL
Project-based learning

PrBL
Problem-based learning

ASP
Advanced Study Project- student-designed course, required for matriculation from OM

Micro School
Small, independent, multi-grade level learning environment

B-Corporation
A for-profit company certified to meet rigorous social and environmental standards

Experiential Learning
Learning through doing, specifically learning through reflection on what one is doing.

Kolb's Learning Cycle
Learning that occurs as a continuous cycle of the following four steps: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, Active Experimenting.
Introduction

Since January 2016, I have been working at Oak Meadow (OM), a small, progressive, Waldorf-inspired distance-learning school and complete K-12 curriculum for independent homeschoolers. We have students and independent users in every US state, and many countries around the world. Initially, I was hired as a Community Relations Specialist, although technically I was the whole community relations department, and was by no means a specialist. Ours is a very small organization, with only 15 full-time employees and roughly 25 teachers in our K-12 distance-learning school. During monthly faculty and staff meetings, all employees, with the exception of our registrar and curriculum editor, who work remotely from Schenectady and California, respectively, fit in our conference room around only six tables.

My job is mainly administrative: answering the phone, filing school records, printing, mailing, collating, organizing, keeping the office together, and supporting my colleagues as needed, from creating curriculum sample binders with the Design Team, to greeting out-of-country guests and booking their hotel rooms. However, as I have proven myself increasingly competent, I have been pulled in on larger projects, and given more autonomy over my time, resources, projects, and processes. For example, I have been tasked with filing our company as a B-corporation, turning our micro high school into a non-profit school, and attending dinner with visiting CEOs and potential investors.

One current project I have been asked to help with is Oak Meadow's pilot micro high school program, the Brattleboro School Without Walls. In September 2016, Oak Meadow started an alternative, independent learning center for local high school students. BSW², as we call it, meets three days a week from 9-3, with an hour lunch break. The
mornings are used as class or workshop time, and the afternoons are for individual
tutorial or homework help. Unlike a traditional small school, each of the eight students is
working on their own classwork, using the same set-up as all of Oak Meadow's distance-
learning high school courses: Students sign up for three or four academic classes per year
(English, math, social studies/history, and science options. We also offer art and language
courses). Most courses span the academic year (10 months) although we do have some
single-semester course options, particularly in the humanities.

During the morning sessions of BSW², students often participate in a workshop
on various topics from environmental science to history to logic. There are several
regular guest teachers, and sometimes a parent of one of the students, or a community
member, will present on their work. Students then break off and work on their individual
class work, often in small groups, as some students are taking the same course. BSW²'s
director, Jessica Turner, and her two assistant teachers float from group to group, student
to student, teaching and guiding learning throughout the morning. The afternoons are
used as group or individual work time, with the teachers available to help one-on-one.

None of the students are required to come to any class or tutorial time, but most
attend the entirety of each of the three days weekly. There are a few students whose
personal schedules conflict with school time, and those students come either for only the
morning sessions, or once a week for the whole day. I have had the pleasure of sitting in
for a few of the workshops, classes, and student presentations, and I am amazed at the
education the students are engaging in, for that is really what it is; they are engaging in
learning, as opposed to receiving education. Students often work together on homework,
projects, engage in discussion with each other and their teacher, and invite all the Oak
Meadow staff to their presentations and debates, an option not available to distance learning students.

A few weeks ago, I was asked by a ninth grade BSW\(^2\) student if I would teach him grammar, since his previous elementary school did not cover it. After the first session, the other seven students wanted to join us, and Foundations in Grammar has become a weekly installment in the BSW\(^2\) schedule, with great success; not only are they engaged with clauses and commas and colons in class, but I had students email me at the weekend to ask, "Can I start a sentence with 'because'?" These students are truly *living their learning*, an Oak Meadow motto, which, along with Learn Organically, embody what we are attempting to do with distance and home education. I have been so impressed with their reaction to the course that I will be submitting the course to Oak Meadow's curriculum development team for possible publication for our school.

Differing, however, from BSW\(^2\)'s collaborative set up, Oak Meadow's high school courses are primarily designed to be completed individually; as students are mostly working at home by themselves on asynchronous schedules, there is little to no opportunity for collaboration with their OM peers, and although many assignments entail real-world activities (as opposed to only writing papers and taking tests), they are more tangential, than central, to the curriculum. Some of the assignments may require students to work with others, be it friends, family, or community members, but never with other Oak Meadow students. With the opening of BSW\(^2\), Oak Meadow has finally had the opportunity for students to work together on meaningful, educational projects. It has also provided both peer-to-peer and whole-class discussions, whether student-, teacher- or guest lecturer-led, promoting critical thinking and expanded perspectives. We have seen
the growth of BSW\textsuperscript{2}'s eight students over the course of the 2016-17 school year, and would like to replicate this culture in our distance program as well.

Oak Meadow's high school director, Dr. Fortescue, is working to redesign its courses toward a more experiential model, moving away from the traditional \textit{read, reflect, and write} model of our current curricula in all subjects. Currently, our classes follow the following basic structure: 36 lessons, one lesson per week, with reading assignments, critical thinking questions, content-related comprehension questions, and a choice of assignments to complete, before moving on to the next weekly lesson. Math and science courses use the traditional methodology of a course syllabus, textbook reading sections, questions to assess understanding, review questions, and short bi-weekly tests. English and social studies courses generally follow a similar pattern: a reading component, reading comprehension questions, short and long essay questions, and a choice of assignments, some of which are projects, others are larger papers. In some of the English courses, composition, vocabulary, and grammar lessons are interspersed throughout the year.

In rewriting the high school courses, Dr. Fortescue would like to incorporate Project-based learning (PBL) curriculum design, letting go of the formulaic weekly lessons with set assignments and smaller, relatively meaningless activities. He would like the teachers to take charge of each course, bringing fluidity and inquiry into the learning process, letting students be actively engaged in their learning and questioning, rather than simply receiving assignments, turning in work, and waiting for grades from their OM teachers. However, no one on staff has experience with PBL, and teaching at a distance presents its own set of challenges for implementing the PBL model.
As a graduate student studying education, and the next-to-youngest member of our staff, Dr. Fortescue asked me to be part of the redesign team. My concern is that the projects are meaningful, educational and interesting to the students, encouraging them to be fully engaged and active participants in the process. I want to give students freedom to explore the areas that interest them, while scaffolding the course to support their discovery, increasing peer collaboration, while preserving the personalized learning experience Oak Meadow provides.

Therefore, I would like to find out how to create and implement project-based learning courses that are taught asynchronously, at a distance. In order to do that, I need to know: What are the necessary components of PBL? How can teachers encourage intrinsic motivation? What are the structural components that will support organic, genuine inquiry and project design? What are the challenges of PBL in general, and in distance-learning specifically, that we need to address as we redesign our courses?

Statement of Research Question

Thus, my mission became to understand how to design effective, meaningful, semester-long PBL courses for high school students who learn asynchronously at a distance. There are several questions this mission posits, including, What gets students engaged in learning? How does an instructor best facilitate that learning? How can we use technology to overcome the challenges of PBL, and distance-learning? I want to ensure that the courses – their academic scaffolding, student-led inquiry process, and overall structure – have enough substance to provide meaningful and useful content, but
are flexible enough for individual interests, thoughtful inquiry, and organic exploration of topics and themes.

In the fall of 2016, Dr. Fortescue asked if I wanted to begin teaching high school English classes, while simultaneously rewriting the old literature courses into PBL-style prototypes. I told him I would rather wait until my capstone was finished before taking on new projects, especially as I would be more prepared to build PBL curricula after my research was completed, since I knew very little about PBL or high school English or writing curriculum then. Then I thought, Wait! What better way to learn than to do? And it is in keeping with the theme of my research anyway: experiential and PBL! Thus, my research question was formulated: How do Oak Meadow high school students view PBL? If I can combine their learning preferences with the established tenants of PBL course design, using technology to address the challenges of distance learning, I believe I will be able to create meaningful and effective PBL English literature classes.

The framework I employed is traditional in nature; Oak Meadow, while progressive, is rooted in the Waldorf tradition of Anthroposophy, and includes aspects of John Dewey's experiential learning. However, since I have not been trained in the Anthroposophy tradition, I have left that framework from this inquiry, but it is a philosophy which I would like to explore in the future, to further aid my curriculum development for Oak Meadow.

I have incorporated Kolb's Learning Cycle [see page **] as the theoretical framework through which to apply my research results to the overarching methodology of the PBL model. I feel that this conceptual structure provides an excellent lens for the

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1 Anthroposophy, founded by Rudolf Steiner, is a philosophy that postulates that direct experience and inner development can assist in the comprehension of an objective spiritual world
creation of PBL courses, and also include the variety of ways students learn, how best to support their different styles and assess projects in a meaningful way that address the learning objective for each project/individual, in addition to traditional learning outcomes, standards, and skills.

**Literature Review**

What makes students want to learn? How can a teacher best impart, present and/or facilitate that learning? What maintains students' intrinsic motivation, sustaining their engagement with the material throughout the course? What assessment methods provide the most encouraging yet poignant means of delivering feedback? These are some of the questions I was looking to answer by reviewing the existing literature on PBL, specifically at the secondary school level.

In the last two and a half decades, much has been published on the effectiveness and challenges of PBL in the classroom. There are a few seminal works (Blumenberg, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial & Palinscar, 1991; Mergendoller & Thomas, 2000; Fleming, 2000) that have informed much of the research in the area, but I was unable to find any studies on PBL courses implemented at the high school level at a distance.

While project-based learning (PBL) has been employed in all types of education for decades, starting with Dewey in the 1920s, academic research on the outcomes of PBL curricula is relatively recent (the last 25 years) and is mostly limited to special
topics, like teaching technology in the classroom using project-based methods, or PBL in the STEM fields.

Fortunately for the purposes of my proposed work, much of the research that has been conducted was done at the primary and secondary school level, although most of the studies I found examined science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

Previously Published Research

In reading the related research studies examining PBL in the classroom, I discovered six distinct areas of focus: increase in interest in the subject being taught; the impact of PBL on students of various abilities; PBL affect on intrinsic student motivation; curriculum development; student vs. teacher role; the efficacy of various assessment methods of student performance in PBL settings.

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) has conducted its own research into the gains in academic achievement over several years in several states in the 90s, from Colorado to Maine, using students standardized testing scores as the assessment measure of PBL influence over student achievement. In all cases (1993, 1995, 1997, 1999), students who participated in Expeditionary Learning (EL) showed improvements in the various state required standardized testing, regardless of subject matter. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) found that EL programs had positive influences on both school climate and student motivation as well (ELOB, 1999).
Increase in interest in the subject being taught

Unlike many of the other studies I read, which sampled mostly STEM subjects, Kean and Kwe (2014) studied language and cultural instruction through PBL. They examined the possible presence of "meaningful learning" in a PBL course teaching Japanese culture in 12-week Japanese language preparatory teacher-training class. Using Jonassen's 1999 rubric on meaningful learning, Kean and Kwe determined that student teachers were able to both engage with and retain cultural information more than in a tradition language-based class. The teacher-training program used traditional Japanese dance to introduce different aspects of culture to the participants. It also included the use of technology as a research and design tool.

Genc (2015) used PBL to gauge the potential change in students' attitudes about the environment. The students, based in Turkey, were enrolled in an "Environmental Education" class, which asked them to complete group projects on real-world issues facing the environment. What he found was that is the PBL course encouraged research, enhanced permanent learning, and helped students define the problems facing the environment more clearly than they could before taking the course. The students also elected to engage in more active tasks during the solution process outlined in their projects.

Impact of PBL on students of various abilities

There are many factors that affect the outcomes of PBL learning. Han, Caparo and Caparo (2014) examined the varying degrees to which PBL instruction in the STEM fields affected high school students' achievement at high, middle and low academic
levels, who found that many factors, especially a student's overall environment, affected their achievement, enhanced through the lens of PBL. Another team in Malaysia (Rambely, Ahmad, Majid, M-Suradi, Din, A-Rahman, Mohamed, Rahim & Abu-Hanifah, 2013) sought to determine the possible increase in interest in the STEM fields among Malaysian undergraduates if taught using PBL. They found that students were both more engaged with the material, and also that they chose to pursue research in STEM areas upon graduation.

A key part of PBL, which is lacking in the current distance-learning model in which I teach, is collaboration; as Oak Meadow students are spread across the globe, learning at their own pace, one-on-one with their teacher, there is little to no synchronicity, and even when several students happen to be enrolled in the same class at the same time, there is no current platform or precedent for collaborative learning. Lee, Huh and Reigeluth (2015) examined how collaboration can be a learning outcome in itself, and how instruction in PBL can be assisted by understanding what causes "task-, process-, and relationship-related intragroup conflict and how social skills are related to intragroup conflict and collaboration at both the individual and group levels." I think this would be a useful aspect of learning we should employ, as many of our students learn alone at home, and do not have as many opportunities for conflict, and to practice its resolution, as do their brick-and-mortar peers.

In addition to collaboration among peers in a PBL environment, Chua (2014) conducted a comparative study of students who had experience with PBL and those who had not, to see if there were significant differences in problem-solving ability, testable knowledge and project completion between the two sets of students.
Another interesting study took a different view of the affects PBL has on students; Allison, Gray, Sproule and Nash (2015) looked at student health and wellbeing in a residential setting while completing PBL curriculum. This included mental and physical health as well as community wellbeing. Allison et al. (2015) used five metrics through which to measure health and wellbeing: context, coping, responsibility, relationship building, and life after the project. Allison’s team found that PBL had effects that extended beyond the subjects being taught, and educators who employ this style of teaching can ”make education more meaningful, relevant and engaging” (p. 217). This is an area of study I plan to delve into much more deeply in the coming months, as I find it a fascinating aspect of PBL: students have differing attitudes or approaches to learning that can affect their response to PBL. Meyer, Turner, and Spencer (1997) examined fifth and sixth grade students, breaking them into the ”challenge seekers” and ”challenge avoiders” in the classroom to see what effects those differing attitudes had on the students’ ability to master mathematical concepts through a PBL approach. In some cases, the PBL work completed by the students changed their attitudes about math, and learning in general.

Curriculum development

Although many of the studies reviewed involve middle and high school participants, several focused on the teachers, veterans and beginners alike. Lee, Blackwell, Drake and Moran (2014) interviewed members of an undergraduate faculty,
who adapt a PBL curriculum having never done it, and explored how their involvement and "perception of their own role" in college PBL course, and how their perception affected their implementation of the course.

Taking PBL out of the classroom, Schwalm and Tylek (2012) examined the Out-of-School time programs for which they work for the city of Philadelphia. They took a system-wide approach to the project-based after school programs, its success and challenges, and offer recommendations to other cities or programs that wish to implement a whole-systems change to a PBL model. Their report focused heavily on the necessary collaboration among instructors during the design phase of the project, noting how this also changed staff attitudes.

*Student vs. teacher role*

Unlike traditional instruction, where the teacher is the imparter of knowledge and the students simply receive said knowledge, PBL is a dynamic scaffold, structured by teachers, but populated by students. "The PBL approach requires staff to plan activities with purpose and to tie each day's work to the project's ultimate goal" (Schwalm & Tylek, 2012). In order for student buy-in, the project presented must have real-world significance. In their research regarding maintaining student motivation in course material, Blumenfeld, Solway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, and Palinscar (1991) discovered that the student-teacher relationship is a large part of the construction of an effective course; "The master-apprentice relationship is used as an analogy for the teacher-learning situation...like masters, teachers should scaffold instruction by breaking down tasks; use
modeling, prompting and coaching to teach strategies for thinking and problem solving; and gradually release responsibility to the learner" (p. 371).

Similarly, Mergendoller and Thomas (2000) compiled the interviews of 12 veteran teachers who had spent years employing PBL in their elementary school classrooms. Their research identified several themes (including Time Management, Getting Started, and Getting the Most Out of Technology). While they consolidated the teachers' self-reflections of the curriculum development process, classroom implementation and student assessment, the conclusion I found most poignant was the 'project characteristics' that emerged, including "making students aware of precisely what they are responsible for doing and producing, establishing professional standards for student products, providing examples of high quality work, introducing external resource people as mentors or partners, building in realistic consequences for failure and non-participation, holding frequent conferences and peer reviews, and assessing student learning on the basis of some realistic performance event" (37). As I write my own English literature course for Oak Meadow's high school, this document has proved a valuable and solid foundation from which to scaffold my own curriculum.

Efficacy of various assessment methods of student performance in PBL settings

There is an abundance of literature relating to the topic of assessments: various method and metrics, as well as their relevance and efficacy, have been discussed, both those specifically designed for PBL curricula and those for general classroom/student assessment. I have included both here. Black and Wiliam (1998) from King's College London examined the literature on formative assessment in the classroom. Two aspects
of their findings stood out: the way in which feedback was presented to students, and
students' perspectives of their role in the assessment process (i.e. through self-assessment
or performance reflection). While their research review is not specific to PBL assessment,
there is much in their report that is useful for any program that utilizes student voice as an
aspect of assessment. As this is a key aspect of effective PBL, I feel their review is
relevant to any curriculum design I produce for Oak Meadow.

Relation to Proposed Work

The previous work covers a broad range of PBL use in secondary school
classrooms, but I was not able to find much research on the implementation or effect of
PBL in high school humanities curricula. While there were a few articles on language
instruction, those studies focused on foreign language study, rather than English language
arts. However, my primary resources (Fleming, 2000; Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Thomas &
Mergendoller, 2000) have proven useful in examining the foundation of how PBL
courses and activities are structured. For my own use of PBL, those primary sources have
been the most helpful, but the reflections and self-assessments of both students and
teachers presented in the other aforementioned studies are a useful guide as to how those
curricula are implemented (by teachers) and received (by students).

One study I found that covered many of the specific considerations of my work
was Shadiev, Hwang and Huang (2015), who explored the facilitation of cross-cultural
project-based collaboration in an online setting. While Oak Meadow's courses are
primarily print-based, teacher-student and (hopefully in the future) student-student and
student-student-teacher collaboration happens via email, Skype, and the Google
education platform. Shadiev et al. (2015) focus on three areas: how PBL collaboration aids cross-cultural learning; how students feel about online collaboration in a Problem-Based Learning (PrBL) setting; and what types of communication are utilized for interaction. The second two aspects are of particular relevance to my work on this subject, although rather than cross-cultural understanding, as I am attempting to incite student collaboration around English literature and grammar.

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

The strengths of the existing literature is that it examines PBL from all aspects, from curriculum development to student buy-in, how PBL affects different students differently, to assessment tools for student performance, and even how PBL itself is assessed. Additionally, most of the studies have been conducted in the last 20 years, making the information relevant and up-to-date. This also adds the benefit of including the use of technology as both a tool in the classroom, and the subject of the course under investigation.

Another common thread of note is how often self-assessment or self-reporting, for both teachers and students, is used as a metric in the aforementioned studies. Similar to experiential learning, reflection is a component of intellectual growth.

An element I have yet to find is any literature on teaching PBL at a distance that is not technology-focused. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the use of technology is a necessary component. However, it is outside the scope of this paper to include the variety, efficacy, efficiency, and proper use of technology for instruction in distance-learning PBL, but is something I will have to research further.
Preliminary Sources

There are several primary sources that provide the theoretical and practical foundation to my investigation. Managing Project Based Learning: Principles from the Field (Mergendoller & Thomas, 2000) outlines the interviews of 12 seasoned teachers, outlining management principles by theme, and Fleming's (2000) guide to teaching PBL, a basic handbook for teachers and curriculum developers.

Further study for my purposes would include a more thorough examination of the work of Gallagher, Stepien and Rosenthal (1992); Krajcik (1998); Marx, Blumenfeld, Krajcik, and Soloway (1997); Fleming (2000). There is much in the studies that provides concrete foundational aspects of PBL, as well as the challenges and solutions for instructing students for a variety of subjects at all levels.

In addition to further study of the research on the implementation and assessment of PBL in the classroom, I would like to examine more primary sources on creating and implementing PBL curricula, specifically within the humanities, as well as additional information on various assessment methods (not just the research on how effective these assessment methods are, but rather how to utilize them in conjunction with a PBL course).

Further Study

There are two articles which were the most helpful in beginning my understanding of this topic: Thomas's (2000) review of the current research literature on PBL, and Fleming's (2000) A Teacher's Guide to Project-Based Learning, a thorough
examination of what PBL is, what it entails, necessary components in curriculum design and implementation, as well as relevant assessment methods. This is one of the papers that requires a more thorough re-examination. I am also interested in bring in a little behavior psychology, specifically the work of B.F. Skinner (1938, 1953) in order to understand the psychological aspects that affect brain development in terms of self-motivation. Again, however, this is outside the scope of this paper.

**Inquiry Design**

For my independent research on the topic, I interviewed current students and recent graduates Oak Meadow students about their academic high school experiences, all of whom were 18 years or older at the time of this study. In addition to enrolling in Oak Meadow's academic and arts classes, all students who wish to graduate from OM are required to complete an Advanced Study Project (ASP) in their junior or senior year. The ASP is a self-designed single semester exploration in which a student works one-on-one with an advisor, pursuing an activity, thesis, or passion of their choice, much like an independent study. It can be academic, artistic, or athletic in nature. As this is a self-designed, project based course, and as most of the students I surveyed have completed one, it provided a universal perspective on PBL through Oak Meadow, and a great contrast to their other, more traditional OM courses. Additionally, many of our students have come to OM from other educational settings, both public and private, or from independent homeschool backgrounds. This diversity gave greater breadth to my survey questions, as most of the student participants had several traditions to reflect on.
Culture of Inquiry

I chose phenomenology to research the potential use of PBL in Oak Meadow high school courses. To gather data, I wrote an anonymous survey and a narrative follow-up interview focusing on students' experiences in high school, both with Oak Meadow and their other various educational experiences, to create the basis of my investigation in understanding how OM students prefer to learn, and which of their educational experiences have been the most effective/inspiring, and which have been the least. I chose phenomenology because I was interested in looking at students' lived experiences in working through project-based and problem-based courses.

According to Creswell (1998), there are several aspects of phenomenology that must be present in this type of qualitative inquiry: a) "the researcher needs to understand the philosophical perspective behind the approach" b) the questions asked of participants ask them to relate their real-life "everyday lived experiences"; c) data is collected from individuals who have lived through the phenomenon, usually through interviews; d) the data is analyzed into clusters of meaning around what and how it was experienced; e) "the phenomenological report ends with the reader understanding better the essential, invariant structure (or essence) of the experience" (p. 54).

Sample selection

All the students I surveyed and interviewed were 18 years or older at the time of their participation. The reason for this was two-fold; first, they are not considered a vulnerable population, and thus no parental consent is needed. Secondly, students at this
age are at the end of their high school careers, and therefore have had more experience, and the more knowledge of how they learn best, what works and what doesn't in terms of curriculum design and delivery, and more insight into how what they learned with Oak Meadow has guided them to their current educational paths. Oak Meadow's IT department gave me a list of Oak Meadow email addresses (each high school student gets one) for all the students who were over 18. There were 40 students on the list; some were current students and some had graduated within the last calendar year. Oak Meadow emails are assigned as first initial, last initial, and the student's ID number, and I did not look closely at the email list so as not to know which students were receiving the survey. For the optional interview, however, I did collect student emails, and as I work in the administrative office at Oak Meadow, I recognized these student's names. I removed the last page of the survey results from each, so that even if a student did provide their email address for Question 10, I did not know which survey corresponded to those student emails. As no students responded to the interview questions, their anonymity was still protected.

*Participant protection*

Survey questions were not intrusive, and were completely optional. Students were not compensated in any way for their participation, and the survey results in their initial form were not shared with a larger audience, including Oak Meadow's high school director. As results were anonymous, no individual student could be identified. As Oak Meadow teachers did not read the survey responses, they also cannot affect their
relationships with any their students (not just survey participants in particular), negating any potential impact on grades, feedback, letters of recommendation, etc.

Data collection method

There were two parts to my data collection; the first was a qualitative survey which asked participants about their various educational experiences through our distance-learning school, what their thoughts were regarding the various types of instruction, and how they felt their PBL and PrBL courses prepared them for their current educational choices, and what influences it had on their perspectives.

I wrote the survey using Survey Monkey, a free online survey tool. The survey was anonymous, and did not record any individual participants' details: it did not connect email addresses to responses. I sent the survey to the 40 students from the list, and sent a reminder out a few days later, because I had only received two surveys back, one of which was mostly blank. 12 students took the survey, but the first participant answered only the first question, giving consent to participate, but then did not fill out any of the other fields. Most students answered all 10 questions on the survey. The final question asked participants if they would like to conduct a follow-up email or Skype interview, and if so, would they please provide their email address. The interview questions were similar to some of the questions in the survey, but I wanted to go more in depth in these areas: What were the course(s) various strengths and weaknesses?; How was the teacher able to support the projects at a distance?; What lasting or meaningful learning they gained from this alternative method of instruction? Eight students answered yes, three said no. I sent the interview questions via email to those eight participants who had given
their email address on Question 10 of the survey. Of the eight yes responses, not a single participant submitted questions or asked for a Skype interview.

Data analysis methods

Creswell (1998) outlines the standard process of phenomenology analysis, based on the work of Denzin (1989) and Moustakas (1994): a. the researcher gives a full description of her own experience with the phenomenon; b. the researcher locates statements from the interviews about how the participants experienced the topic, giving each answer equal weight, and organizes them in non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements; c. statements are placed into "meaning units” about what happened to them as regards the phenomenon; d. the researcher reflects on her own experience, and combines it to those of the participants, encompassing all possible perspectives; e. the researcher concludes with an overall description of essence and meaning of the experience (p. 147).

After collecting the survey results, I transposed and organized participants' statements. For this I used Post-It notes, with each note corresponding to one answer. Each individual had a unique combination of Post-It note color and pen ink, so they were collated across survey responses. The Question number was marked on the top of each note so I knew to which initial Question the response corresponded. I put all the notes in row and columns, with the survey questions across the top, and each row was a single participants responses. I then read through the notes, making initial codes and groupings.

After looking through all the responses, I ascribed my interpretation of the meaning of the experience, followed by the meaning of the experiences of the participants. I found several overlying themes, and grouped their responses into to these
units, organized by apparent meaning. I used these grouping to describe 'what' and 'how' the phenomenon (PBL/meaningful learning) had happened to the eleven participants. Lastly, I finished by creating a narration of the 'essence' of the experience (Creswell, 1998, p. 148).

Limitations inherent in the research design

The limitations inherent in this design is that my participant sample pool is relatively small; Oak Meadow is a small school with only 300 currently enrolled high school students, and only a portion of them are over 18. Additionally, more students begin their high school career with Oak Meadow than finish with us, so we have fewer students who graduate with us than who start. Also, as the survey was optional and was sent via email, my results depended on who responded, or even saw, the survey and/or follow up reminder. The invited survey participants were teenagers, and Oak Meadow high school students are often very busy (many are pre-profession athletes), and may not check their email or felt they had time to complete the survey. These factors may have also contributed to the lack of follow up interviews.

From a conceptual standpoint, I needed to be very well versed in the subject of PBL in order to appropriately assign meaning to the responses I got from the survey. This was compounded by the need to incorporate my own experience of the phenomenon at the center of the study, and my experience was coming from the perspective of a teacher designing and delivering a PBL course, and not as a student participating in the course.

Lastly, there was the limitation of time; I had not finished writing or teaching my PBL English literature course by the conclusion of this research inquiry, so I was not able
to get a first-hand account or feedback for my own work in the field. However, I believe that the information gleaned from this work will serve my curriculum design, delivery, and assessment methodology for both my current American Literature course and future courses I design for Oak Meadow.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

*Theoretical Framework*

As I was attempting to identify what helps students learn in conjunction with PBL courses, I decided to employ the use of two conceptual frameworks related to how people learn using Kolb's experiential learning cycle. I chose this because it directly relates to the PBL courses I plan to design for Oak Meadow, in combination with the findings of my research below, so it seemed appropriate to incorporate the theory in the initial inquiry process. For the purpose of this study, I will be primarily utilizing only the learning cycle, and not incorporating Kolb's learning styles; while they are relevant to thorough curriculum design, making sure all students' learning styles are addressed, it is outside the scope of this study, and therefore is not included in the data analysis and synthesis.
This cycle is a continuous process of learning, with the student moving from one component to the next, sometimes skipping or combining steps.

**Step 1: Concrete Experience**- Life is full of experiences, and learning can come from anywhere, both in and out of the classroom. Concrete experience refers to anything an individual does, any activity one engages in, even if the other three steps are not actively engaged in.
Step 2: Reflective Observation - Reflect on what you have done or experienced. How did it make you feel, think or behave? Meditate, journal, or discuss your actions and experiences.

Step 3: Abstract Conceptualization - Interpret the experience you have had. What do you think about what you experienced? This stage involves finding meaning in your experiences and connecting them to other experiences you have had. Form a hypothesis around what you have experienced and your observations, both internal and external, around the experience.

Step 4: Active Experimentation - Test the hypothesis you formed during Conceptualization. This stage involves doing, taking initiative to actively explore the topic you have experienced, observed, and conceptualized. Experimentation in this way will either confirm or challenge the previously formed hypothesis. This Experimentation then becomes a new Concrete Experience, and the cycle is repeated.

Findings

The results of my survey were interesting, and not particularly surprising; having spoken with many of Oak Meadow's students, either on the phone or those in our micro high school, I have a general sense of the high caliber of our students. The survey had ten questions, the first of which was the consent agreement (all who opened the survey
answered 'yes,' although two participants did not complete any other questions after this), and the tenth question asked participants if they would like to complete a short follow-up Skype or email interview.

The eight survey questions in between examined a range of aspects of how Oak Meadow students prefer to learn, and what have been their most influential educational experiences. With only one exceptions, all Oak Meadow high school courses, across all subjects (English, science, history, social studies, math, art, language, and health) are structured in a traditional manner: weekly assignments, vocabulary, comprehension, critical thinking questions, short answer questions and a choice of longer assignments. There are 36 lessons in a yearlong course, 18 for a single semester course, and each lesson follows this pattern, with a few exceptions. Generally, the assignments do not connect with each other, and there is little connection with a larger audience; learning and lesson submission is solely between the teacher and the student.

Question 1: Do you consent to participate in this optional survey?

[for the following survey questions, explanations were requested; responses are incorporated in the data analysis below]

Question 2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-based/Problem-based approach (learning through creating a larger project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)? Please explain.

Traditional lessons: textbooks, guided questions, set assignments- 36%
Project or Problem-solving: choose the project, answer a larger question - 55%

Other (combination of the two)- 9% [see appendix B]

Question 3: Would you prefer to complete a project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher? Please explain.

Design and complete my own project - 27%
Do what my teacher tells me - 0%
Combination of the two - 73%

Question 4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both). Please explain.

1- 0%
2- 18%
3- 9%
4- 37%
5- 27%
6- 9%
7- 0%
8- 0%
9- 0%
10- 0%
Question 5: Have you completed an ASP?

Yes- 80%

No- 20%

Question 6: Name a specific project or problem you've found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.)

[Various answers]- 75%

Question 7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you? Please explain.

[Various answers]- 100%

Question 8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

[Various answers]- 83%

Question 9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer? [Multiple responses accepted]

Constant oversight - 0%

Weekly check-ins - 55%

Help when I ask for it - 64%

Only for grading 18%
Question 10: Would you like a brief follow-up interview via email or Skype?

No - 28%

Yes - 72%

From the answers to the survey, several distinct themes emerged: collaboration, influential experiences, what helps or hinders learning, teacher support, necessary components for successful learning. Students enter Oak Meadow high school at every grade level, sometimes in the middle of the school year. Some are new to home school entirely, and some only stay for a grade or two. Most take additional courses, at local public schools, community colleges, online schools, and other types of instruction. Some students choose Oak Meadow because of the freedom it gives them, others are responding to a need in their lives (athletics, travel, living abroad, health, etc.).

Collaboration

For the most part, participants prefer to work alone. They cite the control they have over the quality of their work, the direction of their assignments, their research and process, the freedom of having in independent schedules, and efficiency. One student mentioned that working alone removes distraction, improves concentration, and allows one to "work at a higher level." Others said they enjoyed not having to explain themselves or their work or discuss ideas – they could just plug away and learn on their own.
Every student mentioned the negative aspects of working in a group or with a partner. Logistically, group work is difficult; students study asynchronously, starting courses at all time throughout the year, and thus they are not connected to others taking that same course simultaneously. Even if they are, they may have different teachers, who are not aware of other students' academic schedules. Oak Meadow uses the Google education platform (Docs, Slides, Sheets, Drive, etc.) to connect students and teachers, but one student said it was difficult to collaborate with other students through theses media. As one student put it, "Working in a group for projects can sometimes be difficult and incredibly time-consuming, especially when you're going long-distance."

Also, Oak Meadow students, for the most part, do not know each other; there are students in every US state and scattered around the world, and although there are several online group forums (OM Awesome! is an email group where students connect and ask each other questions, like what music or books everyone likes (the *Harry Potter* series was a popular choice), or where they would like to travel (Antigua, Ireland, China, South Africa, Antarctica, etc.), but there is really no opportunity for them to meet in person. Not knowing one another inhibits collaboration, some said, as it difficult to navigate group work when you don't know someone.

One student had mentioned that at a previous school big egos and put downs were a component of groups, making work difficult and unsatisfying, "People would constantly put me down and try to prove themselves. Because of this, I try to avoid working groups." Others mentioned that individuals in groups can be unreliable, one doesn't get as much done, and collaborating is time-consuming.
Most, however, did state that depending on the subject, the project, and/or the other students, group work can be fun. Many enjoyed discussing ideas and subjects with others, gaining new perspective and new ideas from one another. One student put it thus: "working with others covers the weak flank" and is good for subjects where a student feels less confident. Also, the ability to work well in a team is crucial. "Collaboration and discussion are important and valuable," another wrote.

*What helps/hinders learning*

Several of the questions focused on what aids learning, and what inhibits students. Many cited specific teachers, often the same teachers, who had a positive influence on their learning because they were encouraging, kind, responsive, creative, gave constructive feedback, engaged in meaningful dialogue, and helped students explore topics more deeply by recommending books or materials for further study. One participant wrote of a specific teacher, "He was inspiring, encouraging, supportive, confidence building, and provided a safe environment for me to grow intellectually and creatively." Also, students felt that these teachers appreciated their work, and responded with respectful and helpful grading and lesson comments (how Oak Meadow teachers leave feedback for students for their bi-weekly lesson submission). Several students noted that discussion with their teacher(s) lead to greater depth and "an expanded world view," connecting subjects with each other and to the real world. Another common comment was that the most helpful courses and/or teachers taught students new skills, gave them useful tools, and gave them an opportunity to employ them, cementing their learning.
On the negative side, the reasons students gave were very focused: several cited that math and science courses were repetitive, too difficult, with too many small, time-consuming assignments, with teachers who were not helpful or pushed students too far too fast. One noted that science experience in chemistry and biology, which come with lab kits, were "borderline dangerous" for students to be conducting without the supervision of a teacher.

The most harmful influences had to do with teachers who were condescending, disrespectful, critical without being constructive, unappreciative of students' work, vague in giving instruction and then harsh when grading. One participant put this thusly: "several science teachers were condescending, discouraging, and accusatory." Others did not give enough encouragement or support, some did not have enough expertise in the topics students were interested in exploring, and one student, who has an identical twin sister in the school, said she had on several occasions not be recognized as an individual, even being accused of plagiarizing work which wasn't even hers. Another student said that not having rapport with the teacher made learning less enjoyable.

**Influential experiences**

Student responses that related to their most influential educational experiences, whether during an Oak Meadow course or elsewhere, were very informative. Discussions with teachers and/or other students were mentioned several times, leading to new perspectives, information, and people. Many cited learning or improving skills, such as writing or organization, had had a lasting effect. Mostly, students enjoyed projects and assignments that were hands on or real world-based. This helped them expand their
knowledge and gain useful insight into complex issues, such as designing a community center that encompassed several major religions. Many talked about projects where they got to choose the topic, getting in depth in a focused area.

For most survey participants, their Advanced Study Project (ASP) was the most influential part of their high school experience. Every student who graduates from Oak Meadow must complete a single semester ASP in their junior or senior year. Students design their projects and are supported by a faculty advisor. Eight of the ten respondents to Question 5 of the survey had completed or where currently conducting an ASP and their projects included ornithology research, a study of the history of bread, the evolution of English following the Norman invasion in 1066, and designing and running a course to help elementary school students public speaking skills. Survey participants who cited their ASP as the most influential educational experience, or the course that had the most positive effect (Questions 6 & 7), attributed this to several factors. Because they got to choose the topic, they were engaged and motivated to "go the extra mile." Many learned new skills as they researched and explored their topic. Most had a final project that was shared with others, and giving back to the community was powerful to a couple students. Students appreciated the support of the teacher, although one said it had been difficult having an advisor who did not know much about ornithology, which was the topic of the student's ASP.

Teacher support

Among survey participants, there was a strong correlation on how students prefer to be supported by their teachers: solid structure, constructive feedback, available for
questions/discussion, and engaged in each student's work and progress. Most students said they would like help when they ask for it and weekly check-ins. Several students mentioned that if they did not have weekly check-ins, they were liable to get off track and fall behind in their work. They also liked to know their teacher was receiving work, and getting the feedback consistently was helpful for development and understanding. One student said that it was important for a teacher to be interested in both the work and the student as an individual. Another was more comfortable approaching the teacher for help, rather than have the teacher constantly checking in. Specifically, for math and science courses, students wanted less oversight, and just have help when asked, but for humanities and art classes they would prefer more touch-points, to make sure they are on track and on task.

Oak Meadow students, especially at the high school level, are fairly independent; one has to be in our model of education. Most do not have private tutors, but rather are working at home, often alone, and seemingly they prefer it that way. As one student put it, "Oak Meadow's manuals are of such a high order, one can work quite sufficiently independently." However, there was one response that stated that students should collaborate with teachers and peers, as this would help guide and expand learning, providing new perspectives and ideas.

*Necessary components for successful learning*

Gleaned from the entire survey were the necessary components, according to its participants, for an effective Oak Meadow high school course. While current courses are,
with one exception, not project-based models, yet much of what students find helpful, and their most favorite and memorable experiences, all fall under the PBL umbrella.

By and large, students would rather design their own projects and assignments. They desire structure from a teacher to scaffold the course, provide them the tools to complete their exploration of the chosen topic, and engage in dialogue, but would prefer the teacher allow for some autonomy in project incubation and execution. Many stated that they disliked having teachers "peering over my shoulder," especially when working on a larger project that had many moving pieces; they would prefer to turn it in in sections for feedback and support. However, they would like teacher oversight in general, as it aids students in staying on track. Have directions and guidelines, one said, but keep them loose for individual expression and exploration.

Several responses indicated that students would rather answer a larger question, and complete assignments that had some cohesion to one another, rather than many small shorter weekly assignments that were disparate. They also suggested that teachers can enhance learning by providing supplementary materials (books, articles, movies, etc.) in addition to traditional materials, and that it is helpful to give students clear directions and expectations.

Survey participants gave compelling reasons their PBL-style learning preference: it guarantees interest in the topic, since projects are student-driven and student-decided; big projects mean that the individual steps are more interesting, and since they lead to a common goal, assignments are less repetitive; open-ended assignments allow individuals to explore topics how they want to, playing to their strengths and allowing them to challenge themselves in new ways; and many cited the increased satisfaction of
completing a large project or solving a real-world problem while enjoying the creativity such an assignment necessitated.

There are, of course, challenges to using a PBL model, especially in an asynchronous distance-learning environment. First, it is easy to get off track. Several students mentioned that having a larger project with distant deadlines, rather than set weekly assignments, meant it was easy to procrastinate. Guidance and oversight are necessary, several said, to focus learning, address issues as they arose, and helped to steer students towards resources they otherwise would not know about.

One student, who did not at all seem to think PBL was a good fit for Oak Meadow's high school courses, cited that larger projects have too many unknown variables. She or he felt it was imperative to know that the chosen project or topic would be good for learning necessary skills and knowledge. This student also felt that traditional structures prompted good working habits. Also, smaller details, aspects, and information can be skipped over or missed by bigger question. This student also cited, however, that learning to work as a group is a crucial aspect of the adult workplace, but that in a distance model it was not practical.

Conclusions and interpretation

Oak Meadow students both prefer to work alone and conduct larger projects that have real-world applications. They enjoy being challenged, engaging in discussions with their teachers and peers, and are most satisfied when they have a say in the direction their assignments take. They understand the value of collaboration, but recognize the difficulties of group work, especially as it applies to a distance-learning model in which
students are also all on their own schedules. Additionally, they were concerned with the constraints of working with peers whose work ethic or schedule was different from theirs, but felt that exposure to divergent perspectives and others' strengths could enhance their own learning, and group work is therefore a positive opportunity to enhance learning.

With the right frequency and depth of teacher support, curricular scaffolding, and access to additional resources, students seem amenable to conducting larger projects that answer meaningful questions, and that this model is preferable to smaller, disparate assignments. They recognize that this presents its own set of challenges, but as every participant cited a self-designed project as the most influential educational experience they have had, they feel that the challenges are well worth it. Some participants were clearly more interested in PBL than others, but the data overwhelmingly demonstrate that PBL courses would be well received, as long as they were adequately designed and executed by caring, passionate, engaged, informed and understanding teachers.

**Conclusion**

In examining these findings through the lens of Kolb's learning cycle, Oak Meadow high schools students seem to be poised for success by switching to a PBL model; many students use their own interests and experiences outside of the classroom (which, for homeschoolers, is an abundant source for opportunities, as most of their time is spent outside the 'classroom') as the substance or focus of their assignments and projects. Already, it is clear that OM students have concrete experiences that they reflect on, then engage with conceptually as it relates to the schoolwork they are doing, before combining the two into assignments and projects for their academic classes.
Also, many of our students are engaged in their communities, in professions, and other extra curricular pursuits that require real-world skills and understanding, Step 1 of Kolb's cycle: Concrete Experience. They are therefore perfectly suited to the PBL model, where their interests have supported outlets for exploration and the inherent learning that takes place is applicable to their lives outside of school.

In order to successful design and implement PBL courses in our distance-learning high school, Oak Meadow will need to make some changes: students must be enrolled synchronously so as to create cohorts where discussion and collaboration is possible. This will help aid the Reflective Observation step. We will need to rewrite many courses to incorporate larger projects, real world problems, and student-driven inquiry, or Step 3 of Kolb's cycle, Abstract Conceptualization: combining what they have experienced with what they learn, constructing a question or project to answer their chosen topic of inquiry. Then the artifact or solution they come up with- collectively- is Step 4, or Active Experimentation, thus completing the cycle and cementing learning while practicing new skills.

There is an evident need to alter our curricular structure, as my research clearly showed that our students are independent, capable, and prefer to act as autonomous agents engaged in their own learning process, and that they get more enjoyment and satisfaction from completing these types of projects than learning in a more traditional, segmented method.

It is evident that more research on the topic is necessary, probably through piloting PBL courses a semester at a time, to gauge student reactions and address challenges as they arise. Currently Oak Meadow has a single PBL course, Social Justice,
in which the teacher has predetermined the final project structure, but the topic is up to each student group. The course she is conducting this spring 2017 semester is the second time she has run the class, and she has been altering the assignments and curriculum constantly over the last year. I have asked for her assistance in completing the design of my American Literature course, which, although it is labeled as PBL and I have attempted to connect the weekly assignments to the necessary skills of completing a larger project (different writing styles and exercises, vocabulary and grammar tools that are employed in those assignments, culminating in a student-determined artifact).

I will continue to read relevant literature on the subject as I head into my new teaching job this fall; I have been offered one of three positions at Oak Meadow’s Brattleboro School Without Walls, teaching history/social studies and English literature, whose curricula I have to write this summer. I hope to use the courses I build for our in-person students as the basis for our distance-learning classes as well, and will need to instruct the other Oak Meadow teachers as to how to implement them successfully.

Lastly, it is necessary to examine the limitations Oak Meadow has in conducting PBL courses. Often, students never meet their teachers or peers in person, and rarely talk face to face (even virtually). This presents a huge obstacle in collaboration, which the use of technology may help to mitigate, an area not covered in this paper, as it is outside the scope of student learning preference. However, it is a necessary component in the modern classroom, especially when that classroom is global. Additionally, the switch to PBL methodology will necessitate a large cultural shift among Oak Meadow teachers, which has historically been difficult. Many OM teachers have been with the organization for more than five years, and many, according to Dr. Fortescue, have grown comfortable
with the status quo of our traditional courses, which require little active involvement and scaffolding on their part, as the courses are already written; we send the books to the students, and they correct the bi-weekly lessons, offering suggestions and feedback, yes, but not necessarily adapting the assignments or literature to each individual student's interests or learning style. I will be sharing my findings with the high school faculty in the coming months in the hopes of encouraging them to alter their instructional practices, as it is apparent that students would prefer this style of class over the current traditional structure. As the aforementioned literature suggests, learning is more cemented and students find more meaning and relevance in projects they help design that deal with problems in the real world; if a child learns better, more fully, and more efficiently in a PBL setting, as well as getting more satisfaction out of it, I cannot see a downside from an educational standpoint.

I feel that this research has provided much needed information to my organization, allowing us to effectively and efficiently make the switch to PBL classes in our high school program. While additional research and increased use of technology is needed, I think the best course of action is just start; adapt the current courses available by adding the option for student inquiry, introducing class discussion and collaboration, and cohere weekly assignments to create larger, meaningful, real-world projects, answers, and artifacts that can be shared with fellow Oak Meadow students and the community at large.
Bibliography


Han, S., Capraro, R., & Capraro, M.M. (2014). How Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Project-Based Learning (PBL) Affects High, Middle,


Appendix A - Survey and Interview Questions

1) This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow's curricular development. Your name and contacting information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded.

   Do you understand that you are not obligated to take this survey? (Answering 'yes' indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study. You will not be compensated.)  Yes/No

2) Which approach do you prefer: Traditional textbook instruction or project-based/problem-based approach? Please explain.

3) Would you prefer to complete a project of your own design or complete an assignment form your teacher? Please explain.

4) To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group?

5) Have you completed an ASP? Yes/No
   If yes, what was your project, and what was your experience in creating and completing the project?

6) Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.)

7) Over the course of your high school career, which courses had the most positive affect on you?

8) What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

9) When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?

10) Would you like to have a brief follow-up interview via email or Skype?
Interview Questions

1) What was your most powerful educational experience? This could be a single activity, a theme or focus, or a whole course. What about it was powerful?

2) Thinking about your own involvement in your education, are there components of instruction or assessment that you felt assisted your learning? Are there aspects that inhibited your learning? What were they, and how did they impact you?

3) What did you learn in high school that sticks with you? How was it presented? What has its lasting affect been?

4) Thinking about the teachers/instructors you had, which were the most effective? What about their teaching style resonated with you?

5) If you could design a class, what would it be like? How would teach it? What components would you want to include? How would you assess the work?
Appendix B- Survey Results

Project Based Learning

Q1 This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow's curricular development. Your name and contact information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded. Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering 'yes' indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0

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<tr>
<td>NO (please scroll down and click “Done- Thank you!”)</td>
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1 / 10
Q2 Which approach do you prefer:
Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Answered: 11  Skipped: 1

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<td>Project or Problem-solving: you choose the project, answer a larger question or solve a real problem</td>
<td>54.55%</td>
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<td>Other (please explain below)</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
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Q3 Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

Answered: 11  Skipped: 1

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<th>Responses</th>
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<td>Design and Complete my own project</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do what my teacher tells me</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A combination of the two (please explain below)</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
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Q4 To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

Answered: 11  Skipped: 1

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<td>11</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q5 Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?
Answered: 10  Skipped: 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q6 Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).

Answered: 9   Skipped: 3
**Q7** Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect?</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the impact on you?</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q8 What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

Answered: 10  Skipped: 2
Q9 When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?

Answered: 11  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant oversight</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly check-ins</td>
<td>54.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help when I ask for it</td>
<td>63.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only for grading</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 11
Q10 Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?

Answered: 11  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix B - Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow's curricular development. Your name and contact information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded. Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering 'yes' indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)</td>
<td>YES, I consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PAGE 1: Project-based learning: What are your thoughts?

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YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Project or Problem-solving: you choose the project, answer a larger question or solve a real problem.

What about the approach you chose works for you? With a bigger project, the work feels less repetitive. Doing different steps while working towards a goal makes the subject more interesting to me.

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

Design and Complete my own project,

Explain your choice With a project I design on my own I make sure that I am truly interested in the topic. I know what I want to research, and I am more motivated to go the extra mile.

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

5

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)

I think that both working alone and on a group are really important. Working alone gives the freedom to do things your own personal way, and working in a group helps in learning how to work as a team rather than as an individual.
### Project Based Learning

#### Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?
*YES,*
If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it?
I produced a short documentary called "What Inspires Art?" I interviewed four local artists and put together a video that I am proud of. I want to be a film/television producer and this project allowed me to explore each part of the production process. I really enjoyed the experience and learned a lot.

#### Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).

My favorite project and the one that has been the most important to me is my short documentary (ASP), "What Inspires Art?" It helped me expand my knowledge on the process of video production and helped me fall back in love with it.

#### Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?
- **Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect?**
  - Psychology
- **What was the impact on you?**
  - I just really enjoyed the course

#### Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

There are some courses in which the work gets very repetitive such as health or some sciences.

#### Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?
*Help when I ask for it,*
Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers?
I like knowing that my teacher is receiving my work, and when they provide feedback.

#### Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?
*NO*
Project Based Learning

#3
Collector: Email Invitation 1 (Email)
Last Modified: Monday, March 27, 2017 1:50:21 PM
Time Spent: 00:01:47

PAGE 1: Project-based learning: What are your thoughts?

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YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?
Project or Problem-solving: you choose the project, answer a larger question or solve a real problem

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?
A combination of the two (please explain below),
Explain your choice
Either or, depends on topic of project

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

❤
4

Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?
NO

Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).
N/A

Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?
Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect?
Drama Class
What was the impact on you?
human interaction learning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.</td>
<td>Calculus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?</td>
<td>Help when I ask for it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q1: This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow’s curricular development. Your name and contact information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded. Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering ‘yes’ indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)

YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Other (please explain below).

What about the approach you chose works for you? I enjoy having the traditional materials (textbooks and resources and possibly guiding questions) but being able to create assignments and projects based on what I find interesting.

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

A combination of the two (please explain below).

Explain your choice
As I previously said I enjoy having some direction but not a complete study plan I have to follow.

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

4

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)
I almost always prefer working alone but I enjoy discussing things in groups and gaining more perspective.
## Project Based Learning

### Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?

**YES,**

If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it?

I am working on a research based project about the evolution of the English language in major connection with the Norman Invasion of England in 1066. It has been a positive experience yet challenging for the reason that I am the sole creator of the project. Therefore, I have to find resources, decide what to include and what to exclude and structure the final product.

### Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).

I took British Literature in 9th or 10th grade and I designed a unit of study around Frankenstein. Designing the lessons gave me a greater insight into the novel and was a very rewarding experience.

### Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?

**Which course(s)/Teacher had the most positive effect?**

- Julia West, Ted Thornton and Anna Logowitz

**What was the impact on you?**

- Many of my other teachers including Marnie Rogers and Jacquelyn Odonohue have also had a very positive impact but Julia, Ted and Anna have always engaged in a multitude of discussions on many subjects and have always encouraged me in all of my endeavors both in and out of school as well as suggesting books I may find interesting.

### Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

I think taking Chess a few years back. I just didn't have much of rapport with my teacher.

### Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?

**Help when I ask for it,**

Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers?

There are some teachers with whom I correspond more frequently than others but I like to have them there if I need help but not constantly peering over my shoulder so to speak. I have never had a teacher be too over-bearing but I have had teachers who I would have liked more had they been more present.

### Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?

**YES,**

If YES please provide your email address.

rsinger1980@gmail.com
Q1: This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow’s curricular development. Your name and contact information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded. Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering 'yes' indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?!) It depends on the person I am working with, if their work ethic etc is different then mine and it doesn’t work out I find it difficult to work with others. Whereas if it is someone dependable I find it fun to work with others.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?</td>
<td>YES, If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it? My project was an in-depth study of the history of glass. In designing and completing it, I found it very informative and enjoyable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).</td>
<td>A block printing project while taking geography. For me it was a new experience to bring in art into a non-art related subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you? Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect? What was the impact on you? | Mr. Antony Yaeger  
He was inspiring, encouraging, supportive, confidence building, and provided a safe environment for me to grow intellectually and creatively. |
| Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer. | I had two experiences that I found unpleasant. The math courses pushed me further than I needed or was comfortable with. The science teachers I found to be very condescending, discouraging, and accusatory. |
| Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer? Weekly check-ins, Explain your answer - is it different for different assignments? For different teachers? In general, I like to be able to discuss in segments and not have someone constantly hovering over me. |
| Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype? | YES,  
If YES please provide your email address. Bprovan@risd.edu |
### Project-based Learning: What are your thoughts?

**Q1:** This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow’s curricular development. Your name and contact information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded.

Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering 'yes' indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)

**YES, I consent**

**Q2:** Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Traditional lessons: textbooks, guided questions, set assignments.

What about the approach you chose works for you? The guided question works best in a distance-learning programme because it provides a structure for the learning. A structure for work habits has to be built in a distance learning programme anyway, but why should one start with nothing? A large project can also sometimes be impractical such as "Design 4 logos for such and such". Traditional lessons with a guided lesson and assignment are almost always easier to actually achieve than a large project where too many unknown factors come into play.
### Project Based Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?</td>
<td>A combination of the two (please explain below), Explain your choice. I need my assignments to be met somewhere in the middle of designing something and doing what the teacher says. By designing and doing the project entirely of my own design, I have little way of knowing if what I choose will actually enhance my learning. On the other hand, just doing what the teacher says could become dispiriting. So, a combo is the best choice. For example, I would pitch some ideas to the teacher, who would then enhance them by stating some requirements like &quot;use three sources&quot; or &quot;contrast with this other topic&quot; in addition to telling me if they are any good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)</td>
<td>I work best when I am alone and can concentrate on my work. This is especially true in Oak Meadow's distance learning programme as trying to get a group project done is a very unreliable prospect if I never meet the students who are on wholly different schedules. However, the subject also plays a key role. I work best in a group on subjects where I don't have a lot of confidence in my own abilities such as math. Working alone gets the job done efficiently, but working in a group covers a weak flank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?</td>
<td>YES, If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it? (Note, I don't know what ASP stands for, so I am assuming it means assisted student project). I am currently in an ASP with my Social Justice course. So far, getting together online and having a discussion about the Social Justice topics has been delightful as that subject truly benefits from student participation. On the downside, trying to turn in a project for the teacher is difficult due to the structure of the design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).</td>
<td>The Designing a Religious Life Centre for Religions of the World was meaningful because it opened my eyes to the epic logistical challenges of accommodating all of the religions in a single place. I learned the challenges of maintaining diversity and tolerance among hot button topics that will absolutely benefit me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?</td>
<td>The course that had the most impact on me was my English course taught by Alex Loud. What course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Project Based Learning**

**Q8:** What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

My least favourite experience had to be Chemistry. The Chemistry course was nearly impossible to achieve in the distance learning style and some of the experiments in the course were impractical bordering on dangerous. In addition, the assignments were dense and frustrating.

| Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer? |
| Weekly check-ins, Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers? Weekly check-ins are the best ways for teachers to be involved with students in the distance learning programme, particularly with long projects. Long projects need the oversight of a teacher and a weekly check-in allows me to stay in touch with the teacher. |

| Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype? |
| YES, If YES please provide your email address. en2215@oskmeadow.com |
PAGE 1: Project-based learning: What are your thoughts?

Q1: This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow’s curricular development. Your name and contact information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded. Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering 'yes' indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)

YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Traditional lessons: textbooks, guided questions, set assignments

What about the approach you chose works for you? Buying as many supplementary books as possible to read up on OM assignment subjects to broaden my knowledge. I can then produce a highly researched material in my set assignments in my own words.

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

A combination of the two (please explain below).

Explain your choice
Most OM teachers give lee-way on assignments providing they know you are a highly committed student.

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment: what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)
Distance learning is 99% working alone. No distractions from others - can work at a higher level. However, appreciate ability to work in a team crucial.

4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it? What is ASP?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Le Cirque du Soleil&quot; project for French, 80% writing in French language. Discovered a world of which I knew nothing about. Illustrated a completely different kind of living - street artists, travelling performers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the impact on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antony Yeager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement, understanding, kindness, appreciation of my work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A negative teacher, unappreciative of quality of work, and looking to find fault.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help when I ask for it. Only for grading. Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers? OM manuals and text books are of a high order with immense details, enabling the student to work easily alone, or with their personal tutors via Skype.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If YES please provide your email address. Via email. zw2487.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project Based Learning

COMPLETE
Collector: Email Invitation 1 (Email)
Started: Monday, March 27, 2017 7:52:29 PM
Last Modified: Monday, March 27, 2017 8:22:59 PM
Time Spent: 00:30:29

PAGE 1: Project-based learning: What are your thoughts?

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Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering 'yes' indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)

YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Project or Problem-solving: you choose the project, answer a larger question or solve a real problem.
What about the approach you chose works for you? I love to create and explore projects and ideas I have in a project based way. I struggle some times if there are too many small assignments that do not culminate into a larger outcome, as the small projects are very time consuming.

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

A combination of the two (please explain below),

Explain your choice
I would like to create my own projects, at the same time engaging in dialogue with my teacher.

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

5

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)
Sometimes I enjoy working alone so that I can be in my own world without having to explain or discuss ideas with other people. At other times, I love to work in a group when all are motivated. The ability to bounce ideas off of one another in wonderful and fulfilling. Having time to work in groups and on my own is the best combination. In the past I have had some challenges working with groups over google docs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Q5: Have you completed/are you working on an ASP?</strong></td>
<td>YES,</td>
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<tr>
<td>If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience</td>
<td>If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience</td>
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<td>in designing and completing it? I did a project on Ornithology. I loved</td>
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<td>the project; it exposed me to many new people and ideas. I would</td>
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<td>have liked to have more support from my mentor in engaging in the fun</td>
<td>have liked to have more support from my mentor in engaging in the fun</td>
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<td>of exploration, and not focus so much on the checking off of boxes and</td>
<td>of exploration, and not focus so much on the checking off of boxes and</td>
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<td>getting a grade.</td>
<td>getting a grade.</td>
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<td>**Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found</td>
<td>Respondent skipped this</td>
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<td>especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content,</td>
<td>question</td>
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<tr>
<td>collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>etc.).</td>
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<td>**Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s)</td>
<td>The Craft of Poetry/Antony Yeager, Social Justice/Shanta</td>
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<tr>
<td>or teacher had the most positive effect on you?</td>
<td>Both the Craft of Poetry and the Social Justice classes gave me new</td>
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<td>Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect?</td>
<td>tools to interact, impact the world in which I live. Antony and</td>
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<td>What was the impact on you?</td>
<td>Shanta are wonderful people who are always encouraging and willing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to share their knowledge and expertise.</td>
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<td>**Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please</td>
<td>Biology and Lab. This class was particularly challenging for me</td>
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<tr>
<td>explain your answer.</td>
<td>because I love this subject a great deal. I had high expectations for</td>
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<td></td>
<td>how much fun I was going to have taking biology; these were not</td>
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<td></td>
<td>fulfilled. The class had too many assignments that were very time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>consuming for me. After spending a great deal of time on the</td>
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<td>assignments the teacher I had, would always critique every small</td>
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<td>error and not provide encouragement or answers to the questions I</td>
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<td></td>
<td>did get wrong. I was very discouraged by the experience.</td>
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<td>**Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you</td>
<td>Weekly check-ins,</td>
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<td>prefer?</td>
<td>Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For</td>
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<td>different teachers? I like to have weekly conversations for some</td>
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<td></td>
<td>classes, particularly math and English. These weekly check-ins help</td>
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<td>me stay on track with my course work and engage in meaningful</td>
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<td>dialogue with my teachers. Other classes, I like to have some</td>
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<td>distance and engage the teacher only when I need help. I greatly</td>
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<td>appreciate teachers that give space, but also check in with me as</td>
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<td>a student to see how thinks are going. This shows me that my</td>
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<td>teacher cares about me as a student and helps give me boost of</td>
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<td>confidence in my abilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up</td>
<td>YES,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview via email or Skype?</td>
<td>If YES please provide your email address.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:fw1781@oakmeadow.com">fw1781@oakmeadow.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PAGE 1: Project-based learning: What are your thoughts?

Q1: This survey asks general questions about your experience with Oak Meadow courses, your Advanced Study Project (ASP), and any other courses you have taken in your high school career. You are under no obligation to complete this survey; your participation is anonymous and will in no way impact your grade, your academic record, or your ability to graduate. It is merely an assessment tool to improve Oak Meadow’s curricular development. Your name and contact information will not be recorded; all answers are anonymously recorded. Do you consent to participate in this survey? (Answering ‘yes’ indicates that you are consenting to participate in this study, and giving Alison permission to use your anonymous answers. You are not obligated to take it. You will not be compensated.)

YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Project or Problem-solving: you choose the project, answer a larger question or solve a real problem

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

Design and Complete my own project

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

6

Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?

NO

Q6: Name a specific project or problem you’ve done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).

In my Modern Middle East, I was given the chance to create my own topic for a research paper; as long as it pertained to the subject matter. I chose to write about Iran’s views on homosexuality and the overarching LGBT community. This was my first major paper that I have had to write, so I really felt that this, first and for most, furthered my learning of how to write and organize a research paper and secondly, furthered my knowledge of middle eastern views on a certainly large westernized idea.
Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?
Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect? Holly Ramsay
What was the impact on you? She taught me to let go of all the emotion that was held in a piece of art so I wouldn’t get so attached to it. I gained the access of being able to stay true to my ideals as an artist, but not hold so much power in one piece of my artwork.

Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.
My freshman year math class was my least favorite class and teacher. For starters, I was having major academic difficulties and was just gaining my ground in a new high school setting. This teacher was semi-satanish. For someone who was awful at math, it was especially bad because she did not want to help any of us in the slightest. I would ask her for hellion something that we would be working on, and she would just direct me to my peers for help or question my brain compacity.

Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?
Weekly check-ins,
Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers? I believe it is different for different assignments, but a weekly check in would most likely suffice for most circumstances. If it was a paper, I may want some more feedback than for other assignments, but for an art project, I will most likely just want some space until I feel that the piece is finished.

Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?
YES,
If YES please provide your email address.
jw3690@oakmeadow.com
PAGE 1: Project-based learning: What are your thoughts?

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YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Traditional lessons: textbooks, guided questions, set assignments.

What about the approach you chose works for you? Traditional instruction works better for me because I am a major procrastinator and have difficulty completing a project without set assignments; however, I probably get more satisfaction from completing projects of my own design than traditional lessons.

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

A combination of the two (please explain below),

Explain your choice again.
I get more satisfaction out of designing and completing my own projects, but it helps to have a teacher overseeing my work and making sure I get things done.
### Project Based Learning

**Q4:** To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair; 5= a little bit of both)

2

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)

I almost always prefer working alone because I find that I don't learn as much/get as much work done in a group setting. I feel more in control when I work alone and like being able to set my own goals, do my own research, etc. In groups there is always someone who does more work than the others, and that's usually me! Occasionally I like working with another person because I learn new things, but it has to be someone who is equally independent and motivated.

**Q5:** Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?

YES,

If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it?

I am currently doing my ASP on bread, its history, chemistry, cultural significance, and more. I did an internship at a local bakery and am writing a blog about the bread I made there and at home. My overall experience has been good, although my project has turned out differently from what I thought it would. I set high goals for myself at the beginning (such as publishing one blog post per week, baking different types of breads from all over the world, etc.) and haven't been able to meet many of them due to the actual amount of time and energy it takes to do them. That said, I've still made much progress in my ASP and am happy with the way it's turned out.

**Q6:** Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).

**Q7:** Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?

Which course(s)/teacher had the most positive effect?

Health and Fitness/ Julia West

What was the impact on you?

The Health course was great because it gave me the tools to live a more healthy and balanced lifestyle. It empowered me to take better care of my body through exercise and nutrition. Julia was very supportive, knowledgeable, and always available to answer my questions.

**Q8:** What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

**Q9:** When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?

Help when I ask for it,

Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers?

I feel more comfortable communicating with some teachers than others, but in general I prefer to approach teachers on my own when I need help.
Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?  

NO
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YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Project or Problem-solving: you choose the project, answer a larger question or solve a real problem.

What about the approach you chose works for you? As a student I personally enjoy choosing a project and answering a larger question, but I also feel that having some guided questions and set assignments, can help give a student ideas for their own projects. Learning how to read textbooks or difficult material and interpret this information is a very valuable skill, and one you will use throughout your life.

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

Design and Complete my own project,

Explain your choice
I love creating my own projects and exploring the world. I feel like a teacher should not tell you what projects to do but to collaborate, and help guide you to things you would never discover on your.
Project Based Learning

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

♥

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)

Collaboration and discussion can be very valuable and important skills to learn. By discussing material that you've read or learned about it and help using new perspectives about the material. Working in a group for projects can sometimes be difficult and incredibly time-consuming, especially when you're going long distance. I have done group assignments long-distance and it has been difficult.

Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?

YES,

If yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it?

I have completed my ASP it was designed with a focus on Ornithology and was a year long project. I loved creating a project about something I have devoted so much of my time to, and the ability to have time set aside for further exploration was amazing. On the other hand my mentors from oakmeadow had a hard time helping stating what there role in the ASP was and how i was to regraded or the guidelines that were appropriate. Neither or my mentors have a distinct interest in ornithology so it was difficult to collaborate with them and share ideas about what I could go with my interests. I love working with mentors who can help you see new paths and options.

Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).

I did a project on NoI a form of Japanese masked theater, this project helped my graphic design skills grow, and I was able to combine research with beautiful graphics.

Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you?

Which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect?

Lit and Comp. II and The Craft of Poetry Sarah Boughman, and Antony Yeager

What was the impact on you?

With lit and comp I was able to expand my writing skills, and really enjoy writing. Sarah also helped me learn about how to organize classes and schedule. Antony gave so many positive comments and really boosted my confidence around my poetry and self.

Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.

When I was not recognized as an individual and told that I had done the same work as my sister even though that was not the case. This was a very unfortunate experience. This type of un recognition of individual has occurred more than once and is very difficult.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?</td>
<td>Weekly check-ins, Help when I ask for it, Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers? The amount of teacher involvement with me really depends on the project. I like when a teacher checks in periodically and is engaged with the students. I like knowing that a teacher cares about the work I am doing, and is interested in what I discover about the material or myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q10: Would you like to have a brief (4-5 questions) follow-up interview via email or Skype?</td>
<td>YES, If YES please provide your email address. <a href="mailto:bw1762@oakmeadow.com">bw1762@oakmeadow.com</a></td>
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YES, I consent

Q2: Which approach do you prefer: Traditional instruction (read these pages, answer these questions, do this assignment) or Project-Based/Problem-Based approach (learning through creating a large project or solving a larger problem of your choosing)?

Traditional lessons: textbook, guided questions, set assignments

What about the approach you chose works for you? It helps me learn the most and test my knowledge. Answering a larger question often makes me skip over crucial parts of a lesson and not fully understand what I read.

Q3: Would you prefer to complete project of your own design or complete an assignment from your teacher?

A combination of the two (please explain below),

Explain your choice
Having a loose guideline about a project is a lot easier to work with. Designing and completing my own project leaves too much room for straying from a topic, but having some guidelines and instructions helps me stay on track.

Q4: To what extent do you prefer working alone vs. working in a group? (1= always alone, 10= always in a group/pair, 5= a little bit of both)

3

Please explain (depends on the subject; depends on the assignment; what do you like about working alone vs. in a group?)

I had bad experiences in the past with working in a group in my old school. People would constantly put me down and try to prove themselves. Because of this, I try to avoid working in groups. I do enjoy partner work though because it allows me to hear someone else’s point of view on something and be exposed to new approaches.
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<tr>
<td>Q5: Have you completed/ are you working on an ASP?</td>
<td>YES, if yes, what was/is your project? What has been your overall experience in designing and completing it? My project is to run a public speaking class and study how elementary students prefer to learn and get over their fear of public speaking. So far, the experience has been great. I feel like I am really learning what I set out to, and I am helping others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Name a specific project or problem you've done that you found especially meaningful. Please explain what you felt it taught (content, collaboration strategies, meaningful knowledge, unexpected discoveries, etc.).</td>
<td>My ASP project American Literature with Antony Yaeger Mr. Yaeger was the most supportive teacher I had. He motivated me to do my best in every lesson through his positive comments and words of encouragement. When I fell short of meeting expectations for a lesson, instead of focusing only on the negatives, he told me ways I improved upon previous lessons and then went on to explain ways in which I could improve. This made me feel like a lower grade was not the end of the world and instead was motivation to do better.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7: Over the course of your high school experience, which course(s) or teacher had the most positive effect on you? Which course(s)/Teacher had the most positive effect? What was the impact on you?</td>
<td>American Literature with Antony Yaeger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: What has been your least favorite educational experience? Please explain your answer.</td>
<td>My least favorite educational experience was being given vague instructions, trying my best, and then being marked down for not being specific enough (even though I was given little to nothing to work with). I dislike being told to write freely and then being given a bad grade for doing exactly that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: When working on a project, how much teacher involvement do you prefer?</td>
<td>Weekly check-ins, Help when I ask for it, Only for grading, Explain your answer- is it different for different assignments? For different teachers? I love when teachers care to be involved in my education. For subjects such as math and science, little help and involvement is fine. For subjects like literature and media literacy, more involvement allows me to ask questions and discuss topics freely.</td>
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American Literature- The American Dream

Oak Meadow
Alison Davis
Spring, 2017

Welcome to American Literature at Oak Meadow! I’m delighted that we’ll be working together. This will be my first class as an Oak Meadow teacher. I have been working for OM for just over a year, in the administrative office. I am basically the front desk lady, which means I get to work with everyone in the office, from the families, to the teachers, to the design team and educational counselors. Before OM, I taught at an elementary school in Thailand for two years, and elementary, middle and high schools here in Vermont for another three years, before starting graduate school here in Brattleboro. My master’s degree is in international education with a focus on project-based learning and curriculum design. Alan and Marnie asked if I would help design a new sort of course that is more flexible, malleable and exploratory. Thank you for joining me on this journey, and I ask for your patience and understand, as well as feedback.

When I am not in the office, I spend my time (and money) on several different hobbies, the biggest of which is repairing and building motorcycles. On Sundays I apprentice at a local shop called Vintage Steele, and also do my own work in my home garage. Here is a short video of us at work. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBNbbFDtzh8 (it makes us look tougher than we actually are; the two fellows who own the shop, Josh and Chris, are the nicest, kindest guys).

Recently I have expanded to fixing vintage cars, and there is a 1963 Corvair convertible that needs a ton of work sitting in my driveway. I also teach a weekly yoga class, hike and camp, read, and am trying to learn to paint. I am planning to graduate from SIT this spring, and continue teaching high school English for Oak Meadow.

Course
This semester, we will be reading two books that explore the dream, and the realities, of life in America: The Circuit and East of Eden. While the characters in these novels are coming from different cultural backgrounds, many of the themes we will examine are the same: money, power, family, purpose, commerce, the struggle between good and evil. However, there are others, and we can explore any of them that strike your fancy.

In addition to the themes presented in the novel, we will practice different styles of writing, from expository essays, to newspaper articles, to blogs. Each will be explained, and please ask any questions as we go: the more questions you ask, the more information you will receive, and the larger your English ‘toolbox’ will grow.
Course Structure:

This course is set up a little differently from other Oak Meadow courses. While there are still weekly assignments to keep you on track, the semester will be divided into 5 modules, each of which explores a larger theme. Each module will be completed in 4 weeks. The last module will be a project of your design, and can be anything you choose, delving into any of the themes we cover in this course, or one of your own. I am here to help in the design and execution of that project, but it is yours to do with what you will. We will be using Google Classroom for this course (see below). We will be going at a slow pace through the novel and taking our time with assignments. Let me know if you need more time to complete something.

Vocabulary & Grammar:

We will be expanding our vocabulary this semester, and there are both lists of vocabulary words in the syllabus, but please add those you come across as you are reading. This is truly the best way to learn new words: write them down in your Oak Meadow journal (or put them in your Google Classroom- I have provided a spot) as they come up, look them up, and try to use them when you can. You can use either an electronic or print dictionary. I still do this when I read, and find it fun to discover new words, or look up those whose meanings I don’t really know, or have forgotten. Merriam-Webster’s pocket dictionary lives in my car, and its larger brother is on my desk.

Scattered throughout the course are lesson on grammar. While it may be dry, grammar is a very important part of writing and speaking well; like any tool, if you know how to use it, and can employ it in everyday life, it can actually aid you in getting your point across more efficiently and effectively. I encourage you to use them both in the small writing assignments in each module, but also in your daily life. They can be cumbersome at first, but in time you will notice your speaking is more eloquent. In addition to your increased vocabulary, which I also encourage you to utilize when possible, you may find that expressing yourself through words (both written and spoken) can be an enjoyable, elegant activity.

Projects:

Each month you will be designing and completing a project that relates to that module's theme. This can be anything, in any media, to answer any question that you choose. For example, for identity, you might ask, "at what point does a person's cultural identity differ from their personal identity?" and you can explore the answer through photographs of your community members and excerpts from your subjects about who they are, and why. Alternatively, you can do an exposé on a family member as a mini-biography, and compare their experiences to your own. The possibilities are endless.

In addition to the larger project, each week we will be working on writing, through grammar, vocabulary, and different types of writing exercises. Not all weeks will have all components, and we will be really focusing on the writing process: outlines, rough drafts, rewrites, peer review, etc.

The last month of the semester will be dedicated to a larger final project. Again, this project will center around a question about the American Dream that you come up with. I am here to help support and guide you through that process, but it your question,
your exploration, and your delivery. We will be sharing projects with a larger audience, which will depend on the type of media you decide to work within.

**Technology:**

I am most excited about our use of Google Classroom (or Classroom for short). While it may take some getting used to, it is a tool that will help expand our capabilities to discuss the novels and the work we are doing. We will also have opportunities to video chat and have real-time conversations, both individually and as a group. As this is a new tool to Oak Meadow, please give me feedback on what you think about Classroom. All of this material is also in a Google Doc, if you need to refer to it, but for the purpose of the class, and keeping everything in a well-organized digital location, we will be using Classroom.

There are places for posting questions and answers in each module; feel free to post a thought, comment or question, and answer each other as well. Assignments and papers will also be located here, as well as helpful articles, suggestions, extra resources (like rubrics for projects) and video feedback. If you’d like, we can have a weekly video conference (either as a group or one-on-one) to talk about the class, what you are working on, and voice any other thoughts, questions or concerns you have.

**Because your work will be submitted to the Google Classroom, you do not have to notify me when it’s posted.**

**Getting in touch:**

I am available via email, or by phone in the Oak Meadow office 9-5 Monday-Friday. I am happy to chat via Skype, Zoom or Google IM as well as email. If you need to call me in the evenings or weekends, my cell is (802) 291.0755. I will do my best to check email on the weekends, but during the week you can expect to hear back from me within an hour or two.

**Grading:**

Assignments will be graded according to the rubrics for each assignment; use them as guides for your assignments. The main categories are effort, completion, attention to detail, content, and improvement. Each module has four lessons, each lesson has an assignment that build toward the end project of each module, but this structure is flexible, and may change depending on how the course organically grows. Most of your written assignments will have several drafts, so feel free to try things out, and we can make corrections as we go.

I am also looking for engagement with the material, digging deep into the complex themes, and then turning them around to examine your own life, community, our country and the state of the world. The more perspectives you can bring into the discussion, the better. Each module will have a discussion section in the Classroom, so post any thoughts or articles or comments you have there. We will discuss these via video chat as well, but it’s a good place to write things down as they come to you.

**Expectations:**
My biggest expectation is that you discover: yourself, the novel, its characters, its universal messages. Find whatever you can, and share it, in whatever way you choose. The framework is here, but you get to design the look and choose the decor. As the last module is a project of your design, focused around a major question you have, it is up to you to discover what you want to know; the more you dig into Steinbeck’s world, the more it will offer to you.

Proper form is also of utmost importance. We will practice different styles of writing, learn new vocabulary and learn (and employ) the rules of grammar. This includes citing sources correctly. Please see your handbook for instructions on this, but I have also posted Purdue’s OWL website on the Classroom for quick and easy review (I use it all the time!). Always ask questions if you need.

Please review Oak Meadow’s plagiarism policy in your handbook. A PDF version is linked in our Classroom as well.

Most of all, enjoy!

Themes we will be exploring this semester:

- Identity
- Family
- Good vs. Evil
- Religion
- Progress
- Power
- Love/Attachment
- Migration
- Commerce
- Community/Family
- Intention/Drive
- Men/Women

(Add your own):

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Module 1- The American Dream (February)

Lesson 1

Getting Started

Reading: Look through this course doc and the books. Read the introductions.

Grammar: No vocabulary this week.

Vocabulary: No vocabulary this week.

Project: Keep thinking about your final project. Ideas? Post them on the classroom on the last module; you can revisit them as we move through the course, adding or changing or rewriting.

Writing:

Describe what the American Dream is to you: what does it mean? What does it look like? Is it different for different people (your friends, family, strangers, celebrities)? How? If you were to try to achieve it, how would you go about it?

Choose one of the following, or create your own:

a) Write a one page double spaced typed reflection piece about your own feelings/attitudes about the American Dream, using the structure for a basic essay in the Appendix as a guide. You are welcome to play with that structure, but please use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.

b) Create a visual representation (collage, diorama, short film) of how you view the American Dream. You can use any medium you'd like.

c) Draft a mock-op ed about the American Dream. Is it real? What evidence have you seen? How is it different for citizens, immigrants, Native Americans, or outsiders looking in? What are the challenges and realities of this 'Dream'? Where do you fit into the larger idea of 'living the American Dream'? How would you like to see it, or people's perspectives of it, change?

Lesson 2

Look through the US immigration legislation from the last 100 years in the Appendix to get an idea of the policy changes regarding immigration/migration/labor laws in America over the last century. Read a few, or all of them.

The beginning of the book introduces the family, their expectations of their new life in America, and the realities and hardships once they arrive. As you read, feel free to
make notes in the margins, underline powerful or poignant passages, and write down any words you don’t know in the vocabulary section of your journal to look up later (better yet, look them up as you read- you will remember them better that way).

**Reading:** The Circuit, pages 1-50 (chapters 1-6)
**Grammar:** No grammar this week.
**Vocabulary:**
**Writing:** Complete final draft of the reflection piece you started last week.
**Project:** Be thinking about your final project; begin gathering questions you want to answer.
**Resources:**
- Untangling the Immigration Debate  The New Yorker, OCTOBER 31, 2016

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**Lesson 3**

Research current immigration legislation. DOCA, H2 visas, and refugee migration are good places to start. (See the recommended articles in the Appendix if you want help getting started). Note: these policies may all change in the days, weeks and month to come.

Reflect on what these policies mean for you, your community, your state, our country and those coming from other countries. What aspects need to be considered when creating policy? What challenges do immigrants in the US face? Could we do things differently? How?

**Reading:** The Circuit pp. 51-134
**Grammar:** No grammar this week
**Vocabulary:** Start a journal for words to look up. The words you find as you read are in addition to our 5 weekly words.

a) Write a journal entry, short essay or poem in response to any of the questions above.

b) Think about the last chapter of the book. What would it be like living as an immigrant and in fear of deportation? Do you know anyone who is in this situation? Come up with some interview questions for what you would ask an undocumented person (and ask someone, if you know someone)

c) Write, and answer, 3-5 critical thinking/analysis questions about the book, or use some of the examples below
Lesson 4

**Reading:**
Review any lessons in The Circuit you’d like.
Find some current articles about state or national policy changes from any reputable news source. Reflect on how that policy relates to what you have read in The Circuit.

**Grammar:** Try not using the word “like” incorrectly for one day. Count how many times you do use it; increased awareness will help you stop this bad habit.

**Vocabulary:** Continue to write down words in your Word Journal you come across in your daily life; these can be words you don’t know, or whose definition you are not 100% sure of.

**Project:** Is there anything in The Circuit that sparked your curiosity, something you would like to explore more fully as your final project? Run these ideas past your teacher.

**Writing:**
Choose one of the following, or DESIGN YOUR OWN. Write/create a rough draft and turn it into your teacher, noting any questions you have. We will work on it together before you write your final draft. Examples of the following types of writing are in the Appendix. Use the rubric as a guideline for constructing your piece.

a) Write a [formal letter](#) to your local, state or US legislator (senator or congressman/woman) about your thoughts on immigration.

b) Write a book review for The Circuit. Introduce the book, give a few details, voice any thoughts or opinions you had about the book, relate the book, or its themes to your own experiences, or those of a family member or friend.

c) Imagine you were going to turn the book into a movie or play. Pick a chapter and design the staging for it. Include the props, costumes, and set (larger objects). You could do this in real life, and take a picture or film it with your camera/phone, create a diorama, or write the stage directions for the scene. If you create a visual representation, also include a narrative of what you have created. This can be a recorded soundbite, or write it down.

d) Write a [3-paragraph](#) reflection on their journey. A sample structure is in the Appendix, but feel free to write what you’d like to about the family and their life change.

Paragraphs 1 & 2: What did they think life would be like? What was their version of the American Dream? What were they afraid of? How was life different from their
expectations when they arrive in California? Name some specific challenges the children face, and those specific to their parents.

Paragraph 3: Think of a time you traveled, even as a young child, maybe to camp, or even an overnight at a friend’s house. What did you think it would be like? What were your fears and expectations? Were they met? What were the challenges you faced, and how did you overcome them (or did you not overcome them? What happened as a result?).

Module 2- Identity (March)


In this module, we will be examining the idea of identity, of how we got to be where we are, in this moment and place in time. While there are many components of identity, we will be focusing on two specific ones, although feel free to incorporate others: self-identity and cultural identity. Gender, race, sexuality, ideals, values, religion, interests and passions, geography, nationality, the list goes one. All of these are aspects of identity, and we will be examining ourselves as we move into East of Eden, using the characters there presented as lenses or mirrors through which to look at ourselves.

There are many ways you can look at the self, as there are many aspects to this idea: perspective, perception, esteem, relationships, values, beliefs, experiences and goals. There are many others besides these- what do you think defines us? There are just as many ways to define cultural identity. You will notice that some of these overlap.

Throughout the module, I invite you to do some self-exploration. The way I do this is through energy work: yoga, meditation, Reiki, self-reflection. Journaling and talking to friends and family are another excellent way to get an idea of who you are and how you present yourself to the world. Pick your favorite way, but I encourage you to expand your self-understanding.
Lesson 5

I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Emily Dickinson, 1830 - 1886
I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there’s a pair of us!
Don’t tell! they’d advertise – you know!
How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one’s name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

Reading: East of Eden, pp. ~1-70
Grammar: No grammar this week.
Vocabulary:
Review, define and try to use these words in your writing. This is for your own edification; you do not have to turn them in. Add any other words you come across as you read. (I cannot tell you how well this will serve you in writing, reading, and in life!)
1. abjure
2. evanescent
3. inculcate
4. loquacious
5. paradigm
6. ______________
7. ______________
8. ______________
9. ______________
10. ______________

Writing:
This month we will be working on a narrative essay. There are guidelines and examples on the Classroom. Your narrative essay is part of your exploration of your identity, so if you write about your own experience, or that of a friend or relative, make sure to relate it to your identity inquiry.

This week, begin to think about what question you want to ask about identity. What story do you want to tell? Write your outline and post it to the Classroom. Write your rough draft next week. Try to use your vocabulary as you write - it will take some finagling to get them in, but it will make your writing richer.
How to write a narrative essay: instructions, guidelines, format
Project:
Begin to think about what question(s) you have surrounding identity. These can be about your own identity, American cultural identity as a phenomenon, or a specific universal aspect of identity you'd like to explore further (or anything else!).

Lesson 6
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 8-10
Grammar: Dig out your copies of Write it Right: A Handbook for Student Writers (from Oak Meadow 8th grade), The Elements of Style by Strunk and White, and A Pocket Style Manual (from Introduction to Literature and Composition). These texts are excellent resources to have at your fingertips.
This week for grammar, let's review some often misused words. These can be found on pages 61-63 of Write it Right: A Handbook for Student Writers, or look them up.

Affect vs. effect
Among vs. between
Farther vs. further
Lay vs. lie
Less vs. fewer
That vs. which
Who vs. whom
I vs. me
Please include as many of these in your narrative essay as possible.

Writing: Write and submit a rough draft of your narrative essay. Remember to incorporate your vocabulary and grammar words!

Project: Submit your project proposal to your teacher. Your project should pose and answer a question you have regarding identity.

Lesson 7

**Reading:** East of Eden, chapters 11-13

**Grammar:** Foundations in Grammar: Clauses. Take a look through this. There will be a new grammar lesson each week, for your review and practice. You do not have to turn them in. Do, however, try to employ these grammar tools in your writing.

**Vocabulary:**
1. abrogate
2. circumnavigate (*one of my personal favorites*)
3. enervate (the opposite of what you think it would be…)
4. filibuster (very relevant these days in our political ‘theater’)
5. lugubrious
Add some of your own!

**Writing:** Please submit a final draft of your narrative essay to your teacher. Don’t forget to include some of your vocabulary words, both yours and those from this class.

**Project:** Begin work on your Identity mini-project. Make sure you ask your teacher for any support/guidance.

Lesson 8

**Reading:** East of Eden, chapters 14-18
Please read *Howl*, by Allen Ginsberg. It is very long, so read it twice, once this week and once next week. CAUTION: the poem contains many graphic, sexual verses, so reader beware. If this makes you uncomfortable, feel free to read a different poem by Ginsberg. (Note: you may have read this for Word: The Poet’s Voice. If so, reread it through the lens of the themes we have been discussing; family, identity, fate, etc.)

**Grammar:** Foundations in Grammar- Commas

**Vocabulary:**
1. jejune
2. moiety
3. nonsectarian
4. obsequious (another personal favorite)
5. pecuniary

**Writing:** This week, do a personal journal entry about how your thoughts and feelings around the American Dream have changed as you have worked through this course.
Project: Submit your project to your teacher, and share it with the world at large (as appropriate: if it’s a video or photo album, upload to YouTube/Flickr; if it’s poetry or writing, consider submitting it to a local newspaper or national magazine).

Module 3- Change: Inside Out (April)

Change comes in many forms: personal, familial, local, national, global, environment, economy, perspective, your own body, trends, fads, ideas, values, countries, religions. Do people change? How do we enact change?

We will be exploring different types of change in this module. Begin by thinking about yourself. What has changed in your life, in either big or small ways, in the last few years. In the last few weeks? Since this morning? Expand this to your immediate surrounds; what changes in your family, your neighborhood, your community, your environment do you see? What in our nation, and internationally, has changed since this time last year? Since last week?

Lesson 9
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 19-22
Reread Howl, or another Ginsberg poem of your choice. Reflect: how is the tone of the poem different from Steinbeck’s prose? Do they contain similar attitudes.

Grammar: Foundations in Grammar- Apostrophe

Vocabulary:
Writing:
Project:

Lesson 10
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 23-26
Grammar:
Vocabulary:
Writing:
Project:

Lesson 11
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 27-33
Grammar:
Vocabulary:
Writing:
Project:

Lesson 12
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 34-39
Grammar:
Module 4 (May)

Lesson 13
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 40-45
Grammar:
Vocabulary:
Writing:
Project:

Lesson 14
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 46-50
Grammar:
Vocabulary:
Writing:
Project:

Lesson 15
Reading: East of Eden, chapters 51-end
Grammar:
Vocabulary:
Writing:
Project:

Lesson 16
Reading:
Grammar:
Vocabulary:
Writing:
Project:

Module 5- Final Project (June)

Final Project

This month is dedicated to designing and completing your final semester project. The topic and medium/media are up to you, and your teacher is here to help you. The schedule below will keep you on track, and the rubric will help guide your efforts.
Ethics
I, Alison B. Davis, attest to the ethical presentation of information.