



Alamance Community School Project Work

Project Based Learning/PBL

Project Based Learning/PBL at ACS can take many forms. All of our extensive grade level projects are aligned with the NC Essential Science and Social Studies standards and encompass many subject areas, connecting multiple fields of thought, and span most of the trimester.

Other projects might be a “passion” project, a topic that the teacher and students want to investigate further. “Passion” projects are usually a couple of weeks in length. Field experiences (field trips) and guest experts are key components in Project Based Learning (PBL) and are a part of ACS’s project work curriculum.

All projects, however, offer rich educational experiences in which children are engaged in meaningful work that matters to them through tasks and inquiries designed to meet educational standards.

Meaningful projects have several key components:

- A need to know that provides an authentic reason for learning
- A driving question to focus investigations and provide purpose and challenge
- Student choice among options for learning and presentation
- 21st century skills including collaboration, critical thinking and technology
- Opportunities for inquiry and innovation
- Opportunities for achieving best work through feedback, revision, and reflection
- Public exhibition of work

Through these experiences, students practice and develop the habits of mind and characteristics of life-long learners including persisting, thinking flexibly, striving for accuracy and precision, questioning and posing problems, creating, imagining and innovating, and thinking interdependently.

Responsive Classroom

At ACS, we use a system of classroom management called Responsive Classroom (RC). RC’s main goal is promoting optimal student learning and creating a caring community of students and staff. It is a research-based program that shows students learn best when they feel safe, challenged, and happy. The main components of RC are Morning Meeting, Hopes and Dreams, Rule Creation, Guided Discovery, and Logical Consequences. During the first six weeks of school, students spend time learning the rules, routines, and procedures that will foster our students as independent learners and will help our classrooms run smoothly. Morning Meeting is an opportunity to connect with classmates and build a strong classroom community. Morning Meeting, students will gather on the carpet and have time to

greet each other and share any news they might have. In addition, students will work together to create a set of classroom rules that encourage responsibility and kindness. When children are involved in setting the standards for their classroom behavior, it is more meaningful to them. Guided Discovery allows students to explore new materials and classroom activities in an organized fashion, under the guidance of the teacher. The use of Guided Discoveries will help to make sure that students know how to properly care for materials in their classroom. Sometimes students make choices that are not acceptable. When this happens, we will use Logical Consequences; we will respond to the student's misbehavior in a way that encourages the student to correct the situation and learn from their mistakes without losing their dignity.

Specials

Students rotate through specials' classes PE, Art, Music, STEM, & Global Connections to gain exposure to other disciplines and enrich their experiences.

STEM: STEM combines Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math into one class. At ACS, we incorporate STEM into our project work. In the STEM Special, students dig deeper into Science & Math standards, build and create with different materials, and use technology to support learning. Students also learn the Importance of creating a plan in order to be successful and how to enhance their collaboration skills by working in groups to achieve a common goal. Students will embrace their creative side by thinking outside the box and will learn to ask questions and find answers through exploration and research.

Global Connections: We designed a new special that would focus on Project Work and would encompass the new NC Social Studies standards which are inclusive of multiple ideas, viewpoints, and perspectives that prepare our students with the knowledge, understanding, and skills needed to productively live and engage in a multicultural and globally competitive society. The goal is to create global awareness by exploring different nations and cultures; discuss how everyday decisions can have an impact on local and global communities; and offer opportunities for students to share knowledge, develop ideas, and collaborate with others about student project work.