Ready to Teach

The Deep End

Problem-Based Learning Unit
Developed for Residency I Students

Fall 2013

Problem-Based Learning Writers Workgroup
Middle Tennessee State University
Womack Family Department of Educational Leadership

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Facilitator Notes

This PBL event takes 2 weeks. The scenario is presented in 2 sessions, and teacher candidates will conduct research and fieldwork during a 2-week timeframe. The time between the first class meeting and the field experience during the following week provides time for student research and collaboration on the final product. PBL groups will have 8-10 members. Group roles and responsibilities are illustrated in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Role</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty (1)</td>
<td>Facilitator/Mentor</td>
<td>Act as a guide to insure that all are fully exploring course content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant (1)</td>
<td>Quarterback</td>
<td>Manage the PBL process during meetings. Read each scene aloud and moderate discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant (1)</td>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>Take group notes using the PBL Learning Grid and distribute information to the group via email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants (8-10, including the quarterback and scribe)</td>
<td>Researcher (Note: Each participant fills this role, including quarterback and scribe.)</td>
<td>Contribute to group discussions, research assigned tasks and present findings to group.</td>
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As Facilitator, your task is to manage the PBL process during the entire learning event. First, explain group roles and how to use the PBL Learning Grid. Allow students to set group roles if possible, knowing that this depends upon the experience levels of the group members. Explain the Quarterback’s role to them and give them the Scenes for the Session. Explain that they will be leading the group discussion, and that they should only give out one Scene at a time. Stress the importance of not rushing through the Scenes. They should allow enough time for the group to fully think through the problem.

Next, groups should move to Scene One. The Quarterback will read the Scene with no personal interpretation, and the group will begin to analyze the problem using the Learning Grid. Encourage them to summarize key information first, and then to move across the Learning Grid, using it as a method of brainstorming. Make sure they are allowing enough time at the end of the Session (the class period) to generate learning tasks for each group member.

Take a “hands off” approach as much as possible. Allow participants to struggle with concepts and direction. You may intervene with guiding questions that serve to “nudge” the group in the desired direction. This will most likely occur during the “Information Needed” Phase. Do not direct the problem-solving process, but allow time for the group members to raise issues, discuss options, and talk about alternative solutions. One final caution: This Facilitator Guide is confidential, as there will by many notes that are meant for your eyes only.
Introduction

Dylan Johnson has spent the summer interviewing for his first teaching position. Three weeks after the school year begins, Dylan is finally offered a job. He has the opportunity to observe classes on Friday before he begins on Monday. After celebrating his good news with friends, Dylan makes time to prepare himself for Friday by preparing questions he would like to ask and reflecting how his past experiences will affect the kind of teacher he will be. At school, Dylan witnesses a fight, experiences the hectic nature of a school office, learns of his challenging teaching assignment, and observes classes whose teachers have different teaching and classroom management styles. He gets a sense of the school culture and climate and is invited to sit in on a PLC meeting after school. The main focus of this PBL is relationships and interactions (teacher-administration, teacher-student, teacher-teacher),

Guiding Questions
(These are questions that should serve you in guiding student learning. Remember to allow students to work through the problem on their own. They may flounder; that’s OK.)

Session 1
- Probe student perceptions to encourage research.
- If teacher candidates approach you for information: “That’s a really good question, who do you think would know that?” “Where would you expect to find the answer to that?” “How would you be sure that the information you find is accurate and complete?”
- What criteria would you use to choose a school to use as a model?

Faculty Meeting
(Use the product that TCs created in order to focus their activities for the day.) If necessary, here are some possible questions to use in helping TCs to focus their attention.

- When you first walked into the school, what did you see, feel and hear?
- When you first walked into the classroom, what did you see, feel, and hear?
- What is the impact of school culture upon the culture of the classroom?
- What made one classroom more/less effective?
- How do you see your observations of pedagogy matching up with your subject matter/content?

Final Class Session

Graphical representation of learning
Don’t feel that you need to describe what this product should look like. Allow students the freedom to explore. For example, one group may choose to make a concept map, while another may collect images, or create a collage. Here are some types of questions that may
help you to facilitate this activity. Feel free to add your own, and share your ideas with the PBL Writers Workgroup!

- What are some important concepts that you’ve learned through this experience?
- How would you organize this information?
- What sorts of images would you use to represent this learning, and how would you present this to others?
- What types of ways do organizations etc. represent this type of information?

**Learning Objectives**
(Do not share these with students. They are for your use.)

1. (Knowledge) TLW identify characteristics of the relationships and interactions of students and teachers with a focus on their impact on classroom culture.

2. (Application) TLW create an I/We Believe Statement and a Toolbox that reflects/support the development of positive interactions and relationships within the classroom with a focus on classroom culture

3. (Synthesis) TLW organize the information from the application into a graphical representation.

4. (Analysis) TLW reflect upon their experiences and evaluate their findings.

**Products**

1. Research Brief (Knowledge/Comprehension) – Learning Objective # 1

2. a. “I/We Believe” Statements (Application) – Learning Objective # 2
   b. Toolbox of Activities (Application) – Learning Objective #2

3. Graphical Representation (Synthesis/Analysis) – Learning Objective #3

4. Reflection (Evaluation/Affective) – Learning Objective #4
Resources

(Here are some resources that you might expect your group members to identify during the Jigsaw Phase at the conclusion of the first Session (class meeting). Do not share these with the group. Use guiding questions to encourage thought, and only if necessary. If the group has identified appropriate learning goals while using the Learning Grid but can’t seem to think of good sources, then you should use guiding questions, like “What is the nature of the information that you have determined that you need? Where would you find this type of information?”)

1. Human
   - Teachers
   - K-12 Students
   - Parents
   - Administration
   - Facilitator / Liaison
   - Fellow group members

2. School / Teachers websites
3. Previous course notes
4. Internet / Library
5. SIP, TELL survey, SACS Data-demographics
6. School Info
7. Grants
8. Video Clips (YouTube; self produced)

Learning Tasks and Activities
(These are examples of the types of tasks and activities that we would expect your groups to generate. These are for your use as you consider the group’s progress.)

1. Interviews
   - Informal

2. Observation
   - Team Meeting
   - Lunch Room
   - PLCs
   - Parent/Teacher Conf
   - Open House
   - Informal/ “Hanging out”

3. Surf the web

4. Research
   - Academic
- Practitioner

5-7 Check school data

Teacher Candidate Perceptions

Assessment

Assessment Exercises
Time and Schedule

Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PBL, Group Work, Jigsaw</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Research, Prepare Brief</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Research, Upload Brief</td>
<td>Brief Draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Receive Feedback, Upload Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Revise Research Brief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fieldwork, Group Meeting</td>
<td>“I Believe” &amp; “We Believe” Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Receive Feedback</td>
<td>Revise Group Product (“We Believe” Statements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fieldwork, Debrief</td>
<td>Final Group Product, Graphical Representation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>New PBL</td>
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PBL Learning Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBL Learning Grid</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Tasks</td>
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</tbody>
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Analysis and Solutions
Scene 1

It was a mid-afternoon on a scorching hot Wednesday, the last week of August. Dylan thought about going to the pool for a swim to try to relax a little. He had been sitting on his couch at his apartment, not paying attention to the white noise of the TV, going over in his mind all the job interviews he had been on during this sweltering summer, none of which panned out. He got up and walked to the kitchen for a bottle of water. His attitude, like the small patch of grass between his apartment and the pool, was dry and shriveled.

He just didn’t get it, why hadn’t he been offered a job? Being highly qualified in both math and science should have made him not only a shoe-in for a job, but he should have been able to have his choice of jobs. He plopped back onto the couch and thought, “Now here it is, three weeks after the start of school and I am jobless, I have student loans to repay, rent, a car payment. Man, I don’t want to have to move back to my parents’ house. I am ready to teach!”

After working himself up, Dylan decided to go to the pool to “cool his jets.” He was worried that he would not get a teaching job, especially since school was already in session. The cool water on his face and the hot sun on his back began to ease his tensions as he mulled over his options. From the far end of the pool, he heard his phone ring. The call could be from Lisa, a girl he met last week, or it could be from Tony, his best friend, or it could be about a job! Dylan swam fast and then jumped out of the pool with such speed and anticipation that he nearly missed the call as he fumbled over the phone trying to answer it. “Hello?” he said trying to catch his breath. “Hello, this is Ben Rogers, Principal of Jefferson County High School. Is this Dylan Johnson?”

Dylan stood, dripping wet, out of breath, staring pie-eyed as Mr. Rogers offered him a job at Jefferson High.

Dylan shared the good news of his new teaching job with his parents, and then spent the rest of the afternoon celebrating his new job with his friends at the Mexican restaurant. He enjoyed Joey’s jokes (at his expense of course), Mark’s latest stories of the girl he was seeing, and the sports talk. He got his fill of chips and salsa and his favorite meal, fajitas! He had a lot not only on his stomach but on his mind too. As he finished his beverage, he rose to leave, explaining that he had a lot to do to get ready for his observation day. His friends tried to persuade him to stay and have “another one.” He left them celebrating, seemingly unaffected by his departure. He wondered if his new job would affect his social life…should it? He also began to think about the questions he needed to ask regarding his new job and the observations he would need to make this Friday before beginning teaching “for real” the following Monday.
Scene 2

Waking early Friday morning, dressed in black slacks, blue button down and a matching tie, Dylan felt like a professional. He left his apartment in plenty of time, just in case there were any unforeseen delays in traffic. He noted that there were three school zones, six very serious and perhaps cross-looking crossing guards, and a ton of slow-moving school buses between his apartment and Jefferson County High School. He was following a long line of cars to the school when he noticed in his rear-view mirror a car whose teenage driver was texting, the teenage passenger smoking a cigarette and neither one wearing their seat belt. He frowned. Just then his phone vibrated, he was getting a text. He glanced down, saw it was from his Mom, and set the phone back down.

Dylan drove around the parking lot twice and could not find a parking place. In the corner of his eye he noticed that there were six to eight buses to his right unloading their passengers. While waiting on a parking spot to become available, he heard loud voices, then shouting. Looking over his right shoulder he could barely catch a glimpse between the buses at what looked like the beginnings of a fight. Should he get out and try to stop it? Mind his own business? Or get a teacher? “Wait, I am a teacher” he realized. The parking spot became available and he quickly pulled in. He jumped out of his car in time to see a couple of adults, including the Student Resource Officer arrive at the scene. He felt relieved that he did not have to get involved.

He made his way across the parking lot and through the line of cars dropping students off. Making his way through all the students who were grouped in clusters in front of the school waiting for the morning bell to ring, he stopped and asked a kid, who was by himself, where the front office was. The young man looked startled and a little bewildered that someone asked him a question, and removed his headphones. As he looked up at him, Dylan thought that this kid may have special needs and felt his heartbeat quicken. He asked the kid if he would please take him to the front office. The kid nodded and began to lead the way. Dylan asked him his name. After a moment and some effort the young man replied, “Justin, my name is Justin.”

They entered the vestibule where Dylan saw glass doors that led to the classrooms. He tried the glass doors. They were locked. There was another door that Justin pointed to that appeared to route him past the resource officer and into the front office area. “Thanks Justin! Hope to see you around” Dylan said with a smile. Justin’s eyes lit up and he shot his hand up in a gesture that was a wave good-bye.

Entering the front office was like entering Grand Central Station. He had never seen or heard so much hubbub. There were students waiting around; apparently one had a note of some sort and the other three were her bodyguards or escorts. An unhappy parent was tapping her foot and constantly checking her cell phone clock as she impatiently waited on someone or something. The unassailable receptionist was on the phone; another call was coming in; and a teacher was rummaging around her looking for something. Dylan decided to sit down until things settled down. He pulled out his iPad, opened it up to the “Notes” app.
and began to read over the questions he wanted to ask and the list of observations he wanted, or at least hoped, to make.

Not long afterward, the receptionist asked from across her barrier if she could help him. Dylan quickly rose to his feet and walked over and introduced himself as Dylan Johnson, the new teacher. Mrs. Wilson’s eyebrows raised and a warm smile came across her face. He could tell right away that he liked Mrs. Wilson and he decided that he wanted to stay on her good side.

After waiting for what seemed an eternity, Mr. Rogers finally greeted Dylan and apologized for keeping him waiting. “I had to deal with a discipline issue on the bus again this morning” he explained shaking his head. “Third time this week for this kid; he has been suspended for three days and won’t be able to ride the bus for a week. It is easier to kick them off the bus than kick him out of school.” Dylan remembered the school where he did his student teaching and recalled that the principal there mostly seemed to ignore discipline issues on the bus and expected the teachers to deal with their own discipline in the classroom.

Mr. Rogers invited Dylan to his office where he explained that their student enrollment was up which allowed them one growth position in math and science and that he was happy to have Dylan join his staff, albeit late. They discussed Dylan’s teaching schedule. He thought about the three sections of double period Algebra classes and two sections of Honors Physics and how different they would be. Mr. Rogers explained that there would be an EA in the math classes with him, and that there were no classrooms available so he would be on a cart using various classrooms while teachers were on their planning period. Dylan’s eyebrows shot up as he thought, How in the world can I teach science on a cart? As though reading his mind, Mr. Rogers assured Dylan that the Physics classes would be taught in a science lab. Dylan was able to get his other questions answered before going into classrooms for observations.
Scene 3

Mr. Rogers escorted Dylan to the math and science wings to show him around. He introduced him to a couple of teachers and explained that Dylan was a new hire, ready to start Monday but was here today to observe and ask questions. Dylan was left with Ms. McElroy, a young, attractive, petite red-haired math teacher, who, he observed, was not wearing a wedding band. Dylan watched how Beth, as she asked him to call her, greeted each student with a smile and by name as they entered her room. She was seamless in starting her class, as the students immediately began their bell work as she silently took roll. As Beth walked through the room, she reminded students to put their homework on the corner of their desk. A student got up and put a paper in a bin labeled absent work. Dylan saw a student take out his cell phone. Beth, on cue, quietly walked over to the student and put out her hand. The student looked up sheepishly and handed over his phone. Beth then announced it was time to do their “Rotation Stations.” The students with no further instruction, got into their various groups and began working. Beth walked to each group and asked questions of the students. Dylan was listening to a group of students discussing the assignment when Beth began to close the lesson. He was surprised at how quickly the time had passed.

After spending a second class with Beth, Dylan made his way down the hall to the next math class. He noticed that the students in the hall were pretty much the same as when he was in high school; in fact he felt a little weird being “the teacher;” it wasn’t too long ago that he was in their place. In the hallway, he heard curse words here and there, not too much; he noticed cell phones out; he saw what seemed to be a same-sex couple precariously close to each other; and he noticed a group of Latino and Latina students hanging out in the intersection of two hallways. Some kids wore clothing that certainly would not be allowed at his high school with its very strict dress code. He became self-conscious when he realized that some of the girls were pointing at him and whispering. Were they checking him out, he wondered. He could feel himself turn red. He just nodded and kept walking.

Dylan was near the next class when he noticed one kid picking on another kid at the lockers. Dylan hated bullying. He knew he needed to do something; he didn’t want to escalate the conflict, or embarrass or alienate either of the students. As he walked over to intervene, the bully gave Dylan a “who the heck do you think you are?” look. Dylan ignored the bully and walked up to the other kid and said, “Hey man, how’s it going? Need a hand?” He helped the kid with his stuff and as they walked off together, Dylan said to the bully, “It’s okay, I’ll help him, I know it was an accident.” The kid smiled as he went his way. Dylan made a mental note to keep an eye out for those two.

Dylan made it to Mr. Turner’s room just about a minute before the bell rang. Mr. Turner was sitting at his desk reading the newspaper. He looked up and greeted Dylan. Dylan realized that Mr. Turner hardly looked up as his students entered the room. The bell rang and the students were milling around and coming in late. “Okay, everyone sit down and get quiet. The bell has rung.” Dylan found his way through the densely packed classroom, and settled at a student desk covered with writing. Mr. Turner yelled at them again to be quiet, and called roll systematically “Adams, Adkins, Benjamin, Biller, Bueller, Bueller, Bueller…”
Following attendance, Mr. Turner got out a folder overflowing with previously used transparencies and flipped on the overhead projector. “Get out your notes, we are picking up where we left off yesterday.” Some appeared to do as he said; some sat quietly but did not follow directions. Mr. Turner pulled out the first transparency, covering half of it with a blank sheet of paper, and asked the students to begin copying the notes down. As he began to methodically read what was on the screen, one student got out his phone and Mr. Turner yelled, “You, bring that phone up here!” Dylan thought, *This is going to be a long class period!*

After observing one more of Mr. Turner’s classes, Dylan ventured over to the science wing of the building and observed a couple of science classes. Dylan noted that Ms. Murray, like Ms. McElroy, was a young teacher and seemed to be very friendly with the students. He noticed during this observation a student sitting at her desk, another called her by her first name, and yet another student said that they were having a party this weekend if she wanted to come by. For the remaining observation, Dylan worked on his to-do list and paid little specific attention to the goings-on around him.

The science teachers as a whole seemed to be delighted that Dylan was joining them, especially Mr. Tate, the department chair, who explained that the class size would be reduced with Dylan on board. Dylan observed that Mr. Tate, like Beth, had a teaching style that he admired and Mr. Tate was easy to talk to. He thought that in Mr. Tate he may have found a potential mentor.
Scene 4

At the end of the school day, Dylan was invited to stay for the science PLC meeting. Dylan observed the protocols that the group used and noticed that they seemed to be of the same mindset regarding the Next Generation Science Standards and the Common Core State Standards, except Mrs. Tankersly. She claimed to have seen and heard it all in her time and, she ensured her colleagues, that this too would come and go. Looking at her, Dylan figured it would not be long until she retired. He wondered what his attitude would be after working in education as long as Mrs. Tankersly. He hoped that he would get out before he ever got to a place of discontent, cynicism, and general malaise. *I have a very long time until I retire and a lot to learn!* he thought. After the PLC meeting, Dylan spent time with Mr. Tate getting questions answered about the textbook and resources, classroom logistics, and picking her brain for ideas about the best way to get to know the students and to start off the best possible way.

As Dylan pulled out of the parking lot, he reflected on all of the events of this day - so many people, so many needs, so many approaches, so many expectations and only one me. Who am I? Dylan or Mr. Johnson, can I be both? Will the students and teachers respect me? How will I survive? Who will I turn to if I struggle or have questions? He was glad he had the weekend to begin to prepare. As he drove past the pool and into his usual parking spot in front of the pool, he wondered if he had gone into the deep end?