

Effective PBU Criteria: Guiding Questions When Designing and Analyzing Projects/Units

Criteria	Explanation	Sample Guiding Questions
1. Standards and Internationals alignment	<i>Project aligns with key subject-area standards, as well as Internationals Core Principles.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If your teacher team (subject-area or grade-level team) has determined a focus on certain skills--eg., backing opinion with evidence, problem solving, etc.--how does this project align with that focus? Can you identify the specific pieces of the project where students can demonstrate growth in those standards? ● Where in the project is there evidence of heterogeneity, collaboration, experiential learning, language/content integration, and localized autonomy/responsibility?
2. Authentic purpose	<i>Project is authentic to the discipline in giving students multiple opportunities to engage in the kind of disciplinary thinking that practitioners do.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does this project engage students in at least one of the core thinking skills of our discipline? What are some examples of this? ● Does this project reflect the type of work that members of our discipline need to do in the field? Does the project provide opportunities for students to build knowledge about a topic or subject through analysis of a coherent selection of strategically sequenced, discipline-specific texts? ● Does the project present students the chance to address and/or be in dialog with an authentic audience?
3. Relevance and Responsiveness	<i>Project connects to, draws upon, and engages students' lived experiences and interests. The project addresses topics, issues, or concepts that matter to or impact students and their community. The project anticipates and prepares for the varied socio-emotional experiences and needs of a heterogeneous classroom.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the project address topics, issues, or concepts that matter to or impact students and their community and afford them an opportunity to create an impact of their own? ● Does the project adopt a culturally responsive, anti-racist lens that supports the advancement of social justice? ● Does the project feature texts, authors, experts, media, activities, and other resources that are reflective of students' lives, prioritizing equity and cognizant of disproportionality? ● Does the project acknowledge the socio-emotional reality of student experience, and does the project incorporate or recognize trauma-informed practices?

<p>4. Task</p>	<p><i>Project task is open-ended; there is no one correct answer, and some choice is given to students. Task is clear, coherent, and achievable. The task is designed to incorporate students as key creators and participants whose unique knowledge and experience are vital to the process.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is there a clear and compelling Driving Question for the project for which students cannot merely google the answer? ● Is it possible to have multiple and varied responses to the driving question of the project? Will the students have some choice in how they navigate their way to the final product? (topic, product, voice, format, etc)? ● Does the task allow students to bring elements of themselves and their lives into the process and product? ● Is the task clear to students and achievable in the time frame allotted?
<p>5. Depth</p>	<p><i>Project requires students to display strong content knowledge; project is multi-week in duration, allowing students sufficient time for sustained inquiry, research, creation, and analysis.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the project require students to go deeply into a topic and engage in multiple steps of research and work in order to create the final product? ● Does the final product enable a teacher to assess whether the core objectives were met and whether students gained significant content, skill, and linguistic knowledge? ● Is the project structured in a way that guides students clearly through these multiple steps and sets them up for success? ● Do students create multiple drafts for the final product and have adequate opportunity to revise and learn from the revision process? ● Does the project-based unit routinely expect that students draw evidence from texts to inform, explain, or make an argument in various written forms (notes, presentations, summaries, short responses or formal essays).
<p>6. Breadth</p>	<p><i>Project requires students to synthesize multiple topics/skills that are important to the subject area, and/or reinforce interdisciplinary connections.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the project require students to display knowledge and mastery of multiple skills important to the discipline? ● Does the project require students to synthesize and demonstrate knowledge of more than one topic important to the discipline? ● Does the project require students to make connections across more than one time period or topic?



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7. Investigation/ Exploration	<p><i>Project requires students to explore or research from multiple sources (representing a variety of viewpoints/perspectives/approaches), and to cite those sources appropriately. Students are asked to take a stance or make a claim, and back it up with evidence. The project supports development in research skills and media literacy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the project require students to come up with their own, original thesis, hypothesis, claim, or central argument?• Are students required to synthesize research from multiple sources of varied perspectives or to consider and apply multiple approaches to the same topic in order to come up with their own position?• Are students required to explain the evidence they have gathered to support their position?• Does the project help students navigate and develop media literacy?
8. Scaffolding	<p><i>Project contains appropriate and differentiated scaffolding, which allows students at all levels the opportunity to demonstrate the application of new skills and content in a variety of creative ways.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the project begin with an effective hook or motivating activity that enables students to access and build knowledge of the topic and academic language in an engaging and accessible way? Are students of varying levels adequately supported throughout the project in order to grow in the skills they are being asked to demonstrate?• Is the scaffolding adequate without stifling student voice or making the work less challenging than it should be?• Does the scaffolding change over time to encourage student independence and autonomy?• Does the scaffolding still allow the evaluator to determine whether the student has met the content and language objectives?
9. Language Development	<p><i>Project contains clear language objectives, and the language needed for the final product (from all four language modalities) is clearly scaffolded and explicitly taught during the course of the project. Students' home languages are explicitly incorporated and supported.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the project create opportunities for extended language learning throughout, in all modalities?• Does the teacher make the language demands of the project explicit and provide clear support throughout to enable students to rehearse and meet those demands?• Are students engaged socially through this project in order to acquire content-specific language experientially by working and talking together to plan, research, and discuss academic products?• Does the project or unit provide opportunities for students to utilize and develop their home language and full language repertoire while developing mastery of concepts and skills?

<p>10. Assessment</p>	<p><i>Project includes formative assessments which gauge students' progress towards acquiring the skills, language and knowledge needed for the final product. Project is aligned to relevant Internationals Portfolio rubrics. Project includes ongoing reflection points to support refinement for teachers and students alike.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the project use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre, formative, summative, and self-assessment measures? ● Does the project provide exemplars to guide both achievement and assessment? ● Are students involved in assessment and evaluation of their own work, or their classmates' work? Do the formative assessments elicit direct, observable evidence that enables the teacher to determine if students are acquiring the necessary skills, language and knowledge to be able to create the final product (final assessment)? ● Will the work of providing regular, actionable feedback to all students prove manageable over the course of the unit?
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