

## Developmentally Effective Instruction: Project Approach Student Teaching Project Assignment Guide

- Assignment: 1. Facilitate a complete project with the children in your class. The project should be integrated and allow you to assess content knowledge and other skills such as reading, writing, math, etc.
2. Investigate and inquire for yourself about children as constructors of knowledge and write a reflective paper articulating your learning. (See guidelines for reflection.)

A project is an in-depth investigation of a topic. (Knowledge gets deeper and deeper. As children are investigating, the focus may become more specific to an aspect of the topic.) You may need to share your project book with your mentor teacher.

### Conducting the Project

**Journaling:** Each of you maintains a journal of your thinking and observations during the field experience. You are investigating children's learning and thinking. You are an inquiring teacher and are investigating children's thinking, knowledge building, motivation, etc. You must have a journal entry for each day of the project approach. Journal entries are to be focused on your thinking about your work and not just a retelling of what you did. It must include observations and reflections on children as learners, implementing the project approach, and can include personal feelings and thoughts and reflections on you as a pre-service teacher facilitating a project. You need to be connecting theory to practice.

**Project Planning Journal:** Take advantage of the Project Planning Journal that is in Young Investigators: The Project Approach in the Early Years 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. This is meant to be a resource for you as you enter into this emergent curriculum strategy for teaching young children. Also refer to the book frequently to guide and support you. Professionals often refer to professional materials for guidance.

**Topic Selection:** You can initiate a project from the required curriculum of your school or use something that children have shown an interest in. Both of these could actually be true. If you are using a curriculum topic be sure to provide materials that will engage the children and build curiosity and interest. You might even work with the children to select a topic from a choice of several topics. Use good books, pictures, objects, and whatever else you can think of to engage children in looking for a topic that they will be motivated to investigate. Topics which children can actually experience in a concrete, hands-on manner are best for projects with young children. Build curiosity. Help children to wonder and become **puzzled**. Your mentor teacher will need to approve your topic and will probably want to help you determine a good project topic.

**Investigations:** You are to plan a minimum of seven investigations. You may have more than that since you are conducting this project in your student teaching.  
(See *Young Investigators: The Project Approach with Young Children*)

**Planning:** Anticipatory planning is a part of how you facilitate projects. You (teachers) should start webbing as soon as you have a topic. Make multiple anticipatory webs including at least a curriculum web (how can you integrate), a concept web (what ideas might be included) and a question web. Planning for resources is also needed. These are your thinking and anticipating. You can add to the webs as the project progresses. Identify resources to be used including physical objects/creatures, literature, film, pictures, etc. You will be making decisions. What are you basing those decisions on? What caused you to bring in a particular book or item or to do a particular type of experience or to have the

children represent in a particular way? How are you making the decisions that help the project emerge? How are you involving families? (Letters sent home need to be approved by your teacher.) (See *Young Investigators: The Project Approach with Young Children 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*)

**Family Involvement:**

Prepare and distribute a parent communication handout that informs parents of the study topic and provides suggestions of how they might engage with children on the topic at home.

**Culminating Activity:**

A good question that helps the children plan a culminating activity is “How can you show \_\_\_\_ what you know about \_\_\_\_?” **SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW!**

**Assessment:**

You will be assessing student learning throughout the project and will need to be able to document student learning in the content of the project and integrated areas. Your focus is on each individual child’s learning. Do this in ways that are consistent with assessment of young children. You must include at least one assessment on your topic – subject knowledge assessment. You will be integrating content so you might be able to assess literacy, writing skills, science processes, etc. You will need your assessment instruments and your data for your documentation of the project. You will want at least one pre- and post-assessment. You need to analyze your assessment results and write a narrative describing the results.

**Documenting the Project**

**Project Notebook:**

Throughout the project and upon completion of the project you will document the stages, the investigations, children’s learning and your assessments, your decision-making rationales, the concluding activity (show what you know), etc. Your documentation notebook and explanations should demonstrate an understanding of the project approach (from a novice level) and of children’s construction of knowledge. (See checklist below.) The documentation notebook will include each part of the assignment from journal writing to your final reflection. (Include in your notebook the standards that were met through the project work.)

**Reflective Analysis: Your Learning**

**Reflection:**

You are an inquirer and investigator also. You are inquiring and investigating about learning and instruction. Each student will write a thoughtful, analytical reflection on your learning from the project approach teaching experience. Throughout your engagement of the project approach, you should be observing, thinking, discussing, and even making written notations about your thinking, your insights, connections to theory, and even your wonderings and questions. It must be a thoughtful paper that demonstrates thinking and learning. It should not be a sequential retelling of the project and most likely will be around five pages in length. Good journal entries should help you in your thinking for this. A guide for the reflective analysis follows this document.

Rubric (Outstanding Level) states: Reflective paper responds to the full process of the project. It includes insights into learning, development, emergent curriculum, motivation, and effective teaching practices, etc. Reflections are of a highly thoughtful nature which articulate affirmation of or changes in understanding and beliefs about teaching, instruction, learners and learning, children as learners, assessment, and content knowledge as a result of the experience. Deep reflection, analysis, thinking, and learning are evident.

## Project Approach Reflection Guidance

It is important that your reflection of your teaching experience with the project approach is a productive reflection. A **productive reflection** that truly promotes learning would include integration (making connections) and analysis (thinking deeply about). It would be much more than a description. (Write it in narrative/essay form not in bulleted form! Bullets tend to be descriptive and not reflection.)

As a learner in this course you have constructed multiple links and connections in your knowledge. Your reflection paper will hopefully assist you in integration processes like adding, distinguishing, and linking ideas through thinking about and articulating these linked ideas. Following the guidelines below will assist you in writing a productive reflection.

### 1. Knowledge integration.

You have constructed knowledge through your readings for the class, the class discussions, other assignments, and the experience of teaching young children using the project approach. Think deeply about the following four (4) characteristics of learning environments (Davis, 2006).

**Critically reflect upon and make connections between your knowledge, facilitating learners with the project approach, and the following. Think about, analyze, and reflect upon your project approach experience and...**

- a. *Learners and learning.*
- b. *Subject matter knowledge of the topic your group studied for their project.*
- c. *Assessment.*
- d. *Instruction.* (Learning and instruction are not the same thing.)

### 2. Analysis. Analysis is not a description. Below are characteristics of teacher analytic thinking:

- Provide reasons for decisions/ideas
- Give evidence for the claims you make
- Generate alternatives
- Question your assumptions
- Consciously reveal hidden beliefs you have held regarding children, learning, learners, instruction, and assessment
- Identify the results of your teaching decisions
- Evaluating your teaching (not just judging/evaluate)
- Evaluating children's processes
- Evaluating children's learning

To create a productive reflection takes time. You can expect to spend 3 to 5 hours on a productive reflection. A productive reflection will promote more learning for you.

ECED 4443 Theory and Practice in Early Childhood  
Project Approach Prompt or Checklist

**Summary of Assignment/Prompt:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Determine an appropriate topic for a project with young children.

\_\_\_\_\_ Plan at least 3 anticipatory webs; concepts, curriculum, questions children might have. These are preplanning to be done by the teacher. You can also do webs with children but these are your planning. Include planning for resources also.

\_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a parent communication to inform parents about the project approach and your group's topic. Have it approved by your teacher. Include the page called *How We Are Learning* from Suggest ways they can be involved.

\_\_\_\_\_ Facilitate/guide a project keeping a journal throughout. The journal should document each experience you facilitated with the children and what happened, what you noticed about children and about learning, and what you found yourself thinking and feeling. You should also reflect on your decision making, concerns, etc. The journal is a thinking and inquiry data collection tool. The journal is on the course web page.

\_\_\_\_\_ Keep documentation of a minimum of 7 investigations for your photo essay. The KWL chart may be counted as one investigation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Use multiple assessments to assess student growth on the topic you are studying and document your assessments and findings. This should be integrated so you can assess other content as well. Consider reading, writing, listening, or orally presenting. Focus your assessments more on cognitive learning.

\_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a documentation notebook. Document the following:

- 3 phases of the project (Journal, materials listed below,
- Anticipatory Planning Webs
- Investigations (all)
- Integration of content (reading, writing, math, inquiry processes, creativity)
- Assessments and Assessment results
- What state and/or district standards were met throughout the project
- Culminating activity representing what students know (Phase 3)
- Teacher decision making processes
- Other relevant information.

\_\_\_\_\_ Write a reflective analysis paper that documents your inquiry as a student of young children's learning and instruction and that articulates your professional understandings and thought processes, insights, new learning, change in beliefs, questions, etc. This paper is to articulate your deep thinking about this experience. It should demonstrate that you have observed and thought about **children's thinking, learning, motivation, assessment, subject knowledge, instruction** etc. and how this strategy accomplishes effective teaching. It will be a part of your documentation as will your journal.

**Portfolio Artifact Information:**

All components of this assignment are to be documented in a notebook (three-ring binder). Document your project work as fully and clearly as you can. It will include all the components listed above; daily journaling, anticipatory planning, all investigations, all assessments and assessment results, the culminating activity, standards that were met, and your guided reflection.

**PTE 4828 Internship/Student Teaching PreK-3  
Early Childhood Education  
Project Approach Grading Rubric**

| Assessment Traits                                                          | Assessment Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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|                                                                            | Unsatisf                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Basic                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Developing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Proficient                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Outstanding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Topic Selection Process</p> <p>NAEYC 4a</p>                             | <p>Topic is totally teacher chosen lacking support for children as thinkers and learners &amp; demonstrating a complete lack of understanding of children's developmental characteristics and needs, the learning process, and motivation to learn. Teacher considered the director of and source of knowledge and learning; child as receptacle.</p> | <p>Topic is mostly teacher chosen with student input superficially sought or teacher manipulated lacking support for children as thinkers/learners &amp; demonstrating a misunderstanding of children's developmental characteristics and needs, the learning process, and motivation to learn. Teacher still considered the director of and source of knowledge and learning; child as receptacle.</p> | <p>Candidate facilitates topic selection by soliciting ideas from children so that the topic derives from their true interests but not from any level of inquiry or a <i>need to know</i> demonstrating support for children as thinkers but only a surface level understanding of children's developmental characteristics and needs, the learning process, and motivation to learn. Teacher beginning to be viewed as facilitator of learning and child as active learner.</p> | <p>Candidate facilitates topic selection by providing interesting and somewhat engaging materials related to curriculum topics and soliciting children's ideas, interests and questions through sporadic interactions with children exploring and discussing materials; encouraging peer interaction; some limited attempts to challenge children's thinking demonstrating support for children as active thinkers and learners and a solid understanding of children's developmental characteristics and needs, the learning process, and motivation to learn.</p> | <p>Candidate facilitates topic selection by providing an abundance of materials related to curriculum topics that are rich and highly engaging; fully interacting with children exploring and discussing the materials while also encouraging children to interact with peers and intentionally provoking and challenging children's thinking so as to promote an inquiry stance of wondering and questioning which demonstrates a strong support for children as active thinkers/learners and a very deep understanding of children's developmental characteristics and needs, the learning process, and motivation to learn.</p> |
| <p>Topic Quality and Potential for Effective Curricula</p> <p>NAEYC 5b</p> | <p>The topic does not fit the criteria for an effective project. It is too narrow, fact-focused. It lacks potential for investigation and inquiry and/or deepening understanding of the discipline and/or integration of content knowledge/skill. It limits the opportunity for firsthand observations and experiences</p>                            | <p>The topic is concrete and can be explored using firsthand observation but does not lead to deepening understanding of the discipline It lacks potential for deep inquiry, investigation, and/or integration of content knowledge &amp; skills. It provides very limited opportunity for challenging experiences, field work, interviews, and experts.</p>                                            | <p>The topic is concrete and/or a <i>big idea</i> which can be observed, explored &amp; researched in a way that somewhat deepens the understanding of the discipline. It has the potential to integrate content knowledge &amp; skills. It has potential for investigation &amp; inquiry. It provides opportunity for challenging experiences, field work, interviews and experts.</p>                                                                                          | <p>The topic is a <i>big idea</i> founded in essential content knowledge and core concepts which can be observed &amp; genuinely investigated so that understanding and knowledge are deepened. Content knowledge &amp; skills can easily be integrated. It supports the disposition of inquiry and provides substantial opportunity for challenging experiences, field work, interviews, experts and child-led investigation.</p>                                                                                                                                  | <p>The topic is a <i>big idea</i> founded in essential content knowledge and core concepts which can be observed &amp; genuinely investigated so that understanding and knowledge are greatly deepened. It provides substantial opportunity for challenging, active learning experiences. It invites the substantial integration of content knowledge &amp; skill to promote connections among disciplines. It promotes dispositions of inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, and empowers children as thinkers and learners.</p>                                                                                           |

|                                           | <b>Unsatisf</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Basic</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Developing</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Proficient</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Outstanding</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <p>Planning</p> <p>NAEYC 5c</p>           | <p>No anticipatory webs are made; or webs have inappropriate ideas that are inconsistent with age of children and/or content of the discipline. poor resources identified for possible use; project seems to be mostly preplanned with little or no connection to student questions, problems, etc.</p> | <p>Anticipatory web completed by candidates prior to conducting the project. A web of student ideas is completed. Minimal resources are identified for possible use. Minimal engagement of students in planning the project is evident.</p> | <p>3 anticipatory webs completed prior to conducting the project. Web/s content is sparse. Web/s remain/s the same or is/are only slightly modified as a result of student's ideas. Some engagement of students in planning the project is evident.</p> | <p>At least 3 anticipatory webs are completed prior to conducting the project. Webs vary in the quality and quantity planned but they identify appropriate areas/questions that may be addressed in the project. Good integration of content areas. Webs are modified as a result of children's ideas.</p> | <p>At least 3 anticipatory webs are completed prior to conducting the project (curriculum, concept, questions). All webs are well planned and are high in quality and quantity of ideas included. They all identify areas/questions that will support the inquiry nature of the project and the content that might be addressed in the project. Strong integration of content areas. Webs are modified as a result of children's ideas. Development focuses on engaging children in self-directed learning.</p> |
| <p>Resources</p> <p>NAEYC 5a</p>          | <p>Very limited and or poor resources were provided.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>Resources of mostly one type were provided. Quality lacked the potential to gain children's attention and/or challenge them regarding their knowledge or conceptual understandings.</p>                                                  | <p>Resources of multiple types and mostly of good quality were provided. They contained content or experiences that engaged children but did not truly challenge them as learners.</p>                                                                  | <p>Many resources of multiple types and good to high quality were provided. They contained content or experiences that engaged children and challenged their thinking regarding topic knowledge.</p>                                                                                                       | <p>Many resources of multiple types and high quality were provided. They contained content or experiences that challenged children's thinking regarding topic knowledge, led to deeper understanding and provoked inquiry and/or exploration.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p>Family Involvement</p> <p>NAEYC 2c</p> | <p>No attempt was made to formally communicate with family and/or attempt was not professional in writing quality or content.</p>                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>Family letter was written but contained little information or suggestions for families to do with their children.</p>                                                                                                                    | <p>Family letter was well-written, informative and presented some good suggestions &amp; some ineffective ones for families to do and/or the letter was sent at the end of the project so little family engagement was solicited.</p>                   | <p>Family communication letter was well written, informative, respectful, and presented good suggestions of things for families to do to promote learning. The letter was sent in the latter stages of the project so little family engagement was solicited.</p>                                          | <p>Family communication letter was well written, informative, respectful and presented excellent suggestions of ways families' could support children's inquiry and learning during the project. Letter was sent early to engage families in all aspects of the project. Family involvement became evident.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

|                            | <b>Unsatisf</b>                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Basic</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Developing</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Proficient</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Outstanding</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Journaling<br>NAEYC 4d     | No journaling or only partial journaling and/or journal entries are surface level reports with minimal description of what took place during the project time that day. No personal thinking evident. | Daily journals are provided; some not timely. Journal provides limited info regarding daily project work. Personal learning from the experience is discussed in a surface level way with no evidence of deep thinking. | Daily journals are provided. Journal provides a detailed description of the project work. Personal thoughts, ideas, responses are discussed. Personal learning from the experience is discussed with evidence of some connections made.    | Daily journals are provided. Journal provides a detailed description of the daily project work. Most entries include personal learning reflections with evidence of thinking about children as learners, learning, assessment, and content subjects                                                                                                                                                                        | Daily journals provided. Journal provides a detailed description of the daily project work. All entries include personal learning reflections with evidence of deepened understanding of children as learners, learning, assessment, and teaching content subjects.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Investigations<br>NAEYC 4c | 0-6 investigations are completed and/or all or most investigations are teacher planned and directed disregarding the emphasis on child-directed learning in the current theory of learning.           | 7 investigations are completed and documented. They are more rote, recall, or product oriented. Investigations do not engage students in research, problem solving, etc.                                               | 7 investigations are completed and documented. Some investigations derive from student ideas, questions, problems, etc. and engage students in research and representation of what they know. Limited use of expressive media by students. | 7 or more investigations are completed and well documented. Investigations derive from student ideas, questions, problems, etc. and engage students in research and representation of what they know. They are motivating and lead to new knowledge. A variety of different expressive media are used. Limited involvement of students in interactive experiences, different learning dispositions, and use of technology. | 7 or more investigations are completed and well documented. Investigations derive from student ideas, questions, problems, etc. and engage students in research and representation of what they know. They are motivating and lead to new knowledge. A variety of different expressive media are used. They involve students in a variety of interactive skills and different learning dispositions. They integrate content and skills. Technology is effectively used. |
| Assessment<br>NAEYC 3b     | No assessment processes used. Inappropriate assessment processes used.                                                                                                                                | Minimal one-time assessment process used. Assessment is appropriate.                                                                                                                                                   | One or two ongoing assessments are used throughout the project. The teacher can document knowledge gained by each student through appropriate assessment procedures.                                                                       | Three or more forms of assessment are used and are ongoing throughout the project. Assessments are aligned to content and experiences. Teacher documents knowledge and skills gained by each student through appropriate assessment procedures.                                                                                                                                                                            | Three or more assessments are used and are ongoing throughout the project. Assessments are aligned to content and experiences, and occur in a relevant context. Teacher documents content knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained by each student through appropriate assessment procedures. Students are engaged in a self-reflective and/or self-assessment process as part of the documentation of their learning.                                                |

|                                                  | <b>Unsatisf</b>                                                                                               | <b>Basic</b>                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Developing</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Proficient</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Outstanding</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| Documenting Teaching and Learning<br><br>NAEYC 6 | Poor quality of materials used. Messy. Inadequate documentation.                                              | All 3 stages are poorly documented in the photo essay. Teacher candidate's presentation demonstrates a poor understanding of the project approach and of children's learning.                       | All 3 stages are adequately documented in the photo essay. Photo essay is well-organized. Lacks some supporting evidence. Teacher education candidate's presentation demonstrates an adequate understanding of the project approach as a teaching strategy.    | All 3 stages are adequately documented in the photo essay. It is well organized and has a professional quality to the documentation. Student products are included. Teacher education candidate's presentation demonstrates an adequate understanding of the project approach and learning.                              | All 3 stages are strongly documented in the photo essay. Photo essay is attractive and has a professional quality. Student products are included. Teacher education candidate's presentation demonstrates a deep understanding of the project approach and of children's learning processes. Teacher decision making process is well documented.                                                                             |
| Culminating Activity<br><br>NAEYC 4c             | No culminating activity. Activity is all teacher directed. Activity does not represent what students learned. | Culminating activity is used to end the project but the idea comes from the teacher. Minimal engagement or investment by students.                                                                  | Culminating activity is developed with student input. Students are engaged and invested in the project. Minimal representation of knowledge gained is exhibited.                                                                                               | Students' ideas are used and teacher facilitates a high level of student engagement or investment. Activity represents knowledge and skills that were strengthened by the project.                                                                                                                                       | Well planned and executed culminating project designed by students and facilitated by teacher after students have reviewed investigations and articulated what they had learned. Activity represents knowledge, skills, and dispositions that were strengthened by the project. Students share the project with others.                                                                                                      |
| Reflective Analysis Paper<br><br>NAEYC 4d        | No reflective paper. Paper is sparse in detail and thoughtfulness.                                            | Reflective paper responds mostly to the 3 phases of the project. Paper seems to be based more on experience and detail rather than thoughtful consideration of the experience or personal learning. | Reflective paper responds to the 3 stages of the project. It includes thoughtful consideration of the value of the project approach but includes little insight or knowledge deepening regarding learning theory and children as thinkers and active learners. | Reflective paper responds to the full process of the project. It includes insights into learning theory, development, emergent curriculum, motivation, etc. Reflections are thoughtful and demonstrate personal learning about the project approach and of learning theory and children as thinkers and active learners. | Reflective paper responds to the full process of the project. It includes insights into learning, development, emergent curriculum, motivation, and effective teaching practices, etc. Reflections are of a highly thoughtful nature which articulate affirmation of or changes in understanding and beliefs about teaching and children as learners as a result of the experience. Deep reflection and learning is evident. |

**Comments:**