



CASE STUDY

Nye County/Manse Elementary: Students as Reflective Learners

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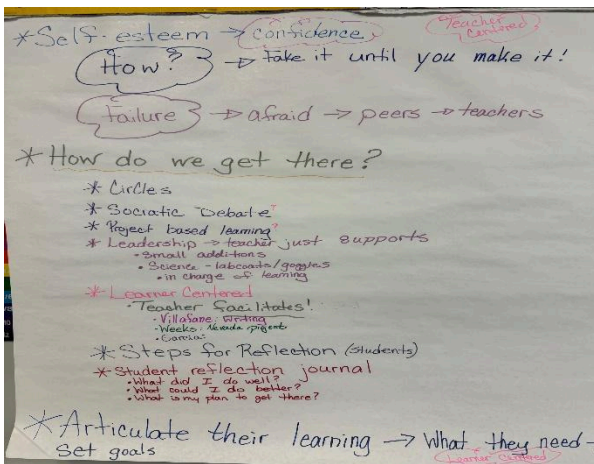
Wendy Weeks

Zuko (Woody) Garcia

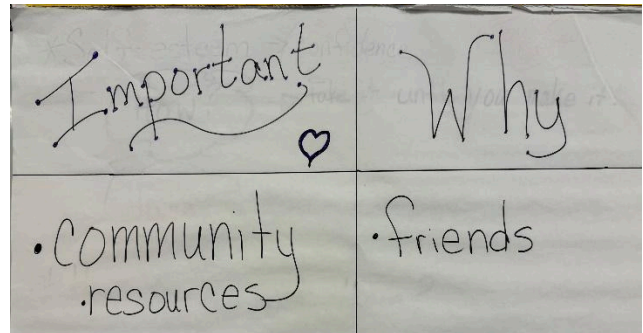


What is your Design Challenge?

After conversations with students, teachers, and families, we determined that if friends and community are important to students, then schools need to focus on “student centered learning.” Schools need to work toward including more “student centered learning,” to promote developing skills to listen, communicate, collaborate, and contribute to a learning task respectfully.



Artifacts from the team’s early meetings to identify what needed change in our school and design a solution to address the change.



Through journaling, students expressed that they were often afraid of failure, reporting “I feel like I might get it wrong,” “I just don’t always understand.” and “I am scared to try.” This fear creates a classroom environment where students do not want to participate. We focused on developing students’ self-esteem through self-reflection, to encourage students to answer questions with confidence while learning about Nevada History. We determined that the best way to get there was to create a self-reflective classroom environment where students would feel safe and learn from failure by utilizing:

- Classroom Circles
- Project Based Learning
- Learner Centered Approaches where the teacher assists groups and facilitates the learning
- Teaching self-reflection

Additionally, for students in Nye County to be critical thinkers and problem solvers they needed opportunities to develop and practice that included:

- self-reflection and an open mindset/ thought process,
- Knowing that there are multiple ways to solve a problem.
- Answering questions that challenge students’ original thoughts, pushing them to analyze and make decisions based on their thinking being challenged.

What did you do?

For the student centered learning project, students self-selected groups based on each student’s reading level. Groups chose what they wanted to research from a matrix of twelve Nevada history topics and then chose from 11 different project recommendations to demonstrate their learning. They were given mini lessons at the beginning of each day that guided their research. Students used an organizer to record what they learned about Nevada. Each group was provided a planning page/organizer to create a draft and assign roles of what each student was responsible for. Based on their project choice, students were given directions and a rubric to guide their learning.

After eight weeks of implementing strategies to develop self-reflection, students and teachers were interviewed about their learning. Some of the ideas that surfaced are reflected in the quotes below.

Student Quotes about their learning:

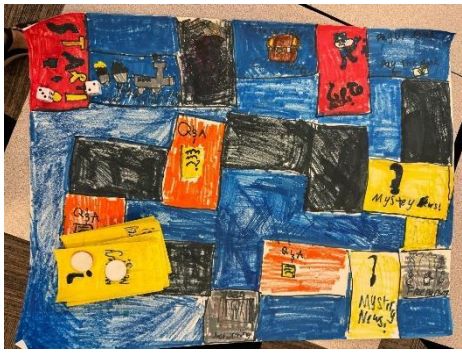
“Being empowered means to me that I feel in control of what I’m learning.”

“What it means for me as a student of Nye County to be empowered and have control of my learning is I would choose to learn with my friends and learn the way I like to Learn”

Teacher Quotes about Student Centered Learning

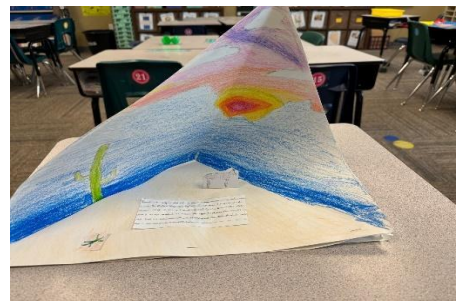
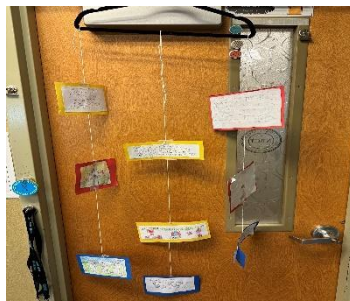
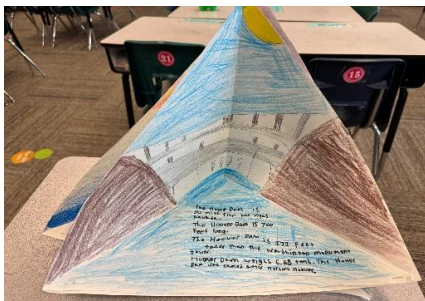
“Critical thinking and problem solving is a HUGE part of the educational process that is often lost with the emphasis of standardized testing. I believe more project based activities can help students relate what they are learning to the real world.”

“To be able to complete a task/project or have the attitude that they would be successful in doing so.”



Administrative Quotes about Student Centered Learning
 “Students who are thriving within a classroom and school are happy, productive, connected, and are focused on growth goals.”

First Name ONLY	Was your Nevada Project successful?	Why do you think your Nevada Project was successful? OR Unsuccessful?	Did you like being able to choose your own topic?	How did choosing your own topic impact your learning about Nevada?	Why is presenting your information a good way to share what you learned?	Did you like being able to work with other students in the classroom?	If you could change something about the Nevada project, what would you change?	Is there anything else you would like to share about the Nevada Project?
Damion	No	I think my Nevada Project was unsuccessful because we wanted to make an uno game but we only got seven cards done because me and my other teammate didn't put much effort into it and most of the time we were goofing off, and only one person was putting all their effort into it.	Yes	Choosing my own topic impacted my learning about Nevada because what we chose to do a project on was something that I knew little about so I could learn more about it.	I think that presenting my information is a good way to share what I learned because you can tell what you learned to other people.	No	If I could change something about the Nevada project I would change how we present it instead of a board game I would do those triangle things where you draw and write what you learned.	
Arianna	Yes	I think its successful because me and my partners did really good reading our facts and we drew animals that came out actually really good so thats why i think it turned out successful.	Yes	Because we learned new stuff that we didnt know about before and learned new facts about lake Tahoe me and my partners picked lake Tahoe because my teacher loves bears.	Because its good to show what you had in mind like when you learn about something new you wanna make something you wanna create what you see in your mind.	Yes	We drew animals with thought bubbles and we wrote facts about lake Tahoe i wish we wrote the thought bubbles little bit bigger because we really could not see the facts in the thought bubbles.	Yes, i like this project and its good that we did it because i learned alot of stuff! And you use your imagination and use your creative thoughts yes i liked this project but do i wish i can change some things about this project also yes because its not perfect but its still really good and we can do some things to make it better.
Brice	Yes	my Nevada project was successful because we finish it before the time to present.	Yes	choosing my own topic impacted my learning positively.	presenting my information is a good way to share what you learned because every team will share what they learned including yourself, when every body shares you and you're class know know a lot about Nevada.		If I wanted to change something about the project i would not want to change any part of the project because i don't want to mess up and not be able to undo my mistake.	no, there is nothing else i would like to share about my Nevada project.
Ryanjett	Yes	it was successful because it helps me write fold and draw.	Yes	because i could learn about my state.	presenting my information was good because i did work.	Yes	nothing	i would because i want to learn about my state
Alani	Yes	My Nevada project was successful	Yes	by learning all the animals in Nevada	So my friends could learn about them too	Yes	Nothing	It was really fun working with my friends



Examples of Students' Nevada Projects

Draft Competencies Addressed in this Project

Empowering -

- Balance, -Distinguishing between their needs and wants and seeking support for goal setting and time management
- Curiosity: exploring the resources around them and imagine solutions
- Self-Advocacy: Evaluating their resources and seeking guidance to overcome challenges.

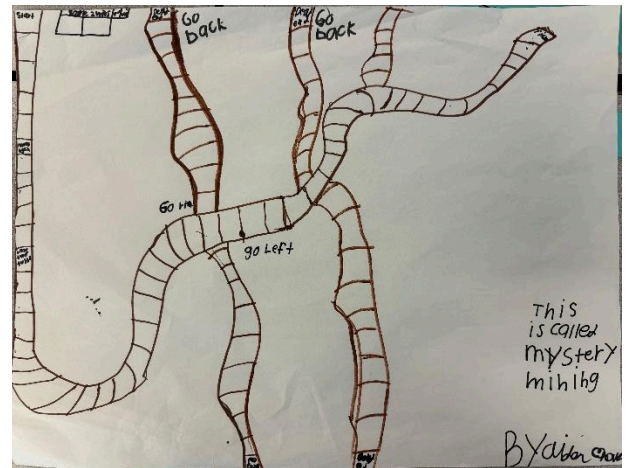
Thriving - Identifying their success and challenges as they build connections within the learning process and showing persistence as they learned new concepts and its impact on their school and/or community.

Connecting - Fostering empathy to make relationships by communicating effectively in daily situations. Collaborating: Work with peers who have contrasting ideas and opinions for a shared purpose.

What was the biggest surprise/barrier in implementation? What was the impact?

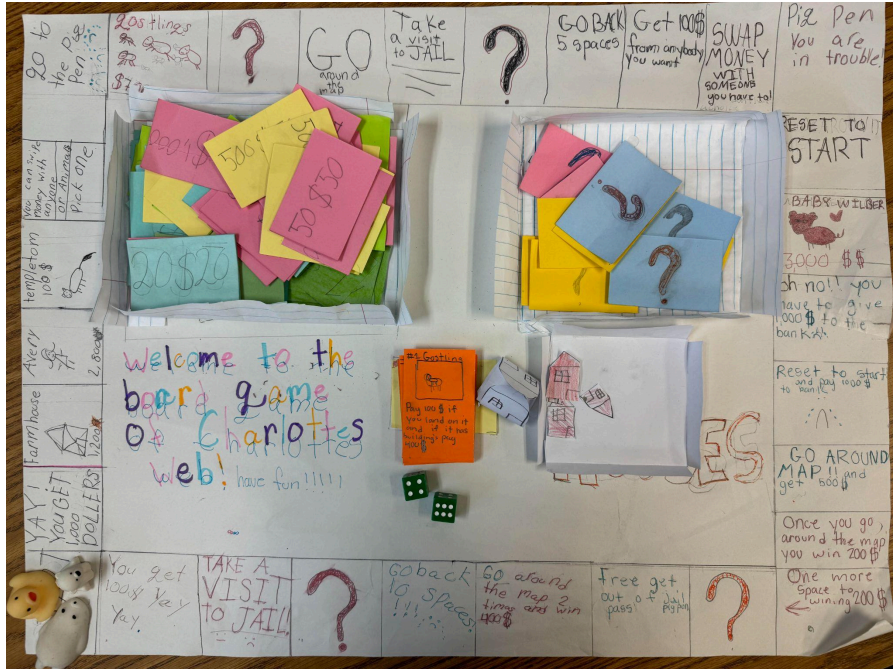
The largest barrier we found was student capacity. Many students found it difficult to work with others. They had difficulty following through with a task, without relying on a teacher. This caused some students to leave their group and join other groups. Other students began working on their own project but did not finish.

This project is an example from a student who left his group. He then started on his own, created a game board, but did not finish the board, or have any facts about Nevada. While we were let down with his lack of success, this experience reminded us of how each student is in a different space on the continuum of personalized learning. This student will benefit from more structure and a clearer time table for learning.



What was the greatest success? How did this success impact young people or how might it impact young people on your campus? What are their perceptions?

Our greatest success was seeing how choice and personalization in learning impacted student engagement. Alani and Arianna are two students who are not on Read by Grade 3 plans, meaning that they are on or above grade level). After the completion of the Nevada unit, the girls asked if they could read a book together and create a game based on the book. Project based learning enabled them to recognize that there are choices in how they approaching and presenting their learning. They were motivated to learn and share their learning with other students.



Charlotte's Webopoly.

What's next? How does your team plan to evolve this work? What are the most significant pieces of learning you see impacting adult work and young people's experiences? What school level, district level, state level policy may need to be addressed?

Our team plans on continuing the work next year to include more project based learning for students. When students had choices, they were more excited to share about their learning than when they had no choice in how they would demonstrate their learning. At the school level, teachers will need to learn how to design personalized learning with their students. Administrators will want to support the change, requiring professional learning on how personalized approaches support students' engagement and learning.

Our district has voiced concerns with the amount of time and resources needed to implement this type of work district wide. At the state level schools and districts will require funding sources to sustain professional learning for teachers as they implement personalized learning with Nevada's students. Current assessments are designed around the curriculum. Students are tested on standards and skills that don't always reflect what they are learning. Most curriculum is designed to support SBAC.

Teachers, administrators and district personnel will need support with this change in order for it to be successful. Current accountability is measured through SBAC, which dictates instruction and curriculum. We look forward to the state considering alternative methods of accountability that more closely indicate what students are learning.

Our mindset is shifting to a more student centered approach to learning. We are working toward teaching students how to be empowered by asking for what they need to be successful. We have also found that making small changes can positively influence students' choices and learning.