

CAPSTONE EIGHTH GRADE EXPERIENCE

Overview

The Palos South Eighth Grade Capstone is designed to be a hallmark culminating experience for our students. The Capstone affords students the opportunity to work in a team setting to explore a topic of local or regional significance over the course of a school year. The Capstone Project is designed to encourage students to:

- Develop critical thinking skills alongside content acquisition;
- Apply critical thinking skills to real-world problem solving;
- Collaborate efficiently with peers;
- Demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills;
- Practice public speaking;

PBL Defined

Project Based Learning is a teaching method where students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem or challenge. Rather than teaching relevant material and subsequently having students apply the knowledge, the problem is presented first.

Why PBL?

- The introduction of the problem is what drives the motivation for learning.
- Students are motivated to learn by a need to understand and solve real and relevant problems.
- Provides real-world relevance for learning.
- Promotes a high level of student engagement.
- Builds 21st century competencies in problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity/innovation.
- Provides an opportunity for students to build skills in self-awareness, evaluation of group processes and self-directed learning.

Capstone teams will:

- Identify or select from a predetermined list of problems that exist in the local or regional community;
- Explore what they already know about underlying issues related to the problem;
- Determine what they need to learn and where they can acquire the information and tools necessary to solve the problem;
- Conduct research on the problem, including consulting with experts;
- Investigate, evaluate and propose a solution to address the problem or need;
- Utilize multimedia to report findings and recommended solution to their peers, faculty, parents and community.

Schedule

There will be an opportunity for all students to attend Capstone during zero hour for a semester or an entire year depending on each student's individual needs. Zero hour bus routes may be used for transportation.

Capstone Day

At the end of each semester, each Capstone team will present their findings and solutions to their fellow Capstone teams, faculty, parents and community members in a day-long celebration of their successes. Working toward Capstone Day will help keep eighth grade students focused through the end of the year.

Assessment

The new Capstone program will focus on developing skills too often ignored in school – creativity, ingenuity, and perseverance. In order to do so, students have to have the ability to work in a non-threatening environment. Therefore, students will receive an effort grade for the Capstone program.