

Joining Public Achievement To The Curriculum¹

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Overview

This section is a guide to crafting Public Achievement to meet standards of student learning with illustrative examples. Public Achievement provides an alternative way of teaching and learning required course content and skills. It is based on experiential education pedagogy. However, sometimes it is difficult to see and document the learning that goes on in PA. Not only is every group different, also students tend to focus on doing projects and making a difference, not necessarily on documenting what they have learned through the process. This guide will help you make the lessons of PA explicit and see how PA can help students meet standards at the national, state, and district levels.²

Teachers and curriculum developers will know the terminology of this guide. For others who want to make intentional and explicit the learning that takes place within PA, the guide will provide you with a language to talk about the value of Public Achievement with educators and school officials.

In addition to making explicit the learning that goes on within PA, this guide also may help groups become more clear about their goals, action plans, and evaluation (on-going and after the project, e.g. “did it work?”).

An Important Concern

Our greatest concern in creating this guide was that it would erode the spirit and process of Public Achievement. Overwhelmingly, youth participants tell us that PA matters to them because they “control what gets done,” “are allowed to speak their mind,” and “do not have to worry about getting graded.” In our opinion, joining PA to the curriculum in ways that limit young people from having experiences like these seriously threatens all learning that takes place. JPASSL is a way for students to show what they have done and learned, not a requirement of things to do.

As with the ongoing work of Public Achievement, the process described by JPASSL must also adhere to and complement the core elements of PA. Joining PA to the curriculum can be a way to encourage particular activities or tasks, but not require them. It can be a way to invite learning and exploration, but not force it upon the participants, and finally it must retain a co-creative spirit. As such, we do not intend that the work described in this guide be done outside of the PA

¹ This was developed from the document: Joining PA to Standards of Student Learning (JPASSL). This is a work in progress, comments and suggestions are welcome.

² We reviewed standards from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Missouri State Standards, Kansas State Standards. Minnesota’s are currently being revised.

group or ahead of time. Instead the work described in this guide will need to be adapted to each group keeping in mind where the group is at and when it would be most useful for the group, coach, PA leadership, and/or other teachers.

To Grade or Not To Grade?

This is a perennial question for teachers who implement PA in their classroom. We have had many conversations with teachers and students on the topic of grading. The ultimate answer to this question will depend on the you, but we offer the following things to consider.

Students tell us that one of the things they like about PA is that they are not graded. They like PA because you don't do things to get a grade, but because you care about an issue. Moreover, students see PA as a free space where "there are no right or wrong answers" which allows them express themselves and participate in problem solving.

Students also tell us that they do not mind being assessed or evaluated for the work they do. In fact, many wish they had "more to show" for what they have done. They told us that they like to evaluate themselves, but do not mind being evaluated by their coaches or teachers.

There are two things that many teachers do to mediate this tension:

1. **Inclusion:** Bring students into the assessment process. Let them be part of the initial conversations about which standards you want to focus on, develop assessment measures and determine how they want to document their learning. Students can be brought into all or part of this process.
2. **Transparency:** Even though students may not be brought into every aspect of assessment, it is important for students to know exactly what they are being assessed on and how they can perform.

Planning Assessment

Preparation for assessing Public Achievement takes several steps. Including the students this process is important. This is done to varying degrees, but making curricular connections is a good opportunity to practice democracy and discuss public accountability. While students should play the main role in choosing their issue and developing a project to work on, you should provide standards-related options from which students may choose.

| Traditional Assessment Planning Process | <i>Public Achievement Assessment Planning Process</i> |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Standards are included in curriculum2. Select activities/assignments for students to meet standards.3. Present information, create lessons, plan activities for students to meet standards.4. Test students on information | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider different assessment models/2. Identify desired standards (with or without collaboration with students)3. Identify and plan learning experiences, project activities, and instruction that foster mastery of skills and content through the PA process.4. Create means to determine acceptable evidence and applicable content standards5. After issue groups are formed, work with students to implement assessment plan. |

Once student issue work has begun, teachers still need to work with teams to determine what products will provide evidence of student learning. These products should not all come at the end of a project—they should be done during the planning, action, and reflection stage. Some student products may be traditional, such as quizzes or reports. Others may be less so, such as presentations, games, lesson plans, journals, or plans for a community event.

This assessment [worksheet](http://www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/Activities/AssessmentWorksheet.pdf) (www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/Activities/AssessmentWorksheet.pdf) can be used by coaches or with PA groups to document group and individual learning as well as facilitate the PA process ([see www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/SixStagesIntro.html](http://www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/SixStagesIntro.html)) The intent of this worksheet is to provide PA coaches and groups with an easy, yet explicit means for documenting the learning that occurs as they move through the PA process.

Step 1: Consider Different Assessment Models

Public Achievement takes different forms at different sites. Before you choose which standards you want to assess in PA, it may be useful to think about how you are going to assess student learning. This guide can be used with three different models that are all based on the same underlying logic.

Model A: Teacher monitored

PA takes place within a self-contained classroom, with a teacher acting as coach for a single or multiple groups, or with a teacher closely supervising coaches. Teachers are responsible for assessing student learning.

Model B: Coach and group monitored

At many sites there are multiple groups, often crossing grade levels, who work with coaches. Teachers may find it difficult to know what is going on in the groups. This model calls for teachers to identify key content and skill standards, and then work with coach coordinators and coaches to help them to highlight and document the mastery of standards in the on-going PA work.

Model C: Group monitored

Some sites do not have coaches. Teachers can work with teams to set up learning goals that can be included in their project goals and action plans, students are responsible for documenting and presenting evidence of learning.

Step 2: Identifying Standards

Reviewing national, state, and district standards of student learning, we have comprised the following list of content and skill standards of student learning. This list is not comprehensive; teachers should select standards that are appropriate to their school and/or grade.

Teachers may want to focus on a particular standard or set of standards that are important for their school (i.e. where they are feeling pressure to perform). Or they may create a larger inventory of standards and encourage coaches and groups to be attentive to skill and content mastery.

Common Themes Across Different Student Standards of Learning

| Knowledge | Skills |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands roles of citizen• Understands decision-making process• Understands democratic ideals (foundation of U.S. political system)• Understands citizen rights, responsibilities, and privileges• Understands civic life, politics, and government• Understands value of diversity and difference• Understands power, authority, and governance• Understands how to map and read maps | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication—written, verbal, and visual• Conflict resolution• Team work• Reading• Problem solving• Research and investigating—gather, analyze, use data• Evaluating• Public Speaking• Planning and organizing |

This table contains standards that are found in Minnesota's State Standards, Kansas State Standards, Missouri State Standards, and the National Assessment of Education Progress.

This list is not comprehensive. Instead it is a list of the standards that were mentioned by each of the set of standards we reviewed. The young people we interviewed this year also discussed many of these. Other school districts likely have slightly different standards, even for the same topic.

Step 3: Identify Possible Activities for Learning

One of PA many strengths is that each stage of the process of PA (see www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/SixStagesIntro.html) can be achieved through a variety of activities. Once a standard has been identified, it is useful to consider what activities might facilitate student's mastery of the standard, while keeping true to the overall process of PA.

Example:

A fifth grade teacher wanted to focus on writing. At the beginning of the year he identified possible activities in the PA process where students could practice this skill. Then he worked with the coach coordinator and coaches so that they could emphasize writing whenever it was applicable during the PA process.

Possible Activities to Practice Writing:

Stage 1: Exploration and Discovery:

- Description of place—students are asked to describe their community without using proper nouns.
- Current event work— students are asked to read the neighborhood, city, or national newspaper and clip out articles of concern and interest to them and their peers at schools. Students write a paragraph about why this article is of personal concern and interest to share with other class members.
- Issue statement—students are asked to write a belief statement about why student wants to work on their chosen issue.

Stage 2: Issue Development

- Research: Students are asked examine different points of view about their issue and write a persuasive essay.

Stage 4: Designing Project

- Mission Statement: Group writes and revises mission statement.
- Written proposals: Teachers could emphasize that students write proposals for their action plans

Stage 5: Implementing Action Plan

- Business Letters: Students are encouraged to write formal letters to key stakeholders.

Stage 6: Reflection, Evaluation, Written evaluation

- Students could periodically write their evaluations.

On-going

- Reflective writing—weekly reflections on PA. Could be put in web with lotus notes, list-serve, etc.

Step 4: Creating Assessment Measures

Once the standards are identified, you need to determine how they will be assessed. This may depend on what model you are using. We have provided three different models to assess student learning, based on the three models of monitoring.

These are provided with the understanding that most teachers are experts at creating rubrics for assessment. These models are only guides, and you may have your own ways to assess mastery.

Model A. Using Rubrics to Assess Student Learning:

Creating a rubric (as illustrated below) is often an effective way of documenting the learning that takes place within PA. Most teachers will recognize and be able to elaborate on this way of assessing learning. Creating rubrics for certain skill or knowledge standards provides a way for coaches, teachers, or PA leaders in schools to document and describe the learning that takes place with colleagues, parents, and prospective teachers.

Skill or Content Standard: _____

| | Skill Level | | |
|--|-------------|------------|---------|
| | Beginning | Proficient | Mastery |
| Student work: Evidence from written work, public presentations, displays, etc | | | |
| Sounds like: When asked, students can describe the process in which they did their work. | | | |
| Looks Like: When observed, students demonstrate mastery of skills / content | | | |

Model B. Inventory of Skill Clusters—Communication

Another simple way to document learning is to create an “inventory of skills” table. This provides an inventory for teachers, coaches, or other PA leadership of skills the group members have demonstrated by their work. It also provides a simple monitoring tool for skills and provides useful feedback about what the group has yet to master.

| Skills: | NO | Some | YES | Comments |
|-----------------------------|----|------|-----|----------|
| Communication | | | | |
| Meeting Notes / Evaluations | | | | |
| Mission Statement | | | | |
| Business Letters | | | | |
| Proposals | | | | |
| Reflective Writing | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Phone Calls | | | | |
| Public Speaking | | | | |
| Interviewing | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Posters / Display Boards | | | | |

Spanning The Curriculum

The following is an example of how a PA issue group on immigration can be linked to standards in various subject areas³. Here are further examples for issue groups on animal rights, hunger and homelessness, literacy, and social change ([see www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/OtherFiles.html](http://www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/OtherFiles.html))

³ Adapted from *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* by Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A., copyright © 2004. Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN; 866/703-7322; www.freespirit.com. This page may be photocopied or printed for individual, classroom, or small group work only.

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>English/Language Arts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read stories about the personal experiences of immigrating to a new country • Study interview techniques and practice listening and note taking • Create an English vocabulary guidebook for English as a second language programs | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Social Studies/History</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct interviews with immigrants of different ages from the same population and compare their experiences • Research reasons people leave specific countries and compare how this has changed over recent decades • Learn about and document the contributions of immigrants in your community in a range of areas—social, political, cultural, and artistic | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Languages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find words in English that have their roots in the language being studied • Prepare lessons to tutor immigrants in English language skills • Translate the school handbook for immigrant populations |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Theater, Music, & Visual Arts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create collaborative theater events with people from many countries sharing talents • Listen to world music and invite musicians from other countries into the classroom • Explore the influence of many cultures on styles of art, architecture, and fashion | <p>Immigrants</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Math</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the decimal system with the metric system used in many parts of the world • Study and chart statistics reflecting the number of immigrants in your region, where they are coming from, and their reasons for moving • Make easy-to-use guides to money conversion for new immigrants |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Physical Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about games and approaches to exercise from different cultures • Research athletes who are immigrants or children of immigrants who have made and continue to make contributions to sports • Create a multilingual guide to places in your region for outdoor exercise | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Computer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create computer-generated lessons on colloquial expressions for teen immigrants • Research ways the Internet is used for genealogy and country of origin research • Study language translation programs that can assist students who are learning English | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Science</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research how indigenous gardening techniques have been influenced by immigrants who bring their methods and plants • Discuss whether or not the food pyramid is an accurate shape to depict the eating and nutrition practices of people from different countries • Learn about folk traditions and remedies for health concerns used by immigrants from their country of origin |