Project Management in the Classroom

Project management skills are invaluable for all students—regardless of age or ability level. By helping your students to learn project management processes and tools now, you set them up for academic, career, and personal success in the future.

# Start small and take baby steps.

Depending on students’ past school and life experiences, they may not be familiar with project management. In fact, some project management processes and tools may be new to you, as well. For those very reasons, don’t be ashamed to take small steps initially.

# Use an existing project.

Don’t assume that you have to create a brand new project when introducing project management to students. Rather, start with a short project that you’re already familiar with—one that you’ve used with students in past years, perhaps.

# Don’t overwhelm your students.

Introduce students to project management processes and tools incrementally. Select just one or two aspects of project management, such as the project charter or work breakdown structure, for students to learn during their first project.

# Work as a class initially.

Help the class to complete project management tools/templates together at first, rather than having students prepare them individually or in small groups.

# Discuss the thought processes involved.

As you help the class to prepare the project charter, work breakdown structure, or other tools/templates of your choice, discuss the thought processes involved. For instance, ask students to identify questions that they could ask themselves to determine what to include or things that they should consider when completing the templates.

# Next time, let student teams take the lead.

The next time that your students work on a project, have them work in small groups to complete the templates that the class prepared together previously. Check in with students as they complete this work to ensure that groups are on the right track.

# Introduce a new tool/template with each project.

Throughout the school year, add more and more project management tools and processes to student projects so that by the year’s end, your students have a basic understanding of project management.

# Remember that project management doesn’t always look the same.

 Keep in mind that project management will look different depending on the age and ability level of your students. Kindergarten students may not be able to complete an in-depth written status report. Instead, though, they could use a red-, yellow-, and green-light system to indicate how things are going for them. Students of all ages can learn project management skills.