THE PROJECT-BASED LEARNING CONTINUUM

STAGE ONE
Teacher designs project
Project is a supplement to the curriculum
- a lesson
- one part of whole
Teacher predetermines product, outcome, and assessment
Single-disciplined
Real-world impact is incidental
All project work fits within class period
Student creativity involved, but little student choice allowed
Teacher acts as director of instruction

STAGE TWO
Teacher designs project
Project is integrated into the curriculum
- a unit
- larger part of whole
Students are given choices regarding process and product within
the parameters set by the teacher
May cross disciplines
Some resources are found outside the classroom
Real-world impact built-in
Teacher acts as director of activities

STAGE THREE
Teacher designs the essential question, focus, and goals
Teacher aligns project(s) with the standards
Project spans the length of the class (quarter, trimester, semester)
- is basis of the curriculum
- is the whole of the curriculum
Crosses multiple disciplines and, most likely, includes multiple planners (teachers) from different disciplines
Students design projects
Definite real-world impact
Work is constructivist
Authentic assessment using multiple assessment targets
A large portion of project work may take place out of the building
Work is complex
Teacher acts as facilitator

STAGE FOUR
Teacher (whole staff) designs infrastructure
(project proposals, time logs, journal reviews, etc.)
Project is the basis of the whole-school program
Students design projects
Students design essential question, focus, and goals
Students align projects with standards
Real-world impact is an inherent component
Work is constructivist
Authentic assessment with students choosing assessment target
Much work takes place out of the building
Not discipline-based
Work is rigorous
Work is complex
Teacher acts as facilitator and advisor

Designed by Erin Thomas
Small Schools Project
April 2003