Managing Your Project in the Classroom

They key to successfully managing your project within your classroom is well thought out, careful planning. Make sure you know whom to contact at your school/or district for tech support, checking out materials and tools, scheduling labs and laptop carts and basic troubleshooting.

Also be sure that you have all student acceptable use plans signed and returned, and if you are going to post the project on the Web it is advisable to get parent permission to post student work, photos (be sure to check you district's/school's acceptable use plan concerning the posting of student work/pictures first).

One of the critical elements of project planning is creating a realistic timeline and sticking with it. Of course assemblies, field trips, disaster drills and other unexpected events can and do happen, so plan for this by building in some "extra time."

It is also critical to have a "Plan B" if the computer lab is books solid, or several computers break down, etc. Plan ahead, and know when you'll need to use which resources.

Scaffolding the project is critical to the success of your project. Create a project plan or check list for yourself. This may look something like this:

Necessary Knowledge/Skills	**Previously Learned/ Mastered by Students**	**Teach Before Doing the Project**	**Teach During the Project**

Make sure you create a clear/useable timeline to map your project
It might look something like this:

	Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wed.**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Week 1					
Week 2					
Week 3					
Week 4					
Borrowing school's digital camera (dates): **Computer lab scheduled for (dates):** **Final projects due:** **Culminating Event:**					

Directions: Carefully review the following list. Plan the classroom management for your project with you partner or a critical friend. You may want to look at Tab 3 in the Readings Section of this binder –Planning and Classroom Management. You may also want to look at BIE's *Project Based Learning Handbook* and *Increasing Student Learning Through Multimedia Projects* (Simkins, Cole, Tavalin & Means)

Before the project starts:

1. Plan the Project (2 to 3 weeks)

A. Project Plan with Measurable Goals and Objectives
B. Anticipate Your Role
C. Anticipate the Students' Roles
D. Create a Parent Letter
E. Make Real-World Connections
F. Prepare Resources
G. Prepare Software and Peripherals
H. Organize Computer Files
I. Prepare the Classroom
    1) Organize books, computer manuals, printer paper, etc so that students can work independently

J. Organize Online Materials
    1) Bookmark Web resources for students using online bookmark sites
        a. http://www.ikeepbookmarks.com
        b. http://trackstar.4teachers.org/trackstar/index.jsp
        c. http://www.backflip.com/login.ihtml

Starting the project (Pre-production)—1 week to 3-4 weeks depending on complexity of the project

1. Introduce the Project (1-2 days)

A. Share Goals with Students
B. Refine Project with Students
C. Review Project Documents

2. Perform Pre-assessments (1 day)

A. KWL (Know/Want (Need) to Know/Learned Chart (1 day)
B. Pre-test knowledge and/or skills

3. Plan Checkpoints/Milestones (at least 2 peer reviews plus teacher/student checkpoints to assure content learning)

A. Create an Assessment Documents or Checklists

B. Use Whole Class Design Review prior to having students begin project research

C. Do periodic Content Assessments

4. Perform Relevant Activities

A. Group Students (Collaborative grouping Techniques)

--By Interest (based on KWL charts or sign sheets)

--By Multiple Intelligences—balancing the groups to include a variety of learning styles and intelligences (using a Multiple Intelligence survey)

--By skills (making sure that each group has a strong reader/researcher, writer, presenter, technology, organizer, etc.)

--By free choice (not recommended UNLESS you have students who can responsibly handle this)

B. Learn the Technology (1-2 days or class periods)

1) Generally your students will easily learn to use the technology. This will depend on both your and your students' comfort level with the technology. It will also depend on the age/grade level of your students. Here are some models for teaching the technology to your students:

a. Teach one student in each project group how to use the technology and have that student teach the other members of his/her team.
b. Take one class period to teach the basics of the software or technology to the entire class. Then give the class one more class period to experiment with the software to create a short sample project. You may or may not choose to have them save this project.

C. Preliminary Research and Planning

1) Students submit research design plan to teacher or teacher assigns books/Web sites
2) Assigned reading
3) Research –in class, library and online
   a. Note taking skills
   b. Hand in notes for review
   c. Peer review of research notes
   d. Final approval of research before continuing with project

D. Concept Design and Story Boarding

E. First Draft Productions

9. Help Student Work Efficiently

A. Preparation
B. Use of Equipment
C. Keep Technology at Student Skill Level
D. Collaboration Techniques
E. Manageable Steps
F. Check and Assess Often
G. Redirect as Necessary

Creating the Final Product (Production)--3 days to 3 or more weeks depending on the length, duration and complexity of the project

1. Schedule the check out and use of any necessary equipment (digital cameras, video cameras, laptops, PDAs, AlphaSmarts, or other shared equipment
2. Schedule computer lab or lap top cart (if necessary)
3. Schedule classroom use of peripheral tools such as digital cameras, video cameras, PDAs, probes.
    A. Create and use a check out system with your students
3. Schedule classroom room computers (if doing project in classroom)
    A. Assign each team to a computer and schedule the time each team may use the computer.
4. Make sure all students clearly understand the requirements for the final product.
    A. Show sample project(s)
    B. Create a template
    C. Be clear about storing and naming files and folders
        1) Names should be short and have no apostrophes, punctuation marks, symbols or spaces. (It is okay to use an _underscore.)
        2) All files for project should be kept in ***ONE folder***.
        3) Always ***save*** regularly
        4) Always ***back up*** files to a CD, zip disk, file server, and/or USB Flash Memory stick.
5. Make sure all students know how to use the programs necessary for the project.
    A. Pre-teach technology skills if necessary—1 class period
    B. Make sure one person on every team know how to use the software
5. Create graphic organizers and check lists for students for project management (See Buck Institute materials behind Tab #3--Planning and Classroom Management--in Readings Section of Binder).
6. Move about the classroom and assist project teams as needed
7. Build in formative assessment
    A. Peer review (Is My Project Good, Takes 1 and 2)
        a. Focus on content
        b. Focus on appropriateness of multimedia elements to support content

B. Teacher review of project with project teams (redirect as necessary)

6. Teach/expect only the basic functions of the software initially. Add more multimedia elements as you see content is well presented and is clear.

Concluding the Project (Post-Production) –1 day to 3 days

1. Assessing, Testing, Finalizing Presentations

A. Evaluation and Reflection

a. Final tests for content
b. Evaluation of project (Content, collaboration and multimedia)
c. Evaluation (see Questions for Student Reflection at http://pblmm.k12.ca.us/PBLGuide/PlanAssess/StReflectionQuestions.html

B. Culminating Event

a. Parent night
b. Open house
c. Presentation for other classrooms
d. In class presentations

C. Whole Class Debriefing Session (What did we learn? Did we collaborate well? What skill did we learn? What skills do we need to learn better? Did we do our best work? How can we improve the quality of our work next time we do a project?)

1) Fishbowl review of projects and process
2) Survey (and share results with class)
c. Class discussion and review of projects and process
d. Small group discussion and review of projects and process

D. Self-Evaluation

E. Celebration