Problem-Based Learning: Experience It Yourself

Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education
University of Delaware
Characteristics Needed in College Graduates

High level of communication skills
Ability to define problems, gather and evaluate information, develop solutions
Team skills -- ability to work with others
Ability to use all of the above to address problems in a complex real-world setting

Quality Assurance in Undergraduate Education (1994)
Wingspread Conference, ECS, Boulder, CO.
What Is PBL?

“The principal idea behind PBL is that the starting point for learning should be a problem, a query, or a puzzle that the learner wishes to solve.”

Deflating Grady – Part I

Read over the e-mail exchange and discuss the ideas it raises about grade inflation.

As a group, compose a definition of grade inflation and be prepared to present it.

Be prepared to “report out” in 10-15 minutes.
Deflating Grady – Part II

Read over the information presented, and be prepared to report out on your answers to either question 1 or question 2.

Be prepared to “report out” in 10 minutes
“...once you have learned to ask questions – relevant and appropriate and substantial questions – you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know.”

Neil Postman & Charles Weingartner in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, 1969
Characteristics of Good Learning Issues

Presented in the form of a question or series of questions.

Focused so that it seeks specific information.

Constructed so that it asks an answerable question.

Pursues information that is relevant to the problem.

Goes beyond superficial knowledge to probe conceptual issues.

Often set in a context that provides direction. Why is the question important?
Take a look at the graph from gradeinflation.com:

- According to your group’s definition, is this evidence for grade inflation?
- Make a list of questions (learning issues) you have about these data.

Be prepared to “report out” in 15 min.
Who Cares about grade inflation?
Match the stakeholders with their comment.

Each person in your group select a different stakeholder and wait for instructions.
What are the Common Features of PBL?

Learning is initiated by a problem.
Problems are based on complex, real-world situations.
All information needed to solve problem is not given initially.
Students identify, find, and use appropriate resources.
Students work in permanent groups.
Learning is active, integrated, cumulative, and connected.