ORGANIZATIONAL DECISIONS IN USING PBL

“PHILOSOPHICAL”

- Clear idea and statement of course objectives
- Balance between problems and lecture (and other pedagogical strategies)
  - Problems and group work only? Equal mix of lecture and problems? Occasional problems?
- Balance between content and process skills
  - To what extent will nature of content change? How much content to retain? What to cut?
  - What process skills are desired? Degree of emphasis?
- Extent of student- vs. teacher-centered instruction
  - How much control/support?
  - Degree of comfort for both students, instructor? (New roles for both: independent learners and facilitator)
  - Getting students to “buy in”: address concerns
- Extent of emphasis on group work
  - Individual vs. group grading
  - Formal (permanent) vs. informal (temporary) groups
- Outside expectations with respect to content
  - Later course requirements, certification standards
- Adoptability
  - Do I want to write PBL materials that other instructors can use?
  - If so, what special instructions/information would they need in order to do so?

“PRACTICAL”

- Class Format
  - Scheduling: number, length of class periods (What is the time frame into which this problem must fit? Does this time frame allow students enough time to digest and ponder the problem?)
  - Room size and structure: fixed vs. moveable seating, space for resource materials
  - Structuring class time: group work vs. whole class; lecture vs. discussion; special events
- Groups
  - Organization: size, criteria for composition
  - Fostering desired group function/behavior
  - Guidance within groups: Independent? Instructor as “roving” facilitator? Peer facilitators or TAs (how will they know what to do? do they have buy-in?)
  - Extent of outside group work required
- Problems
  - Content to address through problems (How will this problem help to accomplish goals of the course?)
  - Number, length, degree of difficulty
  - Degree of structure within problem: guiding questions vs. completely free response
- Grading and Assessment
- Must reflect all course objectives - process as well as content; how to balance
- Exam, quiz format: should it change? How?
- Group vs. individual grading; policies and safeguards
- Evaluation of group work and projects (“mastery” vs. “normed” achievement standards)
- Peer evaluations
- Attendance and participation policies

• Learning Resources
  - Degree of reliance expected on non-text resources
  - Training/expertise level in using resources such as library, Internet and Web, e-mail, computing skills, multimedia
  - Coordination with lab or other special components of courses

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