



Frequently Asked Questions about the Personalized Project Based Learning (PPBL) Pathway

What are the key beliefs of PPBL?

Each child pursues authentic curiosities and receives what they need to develop social and academic potential. We are able to teach academic skills and knowledge as well as habits of mind in cross-curricular ways where learning does not happen in silos. We may ensure time for playful learning where students discover, practice, and revise their thinking. There is a focus on applied learning in real-world contexts and settings in order to motivate students to persist in their learning and engage with adults working in the student's interests.

Why PPBL?

- Cultivates future ready skills for all students
- Improves student and teacher engagement
- Closes the achievement and opportunity gap
(As indicated by data around literacy and math state testing scores, dual enrollment in college courses while in high school, two and four year college acceptance rates, rates of finding financially secure meaningful work, healthy student-adult mentoring relationships, and level of civic engagement)

Where will this be located and how many students will there be?

- Starting 2019-20, there will be a cohort of 100 ninth graders in the personalized PBL pathway which is a Santa Monica High School program, but is mostly housed on what is being renamed the Innovation Center at Lincoln and Ocean Park. The Innovation Center campus will be shared by Olympic Continuation School, Off Campus Learning Center, Independent Study, Personalized Project Based Learning Pathway, and starting in 2021-22 a Capstone program.
- Students in PPBL, will have “Leaving To Learn” days 1-2 days per week off campus and students may take limited VAPA or World Language courses as well as any sport based on tryout results on Samohi's main campus. Students will also take dual enrollment college courses over time.
- The PPBL pathway will grow by 100 students per year until there are 400 students total 9th-12th grade in the 2022-23 school year.

What is the calendar and start and end of school day times?

PPBL will follow the SMMUSD Samohi calendar:

School hours are 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. M-TH, and 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. F

For Leaving to Learn (L2L) days, what is the difference between Learning Through Interest (LTi) days and Learning Through Internship (LTI) days?

- Learning Through interests (LTi): In 9th grade one day a week is off campus. Groups of ~14 students with a common interest are with a credentialed teacher spending one day a week learning off campus with an expert in their field.

- Examples depend on what the 100 ninth graders are interested in but could include: Going to a maker space to design and build a skateboard and test it on various terrain, going with digital music producers and sound engineers to learn the history and business of and how to DJ, or meeting with tv and movie writers to examine their writing process.
- In 10th-12th grade, once students show readiness for this level of independence (productive communication, navigation of public transit, responsibility), two days a week is off campus in an individual internship with a mentor in their field.
 - Examples could include: musical theater company, renewable energy office, city government, animal rights nonprofit, or technology firm.

What does a typical week look like?

Three days a week: Students are engaged in learning academic content, fully aligned to the California state standards, through integrated, rigorous, real world projects.

Two days a week: Students will “leave to learn”. Students have options. Some students will engage in internships with industry professionals. Through this, students will build a professional network that strengthens their 21st century skills, academic knowledge and skills, and develops character.

What course credits will a 9th grader earn for their transcript?

ALL 100 9th grade PPBL students will have:

Humanities Block: matches the course requirements for Freshman Seminar and 9th grade English P.

STEAM Block: Depending on the 8th grade math course completion, matches the course requirements for
Biology P and Algebra P OR Biology P and Geometry P

PE: matches 9th grade PE, or student tries out and makes a sports team at Samohi main campus for PE credit or some students may have Independent Study Physical Education (ISPE)

What visual and performing arts (VAPA) electives and World Language courses are available?

Students interested in auditioning for the 5th/6th period VAPA classes at Samohi’s main campus may do so for a VAPA elective course. Please note there is a limited amount of VAPA classes and spaces available 5th and 6th periods so this is a possibility not a guarantee.

Music courses are mostly 1-4th period with some 5th period. If music is your/your child’s passion, the music programs at Samohi and Malibu High will not be replicated within the PPBL pathway.

Students interested in taking Spanish 1 may do so at the PPBL during advisory and personalized learning times.

Students interested in taking other 5th/6th period languages at Samohi’s main campus, Santa Monica College or other Samohi approved language providers may do so pending space and approval

What if a student wants to play a sport?

Students may try out for sports offered on Samohi's main campus. These occur 6th period and after school. PPBL students who receive spots on teams travel to the main campus for this opportunity. When there are school day athletic competitions or special events, PPBL students are excused from their regular classes to attend just as the athletes on Samohi's main campus do.

Will a graduate of this PPBL pathway be college ready?

Core courses will meet A-G approval and the expectation is that students are exposed to curriculum that would allow them to demonstrate mastery on standardized tests (CAASPP, SAT, ACT)

Taking college level courses through Dual enrollment happens substantially in 11th/12th grade due to on/off campus mobility. According to a 2014-15 Innovation Unit study of public personalized PBL schools in 14 United States, 78% of students in these types of schools take college courses while in high school.

There are no Honors or AP courses offered through the PPBL pathway in 9th grade. The interdisciplinary projects do require advanced work and deep learning.

Four years of math courses will be offered. Algebra II is not offered in 9th grade. 9th graders may meet the requirements for Algebra I or Geometry.

What if a student tries a year of PPBL then wants to leave?

Students may transfer out by registering at Samohi's main campus at the end of a school year. Students may transfer in via the lottery process at the end of a school year.

Can students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) attend?

Yes if the student's IEP includes goals and services that can be provided through the general education setting with Specialized Academic Support (SAI).

In 8th grade, IEP teams hold transition into high school IEP meetings. If the IEP team determines a specialized program placement (Positive Behavior Support Program, Structured Therapeutic Education Program, Life Skills...) then the student attends that program on the site where it is located.

The PPBL program is designed to serve students of all abilities, interests, aspirations, and socio-economic backgrounds. Because of the individualized approach, this model can successfully meet the needs of students, from the most vulnerable to the highest achieving.

What mental health counseling will be available?

SMMUSD partners with several mental health providers (Family Services of Santa Monica, YRT, Women's Clinic) who provide small group and individual counseling sessions.

What college and career counseling will be provided?

ADVISORY: 25 students meet with one teacher advisor 2-3 times per week. Personality inventories, interest surveys, resume building, interview skills, application essay writing, standardized test prep and reviews of college options take place over four years. A college counselor consults with each advisory.

DUAL ENROLLMENT: An estimated 78% or more of the PPBL students will take college courses while enrolled in high school.

LEAVING TO LEARN (Learning Through interests, Learning Through Internships): As described above, these are key components of college and career exploration and readiness.

[How does a student apply?](#)

Must be a current SMMUSD student or a student/family that can establish residency within the SMMUSD attendance boundaries

- Seek to enroll 100 students
- Seek to ensure a minimum of 26% SED and/or EL
- Seek to have a balanced representation from our middle school programs, LMS, JAMS, SMASH and MMS
- Provide an opportunity for resident students not currently attending SMMUSD schools access to the program
- The Personalized Project Based Learning Application can be found after March 19, 2019 on the www.smmusd.org home page. [Click on the Project-Based Learning button](#).
- Applications must be date stamped by April 30, 2019 3 p.m.
- Admission and waitlist letters and emails sent in May 2019.

Questions?

Please contact:

Principal: Ms. Jessica Rishe

jrishe@smmusd.org

310.396.2640