

Washington State University

College of Education

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Will defend the dissertation

Date: November 7, 2018

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Location: Vancouver – VUB 311

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.

PROJECT BASED LEARNING: VETERAN TEACHERS CREATING CURRICULUM FOR A NEW SCHOOL

Chair: Richard Sawyer

John Dewey wrote *Experience and Education* in 1938 which essentially argued that students bring their experience into the classroom and should not be considered as blank slates needing to be filled with information. Dewey wrote his book 80 years ago and since then the pendulum in education has swung back and forth several times. Political, economic, social, and religious events of the 20th and 21st century have been responsible for the swinging of the pendulum and the ever-changing educational landscape which has been well documented (Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011; Slattery, 2014; Spring, 2009).

Over time the swinging pendulum has dictated what curriculum teachers can teach and how to teach it. Today, however, teachers are finding that the pendulum is allowing for some freedom to create curriculum that is student-centered and allows for the experiences of their students to grow. Progressive frameworks such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) are placing the student at the center of their learning and are appearing throughout the US. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how four veteran teachers, responsible for implementing a PBL framework, create curriculum, and encounter supports and hindrances as they do so.

The qualitative study took place in medium sized, suburban school district in the Pacific Northwest. The study consists of four case studies which explored the journey of four veteran middle school teachers as they transitioned from a traditional classroom to create PBL curriculum for a new PBL school. The study also explored the supports and hindrances encountered by each teacher. Two themes emerged from this study: The encouraged and continued blending of personal and professional experiences could shape the creation of future PBL curriculum, promoting relevance and engagement for students, teachers, district leaders, community members, and environment; Conditions that support teachers (i.e., professional development, resources etc.) as they create PBL curriculum could further their intellectual and professional capacity to continually develop and implement projects that engage students, establish lasting relationships with the community and connections to the environment.