



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

### What are the key beliefs of PPBL?

Each student 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 passion-based 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?

- Started in 2019-20, and growing 100 students per grade level until there will be 400 ninth through twelfth graders by 2022-2023 in the personalized PBL pathway which is a Santa Monica High School program, mostly housed on what is newly renovated and renamed the Michelle and Barack Obama Center for Inquiry and Exploration at Lincoln and Ocean Park. The Obama Center campus is shared by Olympic Continuation School, Off Campus Learning Center, Independent Study, and the Personalized Project Based Learning Pathway.
- 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 or concurrent 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.-3:16 p.m. M, W, TH, F and 8:30-2:37pm T

### 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 a combination of working with experts in their field off campus, having guest experts work with students on campus and independent time for students to work on their personal projects.

- Examples from 2019-20 include:
  - Digital Storytelling (mentorship from Santa Monica Daily Press, KCRW, KPCC and tv and movie writers to examine their storytelling and writing process for use in student podcasts and blogs),
  - Creative Community Spaces (working with theater directors, current tv show set crew, make-up artists, and scriptwriters to figure out how to launch and run a theater company),
  - Environmental Advocacy (partnering with Heal the Bay, the Bay Foundation, and interviewing employees at the National Resource Defense Council/NRDC about climate change, sustainability and working on environmental restoration projects)
  - Virtual Reality/VR (learning how music concert producers, medical training, architecture firms, and world news publishers use VR to augment their businesses. Students designed and produced their own mini VR experiences)
  - Project Insight (mentorship from medical professionals, CA Science Center, and visual artists so students get initial training that might lead to a vision service profession)
  - Product Design (supported by current and former product designers, students use the Design Thinking process to create a product that can help people solve a problem)
- In 10th-12th grade, once students show readiness for this level of independence (productive communication, navigation of public transit, responsibility), two half 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 “learn through interests” and “leave to learn” to work on personal projects. 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 OR Biology P and Algebra II

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 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 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.

#### **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 per grade level (In 2020-2021 there will be 100 9th graders and 100 10th graders)
- Seek to ensure a minimum of 26% SED and/or EL and/or students with IEPs
- 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 at [bit.ly/ppbl2020](http://bit.ly/ppbl2020)
- Applications must be date stamped by March 20, 2020 3 p.m.
- Admission and waitlist letters and emails sent in April 2020.

### How does an interested family take a tour?

Sign up for a tour at [bit.ly/ppbltours](http://bit.ly/ppbltours)

**January 31, 2020**

**February 21, 2020**

**February 28, 2020**

**March 13, 2020**

**March 20, 2020**

Questions? Please contact:

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