



## EdVisions Off Campus High School

Personalized Project Based  
Learning – On Line

## Session Schedule

- Introductions (5 Min)
  - School
  - Presenters
- Advisory Group (10 Min)
- Project Coaching Breakouts (3 X 7 Min)
  - Google Docs, .. (Karen)
  - Project Request Form (Gigi)
  - Webbing a Project (Keven)
- Round 2 Breakouts (3 X 7 Min)
  - Special Ed at EOCHS (Karen)
  - Sample Projects (Gigi)
  - Math at EOCH (Keven)
- Q and A (5 Min)

## Our School “Building”

The screenshot shows a virtual meeting interface. On the left, there is a 'Participants' list with names like Karen, Gigi, Keven, and others. On the right, there is a 'Whiteboard' with a blue background and white text. The text on the whiteboard reads: 'TODAY IS WEDNESDAY MAY 21!!', 'Kevin, Aaron, Chris and Cathy are at a project fair. You will be having guest advisors for advisory so stay tuned for the fun!', 'Algebra I classes have been canceled for today', 'If you have not finished your NWEA testing or Hope Survey, please do so today. Contact Gigi, Mike, or Karen if you are having difficulties. Thanks to all those who have finished!', and a 'Question' section with a riddle: 'A 6-foot tall Magician had a water glass and was holding the glass above his head. He let it drop to the carpet without spilling a single drop of water. How could he manage to drop the glass from a height of six feet and not spill a drop of water? There is no water in the glass.' Below the riddle, there are two options: 'He was magical.' and 'He drank the water!'.

## Presenters

- Keven Kroehler
- Gigi Dobosenski
- Karen Locke

## Presenters

Karen Locke, [karen@edvisionsonline.com](mailto:karen@edvisionsonline.com) has taught in many different settings, from St. Paul Public Schools to charter schools including Minnesota New Country School and EdVisions Off-Campus High School. She is on the technology team as well as being a 1/2 time advisor and 1/2 time Special Ed teacher at EOCHS.

Gigi Dobosenski, [gdobosenski@edvisionshighschool.com](mailto:gdobosenski@edvisionshighschool.com) is co-director of EOCHS and has been part of the school since its early planning stages. Previously she taught at Minnesota New Country School and has continued to serve as a national coach for other project based learning and synchronous online schools.

Keven Kroehler, [kkroehler@edvisionshighschool.com](mailto:kkroehler@edvisionshighschool.com), has been teaching in project based charter schools since 1997, first at the Minnesota New Country School, and for the last 3 years at EdVisions Off-Campus High School. The 12 years prior to that he taught in a traditional public school in Colorado.

## Connecting with each other (and the world)

<http://www.illuminate.com>

This is the program that EdVisions Off-Campus High School uses to connect online. This is our school "building". Other companies make competing products. USED DAILY

<http://projectfoundry.org/>

Project Foundry is the program that many project based schools use to keep track of projects that students are working on. Students will enter time spent on projects, advisors can review this information. This program eventually generates the transcripts for the students. USED DAILY

[www.myfax.com](http://www.myfax.com)

Virtual fax program that sends us e-mails when we get faxes, we send out e-mails to send faxes.

[www.freeconference.com](http://www.freeconference.com)

We can set up meetings with 800 numbers, and it will send invitations by e-mail to whoever we want (it's not really free for an 800 number, but it is free if you want the people to pay long distance for their calls). We use this for IEP's, parent conferences, potential staff interviews, board meetings, etc.

<http://get.live.com/messenger/overview>

Windows messenger/msn messenger - we try to have students and staff sign onto messenger during the day so we can ask questions, remind them of things, etc. USED DAILY

<http://documents.google.com>

Google docs/calendar- some of our advisors have found Google mail/docs/calendar/chat valuable for connecting/reminding/helping with project documents

<http://educationontheedge.blogspot.com/>

Karen's blog- Entries made occasionally.

<http://aaroneochs.blogspot.com/>

Aaron's (another advisor) blog- more up-to-date. Includes comments on school reform among other things.

<http://www.ning.com>

This is a connecting site- we created our own school social network which is somewhat slow in catching on. Kind of a MySpace for EOCHS.

## Special Ed

<http://www.childrenslibrary.org>

This site has free children's books available via internet, searchable by type, age, and topic- good for elementary-level books (the pictures are on there)- but old-fashioned.

<http://www.teenink.com/>

This has stories written by teens- easy enough for poor readers in upper grades, teen interest level.

<http://www.nrsi.com/rsi.html>

National Reading Styles Institute has inventory, materials, methods for teaching students according to their individual reading styles.

<http://theworksheetgenerator.com/>

I think this costs something like \$20 per year- customizable worksheet generator for many different kinds of problems including money.

<http://www.coolmath.com/>

Students can practice math facts here on their own in gamelike situations.

[http://www.cusucceed.net/resources/b\\_budget\\_page.php](http://www.cusucceed.net/resources/b_budget_page.php)

This has a budget excel program that students can type their own numbers into and figure out how much to save, spend, etc.

<http://hsfpp.nefe.org/> This is a financial planning curriculum- can be somewhat simplified.

## **Math**

<http://mathworld.wolfram.com/> Excellent resource for math terms. This can be a bit complex for younger students. More theoretical than other sites.

<http://www.mathopenref.com/> Interactive Java Applets. Very nice demos. Not as deep into the math jargon as Wolfram.

<http://www.gcalc.net/> The best online graphing program that I have seen.

<http://www.renlearn.com/> The homepage for our Accelerated Math software. We actually use the web version that is called Renaissance Place. USED DAILY

## **Other Software:**

Microsoft Office Suite: USED DAILY

Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Publisher, Outlook

Elluminate Web Conferencing – this was listed above. USED DAILY

Rosetta Stone – We have 1 license for each of 6 languages. Students can rotate through at different times of the day and do their lessons. USED DAILY

## **Differentiated Support in Project-based learning**

Students that I have worked with need varying amounts of support or help. Some students need support because of low skill levels; they actually can't read materials they'd use for research or write sentences and paragraphs to do their summaries. Others for various reasons seem to need someone sitting by them, or writing questions for them to answer, or help finding good web pages or books.

Often, as well, these students don't seem to realize that they need these kinds of support. Therefore, for new students, after their first month (or some other period agreed upon in advance), advisors and students (and possibly parents?) could meet to discuss how independently the student is functioning. They look at what the student has accomplished, what kinds of tasks they've seemed "stuck" on, and agree on an appropriate level of project support from the list below. The advisor monitors progress at daily check-ins, deciding if that level of independence is producing results or if the level of support needs to be raised.

### **SUGGESTED LEVELS OF SUPPORT**

6. Students get help thinking of projects, are assigned a prescribed amount of time for each project, they're provided with research or other materials, are given prompting questions for their research, and they're given reading/writing/on task assistance – amount \_\_\_\_\_ (often ½ hour per day in Sp. Ed in our school)

5. Students get help thinking of projects, are assigned a prescribed amount of time for each project, they're provided with research or other materials, and are given prompting questions for their research.

4. Students get help thinking of projects, are assigned a prescribed amount of time for each project, and they're provided with research or other materials,

3. Students get help thinking of projects and are assigned a prescribed amount of time for each project each day.

2. Students get help thinking of projects.

1. Completely Independent- The student functions just fine on his/her own, getting enough credits and completing projects without prompting.

### **Direct Instruction- Special Education in online, project-based schools**

1. Online whiteboard is good for many things: numbers/letters they can manipulate and move around, examples to save and send out, pictures/illustrations, highlighting/taking notes, etc.

2. Mics and headphones make it possible to do reading aloud, practice speech/discussion skills, spelling practice/tests, discussion of behavioral strategies, etc.

3. web tour element brings in almost any website to discuss and take notes on (using chat window and mic/headphones)

4. Sharing/loading powerpoint helps us to discuss writing as they do it, making suggestions for topics, grammar, punctuation, etc.

5. Google Docs makes it easier to share assignments- teacher writes and shares with student (sends e-mail invite)- student write in answers, teacher can see and check any time and copy discussion questions to whiteboard.

6. Google presentations (in docs) enables teacher to add structure- put in slides for student to "fill in", put in website to research for a slide, etc. Minimizes "lost" data! However,- sometimes google gets "tied up" and is inaccessible, and we have had 1 student whose computer just wouldn't open a document after it was started- there are still kinks in this program.

Autistic students and project based learning, by Karen Locke  
(initial impressions and input about autistic students and project-based learning)

My experience is with 2 schools (Minnesota New Country School and EdVisions Off-Campus High School) that were project-based, with few or no ‘seminars’. These are my observations:

-project-based instruction was helpful for the autistic students because it adapted to their own interests- thus, farmwork, or computer programming, or working with animals, or writing, or playing guitar could be significant parts of their days. They weren’t sitting in a classroom with lots of distracted students, which can be difficult because unmotivated students tend to act out, make noise, cause problems that further distress autistic students.

-Many of my autistic students have had trouble self- motivating to work on their projects, keep track of their work, and especially to log their time. I have used reward programs including points and often treats or free time to help motivate them to stick with the project work. I have also sat with them and helped them log time, as this was almost universally (among autistic students and many others) a distasteful and often avoided activity.

Another difficult thing with projects has been sorting through information, finding what is important, and then remembering what they’ve learned. We used pre-organizers for some of them- today answer these 3 questions about ... (the topic, e.g. the history of horses). They then wrote down the answers to questions or highlighted the material they had read so they would remember the important things. Later they had help, often with me or educational aides, in summarizing the material and putting it into a form to “report out” (powerpoint, built project, report, illustrated timeline, etc)

One advantage project-based learning had was that it enabled change of activity due to individual needs. If a student could only work for 20 minutes at a time, then that student could do so, take a break, and come back. This was very helpful for many of our students who had failed in other settings where they had hour-long classes and didn’t manage very well. This could combine with self-soothing strategies if desired, so they could take a break and calm down and then move on.

Another advantage was that emphasis could be on “hands on” projects for verbally challenged students. Building a model of a house, working with sheep and horses, playing guitar, and even programming a robot were all acceptable uses of time if they were built into projects.

Lastly, students have done projects on some of their social and behavioral skills also. They would write out goals such as improving conversation skills, organization, etc. and then log time when they worked on those skills. Thus these came under their “control” a little more, and they could see that they were getting school credit for working on things that had often been relegated to the background in previous schools.