

What is a “good” ELO?

A good Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) begins with an **essential question** ~ a big idea ~ deciding what will be learned by the experience. The student will develop one or more essential questions that focus the activity, motivate the student, and drive the learning. A question should be broad enough not to be answered easily, and the student will find that it can be approached from many different entry points. The essential question lends itself to exploring connections between the student’s personal, individual, and unique experience of the world. The ELO experience centers around finding an answer.

Rigorous ELOs– those that result in the highest level of academic and personal learning – have four general components. They are: **research, reflection, product, and presentation**. Establishing these four components from the beginning helps the student focus, gives them four natural goals to aim for, and act as benchmarks for their progress.

Research: Research is a good place for a student to start with any exploration. Learning where and how to find more information about their subject can turn a lukewarm interest into engaged enthusiasm. Research adds to the knowledgebase of the subject matter. The student and their cooperating teacher should research the competencies that can be met through the ELO project. The competencies will have some natural content and skills associated with them. As a result of their research, the student may develop or refine their initial essential question(s). Students will be expected to demonstrate how they went about their research and how their research guided their learning.

Reflection: Students are asked to reflect often and regularly on their ELO. The process will encourage them to compare their own values and goals with the issues that formed the basis of their experience. Through reflection, students will develop and adjust short and long term goals, explore problems and solutions encountered during their ELO, and connect their experiences to their learning goals. The expectation is that students document and self-assess their growing knowledge, values, and skills as they move through the learning.

Product: Students will create a product that reflects the knowledge and information gained from the ELO experience. In some ELOs, the product will grow logically from the topic or discipline that the student is exploring. The product should move beyond simple pencil-and-paper artifacts such as written reports to products that involve multiple higher-order thinking and problem solving.

Examples of products (adapted from Teaching for Today, from McGraw-Hill and NHDOE CBAS 2006)			
Song/song lyrics	Visual graphics	Drawing/painting/installation	Interview
Play script	Web development	Original experiment	Graphic novel
Lesson plan	Flip chart	Persuasive letter	Building plan
Game	Demonstration	Menu/recipe/food/beverage	3-D model
Pictures/photos	Mural	Dramatic presentation	Film/video

Presentation: The presentation portion of the ELO assessment is not a rehash of the product. Instead, the presentation is where the student demonstrates their learning. Students will be evaluated on how clearly they communicate their learning during the ELO process to an audience that could include members who are either experts or novices in the disciplines related to the ELO. The student should be able to communicate what they learned through the successes and challenges of the ELO experience and how they changed as a result.