

Implementing Project GLAD® in Secondary Classrooms

by Juanita Sandoval—Project GLAD® Trainer

Promising practices...

OCDE Project GLAD® is often perceived as a group of strategies used by primary teachers. Yet, I have found Project GLAD® to be highly effective in the secondary classroom with older students. Given the foundational premise of making content and language accessible and creating a positive classroom culture, Project GLAD® is a beneficial and necessary component of successful secondary classrooms. Since students are expected to graduate from high school prepared to enter the workforce or higher education, it is particularly important that they leave school with the ability to think critically and collaborate with their peers. In order to do this, students need access to grade-level content standards and rigorous content, as well as the opportunity to learn valuable social skills. Project GLAD® can be a tool to accomplish these goals.

I first learned about Project GLAD® during my student teaching in a second-grade dual language classroom in Albuquerque. I implemented Project GLAD® successfully while teaching elementary school. Discovering that working with older students was more my cup of tea, I continued to use these strategies in sixth- through eighth- and twelfth-grade classrooms. I quickly found that older students also thrived using the Project GLAD® strategies. Student learning increased, and I had an easily-managed classroom where students cooperated with one another and learned academic content easily and effectively.

We know from brain research that the adolescent brain is still undeveloped. The frontal lobe, which is responsible for critical thinking skills, is not fully developed until the early 20s. Students need direct teaching and scaffolding of social skills in order to be able to work collaboratively and also practice positive interdependence. I would argue they need this even more so in middle school, where socializing is more essential than at any other time.

Of course, using Project GLAD® in the secondary classroom does not come without its challenges. In

secondary settings, teachers have multiple classes, often seeing 100 or more students daily for 45 to 90 minutes. As a secondary Project GLAD® teacher/trainer, the following questions are some of the most common I hear.

What benefits do you see from Project GLAD®?

With Project GLAD® my students were able to take ownership of their learning. Project GLAD® protocol requires that anchor charts are created for each new group of students. This allowed all students to actually see themselves on the walls. Students were highly engaged and participated in all the activities. Big Books are a vehicle for content learning, and even my seniors enjoyed Big Book read-alouds. Students also appreciated being able to refer to the charts and use them as ongoing resources for projects and assessments. Most importantly, Project GLAD® helped my students learn specific life and social skills necessary to be successful in school and beyond. The collaborative strategies of Project GLAD® helped us to form a strong classroom community based



Middle school students prepare to present a Project GLAD® team task to their peers.

on positive reinforcement and social skills. I successfully taught rigorous academic content to students with a wide range of language levels and abilities, including long-term English learners and students in special education. Positive results were evident not only in my teacher evaluation scores, but also in my student's end-of-semester test scores.

What do you believe are the most effective strategies for secondary students?

The short answer is that they all are! To be more specific, I particularly found classroom management strategies to be the most beneficial with my middle school students, as they needed direct teaching of social skills and character development. Students appreciated having specific feedback about how to work collaboratively in groups; positive reinforcement is built into the Project GLAD® protocol. Using these strategies helped my students think critically about their own behavior and the impact it has on themselves and others.

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We cannot forget that our secondary students love to move around and be active participants in their learning. Too often they are confined to desks ... let's get them up and moving! Students love sitting in close proximity to charts in order to learn from them, to process content information more deeply, and/or to interact with their peers with structure and support around that content.

Do you create a chart with every class?

I created charts with each of my classes. It is important to create Project GLAD® charts in front of the students so they see the input process in its entirety and learn the information, complete with context and connections.

I have found through the process of creating a chart with each class that each group of students has individual needs and interests to be addressed. The personalities of each class shine through the charts. While it is possible to use a reveal method or digital chart formats with your students when conducting an Input Chart, the benefits are simply not as powerful.



How do you manage your charts?

One key to organizing Project GLAD® materials in a secondary classroom is to allow students to take ownership of the room and the resources. Each class had a designated individual in charge of “changing the charts” during the first five or so minutes of class as others completed their “bell-ringer” activity.

Space is often an issue, so in order to maximize our use of space to display charts, I would layer charts on top of each other. Sometimes I would create a book-like format of charts that could be turned easily by students, or I would use chart hangers and place the charts on rings that could be flipped easily. Ongoing access to the charts as a resource is important.

Where do you find resources?

Project GLAD® uses typically available resources such as content texts, magazines, primary sources, visuals and other realia that can be incorporated into any unit. Complete secondary Project GLAD® units are still a work in progress. I have found it helpful to look at units for younger students and then elevate content based on grade-level standards. It's also productive to collaborate with other teachers in the same content area, sharing the work and knowledge of resources.

What are the next steps for Project GLAD® implementation in secondary classrooms?

My own next step as a teacher and trainer is to make Project GLAD® accessible to more secondary teachers. When training, I consider what I can do to make these strategies manageable and effective in secondary classrooms. I may include a strategy that isn't typically done at elementary demonstrations but is better suited to secondary students. I am also interested in the benefits of Project GLAD® for long term English learners and adult language learners.

DLeNM and the OCDE National Training Center are working to add more secondary units to their unit banks, and

hopefully those will continue to increase along with Project GLAD® implementation in secondary classrooms. This could also lead to more training for secondary teachers in language acquisition strategies and working with ELs. I would like to see a secondary Project GLAD® cohort of teachers across content areas formed to help plan units, gather resources, share ideas, and spread the word on how beneficial this work is for adolescent learners.

All teachers are language teachers, regardless of the content they teach on a daily basis. It is our responsibility to ensure students leave our classrooms with the skills and content understanding necessary to communicate academically across content areas. Project GLAD® gives us the tools needed to do so. Speaking from experience, the benefits of using Project GLAD® with secondary students far outweigh the challenges, so why not give it a try!

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evaluaciones y/o otras actividades. Esto sin mencionar que esta ligado a los cantos o rondas “de aquí y allí” las cuales ayudan a la retención de vocabulario de una manera muy divertida; ¡cantando! El hecho de tener el diagrama completo en la pared da confianza a los estudiantes y les da la posibilidad de visualizar sus propias construcciones colectivas.

Reitero, es muy difícil revivir una estrategia sin tener en cuenta a las otras, pues la magia de Project GLAD® es que todas sus estrategias están entrelazadas en pro del desarrollo pedagógico y la construcción de conocimiento colaborativo en el aula.