I.   **"MY SYNTHESIS PROJECT SHOWS THAT..."**
(adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course in the expectation that these are also relevant goals for students' work in moving towards the synthesis product)

A.   I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).

- Thanks in part to the readers I chose and their inexperience with my subject matter, I needed to be as clear and through as possible to convey what I wanted to say. It was easy to share with colleagues who understood both the context of my work and the target audience. It was much more challenging to prepare a coherent end product for someone who was unfamiliar with the material. In the end I believe that I have succeeded.

B.   I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

- After three semesters of work in this subject area I am beginning to believe that I have explored a significant amount of information about my subject area, yet I am aware that more research and data becomes available as time progresses. I have utilized material form a wide range of practitioners and subject areas, including psychology, education and public politics, to be sure that I have a true representation of the issues.

C.   I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

- I began this project not really knowing which direction I wanted to take, nor where I wanted to focus my attention. SO many facets of this puzzle interested me, but I knew it was unrealistic to try and accommodate all of them in a synthesis project. In the end I had many options and many choices to make, but I believe that in doing so I gave voice to a number of valid focus areas, some of which I may still explore in the future.

D.   I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

- After considerable research I truly feel as though I have a grasp of the key arguments and counter-arguments about single-gender education, even if that means not having all of the answers! There is still much work to be done, and the underlying premises of female adolescent development have helped me ot work through the challenges that these arguments presented for my project.

E.   I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

- This is definitely one place where I grew over the course of the project. I hate deadlines, and no matter how well I have done with an assignment or piece of work, I always feel as though deadlines limit what "more" I might be able to accomplish. It's no surprise, then, to hear that I chose to extend my project into a second semester. I could have completed it in December as scheduled, but I believe part of me still would have felt that I could have done more. Knowing that I wanted to graduate on time, however, forced me not to extend my own self-imposed deadline and work within a given time constraint. ☺

F.   I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

- By far, this is again an area that I most need to develop, much like I did in Practicum. The information I discovered through literature was invaluable, but when dealing with schools and how they affect their students, nothing is more telling that direct observation and interaction with students. One of the challenges for me was simply finding time to explore this hands-on. As a teacher, scheduling time to visit other schools and classrooms without disrupting the lives of my own students is nearly impossible. On the other hand, my own students did provide some hands-on interaction that I hopefully will be able to expand upon when I continue looking at these issues in the future.

G.   I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

- Even though I do not feel as though I have an "answer" to the problem I chose to explore, I have some ideas about HOW to proceed toward real solutions in the future. This is the result of working and reworking my ideas, using the PBL process which I document in the project. If I were to continue working on these topics, as I hope to do, I may find that with continued exploration I can clarify specific goals and ideas even more.

H.   My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps,

so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

- I believe that my writing has developed considerably over the course of this project and throughout the program. I believe that my final draft really expresses the true nature of my "messy problem" and orients my readers to the exploration of PBL through this problem. My one reservation is that I do not seem to have as many concrete solutions as I would like, but more recommendations for how to proceed toward these solutions in the future.

I.   I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

- I have shared many of my findings on an informal basis with my colleagues, and I hope to do so in a more systematic way (with some students as well) as the next stage of the project begins to unfold. I have also worked much more closely with my peers over the last two semesters in this course and others, and I feel that I was able to do so because of the skills I have built in Synthesis.

J.   To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

- I have evaluated where this process has taken me, and how I would like to proceed in the future; I have also found that while my research skills are relatively strong, my interaction with practitioners in the field is an area that I could develop much further to help my project reach the next level. This is much the same as where I found myself at the end of Practicum, except that I feel my knowledge base is much stronger and that I have a more specific focus for what I would like to achieve.

II. DEVELOPING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, INCLUDING TAKING INITIATIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

- The topic of single gender education has always been of interest to me. I have explored it in a number of courses, including practicum CCT 627, and my moral education independent study. With each new course and new insight I find that my energy is renewed and that I want to continue to work toward bringing about positive change.

2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

- One of the keys to the critical and creative thinking program for me is the relationship between courses. However, it is also one of my biggest challenges; again I find myself in much the same place as I was at the end of Practicum. There are so many things that could have been drawn together as I progressed through my courses, but I often am unsure how to do this without getting in over my head. I think my only regret is the fact that I was trying to complete the program while teaching full-time—it gave me some wonderful resources, but also limited the amount of time I could realistically commit to anything over and above what was required for my courses. I wish I had more of a change to integrate material, but it is something I can use in future work.

- On a more positive note, I have been able to overcome some of the challenges I had in previous courses (like my aversion to journaling!) to develop tools that served me well in my project this semester and my online course with Allyn—what an interesting way to end my time in CCT with a course that required collaboration with people I never met on a project we had to develop from scratch!

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies...

- I believe that I have really progressed in this area. I often worked from home, and in my classroom, and on campus—given that, all of my computer files were always on hand via a mini USB drive, and my research materials were summarized, annotated and sorted to help me make better use of them. I have more books, articles and electronic documents than I ever believed that I could acquire for 1 project, but thanks to some skills I really developed in Practicum, I was able to annotate and use them efficiently to progress through my project.

- One thing I considered but never really had a chance to try was a more sophisticated bibliographic software program. Partly because I knew I would not have much time to learn how to use a new program as well as I would like during the semester, I skipped it an worked from another system. It served its purpose well, but I hope to strengthen this aspect of my research organization in the future.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

- I began to use quite a bit of free writing this semester, mainly to help me sort out ideas and manage my workload. When I did take the time to use it, free writing gave me a wonderful cache of ideas with which to begin the next step of my work. After doing that I relied VERY heavily on the PBL tools that we first encountered in CCT 640. I don't remember how I ever got along without them!! At this stage I have become very comfortable using them and I find that they help me more than many other tools or methods I had used in previous years and courses. I am even encouraging my students to try them out and some are quickly becoming converts to PBL! ☺

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

- Sometimes I think "distraction" should be my middle name! There were so many ideas that kept creeping back into my work that I wanted to run off and try something else, leaving my synthesis project "hanging", so to speak. On more than I occasion I thought about scrapping the whole thing and trying something new—strangely enough I had the same notion in Practicum! I think having the extra time of a 2nd semester was both a blessing and a curse—I could acknowledge the fact that other ideas were good and do a little exploration to curb my curiosity; the extra time gave me that flexibility but also reminded me that I had a deadline to make and that other ideas needed to be put on hold.

6.   I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

- I believe this is one of my strongest areas of growth. I had such a strong connection to many of the people in Synthesis that working relationships were great. We were able to share concerns and frustrations as well as hopes and encouragement. I worked with my peers to help them develop their projects and they did the same for me. I think my project owes much to my peer group and our interaction through the second half of the semester.
- By far I would have to say that learning to work with my peers and developing these relationships has been one of the greatest assets that the CCT program has provided me. I fully expect that my peers will be with me as friends and supporters long after we all graduate and move on.

7.   I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my instructor and other readers. I didn't wait for them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in the literature, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my instructor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

- I definitely took full advantage to having a dialogue with others about my project. Many times it was my classmates, but just as often, It was my colleagues here at work. I was very lucky to have a group of people here at work that had a real interest in my project and who were willing both to listen and offer suggestions about the direction of my project, including where they might like to see it go in the future in relation to our students.

8.   I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

- Revision was something I struggled with sometimes. I tend to be a perfectionist and am not always happy with things even after incorporating new ideas and suggestions after someone has read my work. Again I think this is part of the reason that I chose to extend the project over the 2nd semester—it could have been ready by December, but part of me would have picked it up and critiqued it so seriously that I would have wanted another chance to revise it. Hopefully I have succeeded in creating a well thought out piece that shows a serious commitment to good revision.

9.   I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work—criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the instructor so I get a good grade.

- This relates somewhat to revising, and I began to understand more about process during practicum. There were "things" that should have been done at different points of the semester as we worked on our projects—for some I was on schedule, others not even close. As I began to get a better understanding of the importance of the process to the end product, I was able to let go of my fixation on assignments and deadlines and focus on how my project was coming together. In this case as well, I believe that I partly why I opted to extend my timeframe—time was not as important as being satisfied with my work.

10.   I have approached this course as a work-in-progress. Instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and suggest directions for further development.

- Revisions are done and I'm ready to submit my "final" version, but my project is by no means complete. It has provided me with a ledge from which to "jump" into the next phase and hopefully will be the basis of exploration for a long time to come.