The New York State Office
of Religious and
Independent Schools

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE CENTER (PDRC)

The Upstate PDRC – All NYS Regions North of NYC

Project-Based Learning: A Quick Guide

Look for more Quick Guides on the Upstate PDRC website:
https://www.nysed-soris-upstate-pdrc.org/quick-start-guides

GOALS of this Guide:

- Create an clear understanding of the buzzword: Project-Based Learning, what is it all about?

- Identify the key elements and general process of PBL

- Give examples of Unit Projects

- Provide you with resources to further your knowledge

What is Project-Based Learning?

- making learning come ALIVE!

- active engagement in real world challenges

- promotes critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills

- includes deep collaboration and teamwork

- involves assessment beyond a grade

More Importantly…
What is Project-Based Learning NOT?

It is not…

memorizing information and repackaging it

"doing a project" (or a science experiment, or a book report)

about the end product

ever the same twice!

Five Keys to Rigorous Project-Based Learning:

1. Teaching through Real World Problems and Applications

some ideas for PBL units that are relevant to today's students:

"How can I use my voice to create change?"(ELA)

"How can our observations of the natural world help us solve human problems?" (STEM/STEAM)

"What impact did WWII have on today's global relations?" (History)

Five Keys to Rigorous Project-Based Learning:

2. Content Based, Academically Challenging

- **Root the project in the standards you are trying to teach**

- **Clearly identify these before you begin planning, and use them as a tool**

Five Keys to Rigorous Project-Based Learning:

3. Structured Collaboration

- **Working together is a main component of PBL!**

- **This can be done both in the classroom and at home (technology)**

Five Keys to Rigorous Project-Based Learning:

4. Student Driven

- **Students must be invested**

- **Create choice boards, allow freedom for presentation variations**

- **Let students DISCOVER rather than teaching them what to learn**

Five Keys to Rigorous Project-Based Learning:

5. Assessments Beyond a Grade (multi-faceted assessments)

- **Create different points of assessment throughout the unit**

- **Have students assess themselves and each other**

PROCESS

- Identify what you want the students to walk away with knowledge of
- Identify learning goals
- Identify the driving question
- Identify the student choices
- Set benchmarks
- Help create a space for presentation
- Create a method of feedback

Examples of Unit Lessons and Driving Questions

1. How can _____ improve _____?
How can robotics improve the healthcare industry?
How can access to clean water improve communities in developing nations?

2. How can _____ be applied to _____?
How can economics be applied in our daily lives?
How can ethics be applied to solve environmental problems?

3. How can _____ change _____?
How can individuals change their communities?
How can the human behavior change the environment?

4. How would you design a new _____?
How would you design a new system to purify water?
How would you design a new flag for your community?

https://www.penpalschools.com/blog/easy-project-based-learning-question-stems-for-essential-questions

What challenges might PBL present?

- **Trouble with group dynamics**

- **Teaching to "passive learners"**

- **Sticking to the timeline**

- **Balancing the workload**

Advice For Lesson Planning

- Create Open-Ended Questions

  - Share your plan and your schedule with the students...

- ...BUT be flexible, and allow for changes

  - Choose a topic that both you AND the class will really be invested in

Some Resources
and More Information:

- An Example of a Project Based Learning School: [Khan Lab School in Mountain View, CA](#)
- A website chock full of PBL information + help: [PBLWORKS](#)
- 10 Ready-to-Borrow Project Ideas: [Edutopia](#)
- August 12 or 13 Live Session through PDRC: [Beyond the Book Report: Using Google Tools   to Create a Project Based Classroom](#)

THANK YOU!

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