

## Why do project-based learning?

Project-based learning (PBL) is a model for classroom activity that shifts away from the classroom practices of short, isolated, teacher-centered lessons and instead emphasizes learning activities that are long-term, interdisciplinary, student-centered, and integrated with real world issues and practices.

One immediate benefit of practicing PBL is the unique way that it can motivate students by engaging them in their own learning. PBL provides opportunities for students to pursue their own interests and questions and make decisions about how they will find answers and solve problems.

PBL also provides opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. Students apply and integrate the content of different subject areas at authentic moments in the production process, instead of in isolation or in an artificial setting.

PBL helps make learning relevant and useful to students by establishing connections to life outside the classroom, addressing real world concerns, and developing real world skills. Many of the skills learned through PBL are those desired by today's employer, including the ability to work well with others, make thoughtful decisions, take initiative, and solve complex problems.

In the classroom, PBL provides many unique opportunities for teachers to build relationships with students. Teachers may fill the varied roles of coach, facilitator, and co-learner. Finished products, plans, drafts, and prototypes all make excellent "conversation pieces" around which teachers and students can discuss the learning that is taking place.

In the school and beyond, PBL also provides opportunities for teachers to build relationships with each other and with those in the larger community. Student work-which

includes documentation of the learning process as well as the students' final projects-can be shared with other teachers, parents, mentors, and the business community who all have a stake in the students' education.

## Components of project-based learning

Seven features have been identified as key components of this project, for use in describing, assessing, and planning for multimedia projects.

1. Curricular content is the PBL feature for which teachers and students may be held most accountable. Successful integration of content learning requires projects to be based on standards, to have clearly articulated goals, and to support and demonstrate content learning both in process and product.
2. The multimedia component gives students opportunities to use various technologies effectively as tools in the planning, development, or presentation of their projects. Though the technology can easily become the main focus of a given project, the real strength of the multimedia component lies in its integration with the subject curriculum and its authentic use in the production process.
3. The student direction component is designed to maximize student decision-making and initiative throughout the course of the project-from topic selection to design, production, and presentation decisions. Projects should include adequate structure and feedback to help students to make thoughtful decisions and revisions. By documenting students' decisions, revisions, and initiative, teachers (and students) will capture valuable material for assessing student work and growth.
4. PBL accommodates and promotes collaboration among students, between students and the teacher, and ideally between students and other community members as well. This

component is intended to give students opportunities to learn collaborative skills, such as group decision-making, relying on the work of peers, integrating peer and mentor feedback, providing thoughtful feedback to peers, and working with others as student researchers.

5. The real world connection component can take on many forms, depending on the goal of the project. PBL may connect to the real world because it addresses real world issues that are relevant to students' lives or communities. A project may be connected to real professions through use of authentic methods, practices, and audiences. Real world connections might also be made by communicating with the world outside the classroom, via the Internet or collaboration with community members and mentors.
6. An extended time frame builds in opportunities for students to plan, revise and reflect on their learning. Though the time frame and scope of projects may vary widely, they should all include adequate time and materials to support meaningful doing and learning.
7. With its innovative approach to learning, PBL also requires an innovative approach to assessment. Just as learning is an ongoing process, assessment can be an ongoing process of documenting that learning. PBL requires varied and frequent assessment, including teacher assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment, and reflection. Assessment practices should also be inclusive and well understood by students, allowing them opportunities to participate in the assessment process in ways not typically supported by more traditional teacher-centered lessons.