



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](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](#)



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THANK YOU!

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