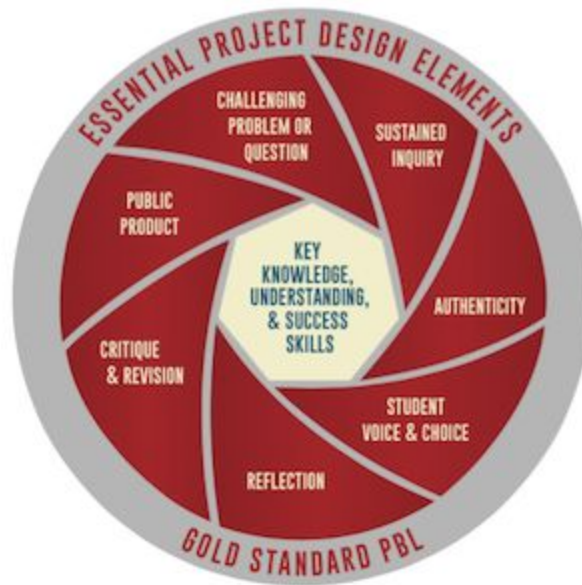


Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Elements

Buck Institute for Education 2015



Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge. In Gold Standard PBL, Essential Project Design Elements include:

- **Key Knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills** - The project is focused on student learning goals, including standards-based content and skills such as critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration, and self-management.
- **Challenging Problem or Question** - The project is framed by a meaningful problem to solve or a question to answer, at the appropriate level of challenge.
- **Sustained Inquiry** - Students engage in a rigorous, extended process of asking questions, finding resources, and applying information.
- **Authenticity** - The project features real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact – or speaks to students’ personal concerns, interests, and issues in their lives.
- **Student Voice & Choice** - Students make some decisions about the project, including how they work and what they create.
- **Reflection** - Students and teachers reflect on learning, the effectiveness of their inquiry and project activities, the quality of student work, obstacles and how to overcome them.
- **Critique & Revision** - Students give, receive, and use feedback to improve their process and products.
- **Public Product** - Students make their project work public by explaining, displaying and/or presenting it to people beyond the classroom.

Gold Standard PBL: Project Based Teaching Practices

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Teachers who make Project Based Learning a regular part of their teaching enjoy their new role. Many traditional practices remain, but are reframed in the context of a project.

- **Design & Plan-** Teachers create or adapt a project for their context and students, and plan its implementation from launch to culmination while allowing for some degree of student voice and choice.
- **Align to Standards-**Teachers use standards to plan the project and make sure it addresses key knowledge and understanding from subject areas to be included.
- **Build the Culture-**Teachers explicitly and implicitly promote student independence and growth, open-ended inquiry, team spirit, and attention to quality.
- **Manage Activities-**Teachers work with students to organize tasks and schedules, set checkpoints and deadlines, find and use resources, create products and make them public.
- **Scaffold Student Learning-**Teachers employ a variety of lessons, tools, and instructional strategies to support all students in reaching project goals.
- **Assess Student Learning-**Teachers use formative and summative assessments of knowledge, understanding, and success skills, and include self and peer assessment of team and individual work.
- **Engage & Coach-**Teachers engage in learning and creating alongside students, and identify when they need skill-building, redirection, encouragement, and celebration.

(Adapted from Setting the Standard for Project Based Learning: A Proven Approach to Rigorous Classroom Instruction, by John Larmer, John Mergendoller, Suzie Boss (ASCD 2015)).