

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAM REPORT

School Year: 2015-2016

PLT Title

One Small Step for Teachers, One Giant Leap for a District: Project Based Pandemonium

Blurb for PLT Conference Brochure

What if students cared so much about the outcome that they willingly engaged in extra work? Our team learned about the elements of Project Based Learning (PBL) and how to implement a meaningful, engaging project that challenges students to think beyond the books and still meet and exceed the standards. There are many ways to examine PBL. Come share and discuss a common vocabulary on ways to implement PBL on a small scale. We've put some time into creating and piloting some sample projects and collecting valuable resources. Come find out what we have learned so far, and contribute to the ongoing conversation.

Contact Information (*Write * next to facilitator's name.*)

Name	School	Grade Level or Subject
David Beebe	Chenery Middle School	Tech Ed
Jim Buckley	Chenery Middle School	Grade Five
Sarah Costa	Chenery Middle School	Grade Five
Catrina Knapp	Chenery Middle School	Grade Five
Dori Pulizzi *	Chenery Middle School	Grade Five

PLT SMART Goal

We will spend the year learning about project based learning.

While fulfilling Common Core requirements, our PLT will look at creative ways to teach the whole child in ways that foster creativity, collaboration, and a love of learning.

We will compile necessary resources; collect information about already existing authentic, holistic, interdisciplinary projects in our respective curriculum areas; and communicate with and learn from colleagues in project based districts.

This PLT Goal is also

A Professional Practice Goal

A Student Learning Goal

Neither

Key Actions

1. We will read and discuss a book about project based learning.
2. We will watch and discuss webinars from the Buck Institute of Education.
3. We will invite speakers to share their expertise on the topic of PBL.
4. We will draft a pilot project.

Findings

As we undertook work to learn about project based learning, we looked at a variety of successful case studies, and we learned about some of the challenges presented by project based learning (PBL). Through our reading of Authentic Learning Experiences: A Real-World Approach to Project-Based Learning, our conversation with Peter Cook an expert in the field, viewing Buck Institute webinars, and talking to colleagues in other districts who have implemented successful projects we learned a great deal about the elements of PBL. Besides learning about the elements of PBL we also learned the following:

- 1) There are elements of PBL already taking place in our district.

- 2) It is wise to have a plan, start small, and not be paralyzed by the need to make things perfect.
- 3) Addressing the standards and incorporating them into the project needs to be intentional and well thought out.
- 4) Members of the community at large were very happy to serve as community and career experts.
- 5) For teachers to feel comfortable implementing PBL in the classroom, it is important for them to feel empowered to address the standards in a creative, project-based way.
- 6) As with all change, in order for PBL to take hold in a district, all stakeholders including teachers, curriculum directors, administrators, and parents need to understand the benefits of PBL.
- 7) Planning time and training time would need to be possible in order for people to feel comfortable with taking a new approach. The Buck Institute recommends a 3 to 5 year time-line when trying to implement PBL.
- 8) When given a problem to solve and presented with a driving question, students are engaged.
- 9) Project based learning requires a lot of planning; teachers need to guide students through the project, know what questions to ask, and identify what resources to have available.
- 10) Ideally, project based learning crosses the curriculum.

Recommendations / Next Steps

We would like to get more colleagues involved in dialogue about project based learning and its benefits for our students.

Our next steps will be to have conversations with administrators about how a PBL approach benefits learners. In order for productive dialogue, the conversation should encompass fears, concerns, and questions of all stakeholders.

We would like to find some time for planning a pilot project that would allow students to make cross-curricular connections.