

Project-Based Learning (PBL) Decision Maker's Guide





PBL Decision Maker's Guide

Tips for Evaluating PBL Resources

Today's educators increasingly recognize the value of Project-Based Learning (PBL) integration in their districts. PBL helps students practice time management, collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking -- essential 21st century skills. In addition, PBL helps students drive their own learning, which results in increased attendance, engagement, and motivation.

As educational leaders work to lead the shift to PBL, they face the challenge of where to start. Will we develop our own programs or purchase existing materials? How will we evaluate available PBL programs? How will we ensure successful implementation in our school or district?

With such a great demand for PBL, many education companies have jumped on the bandwagon to address the need. These programs vary greatly, with many lacking rigor and resulting in "fluff projects" rather than true PBL. We've developed this guide to help you through the process. These tips represent best practices as defined by PBLWorks (formerly the Buck Institute), combined with our own 15 years of experience providing schools with the highly successful PBL program, TREP\$.

The 9 Essential Components of Successful PBL

1. Key Knowledge & Understanding
2. Success Skills
3. Challenging Problem or Question
4. Sustained Inquiry
5. Authenticity
6. Student Voice and Choice
7. Reflection
8. Critique and Revision
9. Public Product

Use the following checklist to guide you through the process of evaluating your PBL options.



PBL Component	Yes?	No?	TREP\$?
Key Knowledge & Understanding Does the project teach students key knowledge?			✓
Success Skills Does the project require students to hone valuable "soft skills"?			✓
Challenging Problem or Question Is there a question to explore or a problem to solve?			✓
Sustained Inquiry Do students have the chance to continually ask and answer questions?			✓
Authenticity Is there a real-world context or application to the learning?			✓
Student Voice and Choice Are students allowed to make choices about the projects and processes?			✓
Reflection Are there opportunities for students to reflect on learning?			✓
Critique and Revision Are there processes for giving and receiving feedback?			✓
Public Product Is the final project presented beyond the classroom?			✓

Conclusion

PBL is a vital component to developing confident and capable students. When planned and executed well, PBL has the ability to provide students with the knowledge, understanding, and skills for success in the classroom today and in the workplace of tomorrow. Selecting the right PBL program for your students is important, and we hope that this guide helps you to make that decision.

As you continue your evaluation, we invite you to take a closer look at TREP\$ for your school or district. TREP\$ is uniquely designed to meet all these criteria and more. It has been successfully used in STEM, enrichment, financial literacy, and career exploration courses. It is also widely used as an extracurricular, before- or after-school program. Visit www.trepsed.com to learn more or to contact us.



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