



BUCK INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION

# PBL District Support Toolkit

## PBL Classroom Walkthrough Tool

**Leaders are encouraged to use this tool as a framework for conversations about the design and classroom implementation of Gold Standard Project Based Learning. It is intended to act as a catalyst for reflective dialogue and to stimulate further discussion about student learning.**

## Student Learning Goals

# Key Knowledge, Understanding & Success Skills

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Teacher provides direct instruction when appropriate (it is not the sole mode of instruction).
- Students are provided with additional instruction and related resources when they demonstrate a “need to know.”
- Teacher incorporates a variety of teaching tools and strategies to build 21st century success skills.
- Teacher supports students in understanding how the learning and content is tied to the real world.
- Student needs are met through varied modes of instruction and support.
- The project is thematic and tied to the school, community or world.
- Students can articulate what they are learning and why.

### Questions for Teachers

- What might it look like for students to exceed your learning expectations for them on this project?
- What specific 21st century success skills are you addressing in this project? How will you teach and assess them?
- How will students know their learning targets for this project?
- What is the connection between the key content knowledge and understanding you selected and how it is demonstrated in a real world setting?

- What evidence do you have that this is a “main course” project?
- What would it look like to increase the rigor of the content addressed in this project?
- How do you know that your project is ambitious enough to stimulate creative and innovative thinking?
- What criteria did you use to choose your entry event?

### Questions for Students

- What do you think you’re learning by doing this project?
- Do you think you understand \_\_\_\_\_ (content/topic) pretty well because of this project?
- Do you have to think hard in this project?
- Can you tell me about a time when you had to solve a problem that came up during the project?
- Did you need to be creative in this project?
- Does this project make you think about how different people might see this issue/problem?
- How are you using technology in this project?
- Do you think you’re learning how to work as a team?
- How do you organize your work as a team?

## Essential Project Design Element

# Challenging Problem or Question

### Classroom Look-Fors

- The challenge, problem or driving question is posted and visible for students.
- The teacher uses the challenge, problem or driving question to frame the instruction.
- Students can connect or relate to the challenge presented in the challenge, problem or driving question
- The challenge, problem or driving question engaging to students.
- The challenge, problem or driving question is open-ended and aligned to essential learning outcomes/standards.
- The challenge, problem or driving question pushes students to learn the key content knowledge and understanding they need to gain from the project.

### Questions for Teachers

- How do you know your DQ is ambitious enough to stimulate genuine inquiry?
- When students answer the DQ, how will you ensure the answers are unique?
- What would it look like to include your students in writing the DQ?
- What feedback did your peers give you about your DQ? How was that feedback given to you?
- What is the connection between your entry event and the end product?

### Questions for Students

- How did this project start? Did that get you interested right away?
- Can you tell me what this project is about?
- What is the challenge, problem, or driving question for the project?
- What are the major products you're working on?
- What questions did you have at the launch of this project?

# Essential Project Design Element

## Sustained Inquiry

### Classroom Look-Fors

- The list of student questions for inquiry is posted and visible.
- The list of student questions for inquiry is actively used to guide instruction.
- The list of student questions for inquiry include comprehensive questions about content knowledge, skills, and the processes required for the project.
- Students are engaged in a process where they are asking and seeking answers to their own questions.
- Students ask questions that require them to access multiple sources to find answers.
- Students ask questions that help them develop even deeper questions.
- Students apply what they learn to the project tasks.

### Questions for Teachers

- What is the connection between your list of student questions for inquiry and the significant content/ key understandings that you are hoping students will learn?
- How has your list of student questions for inquiry changed the trajectory of your project?
- What surprises were revealed during the collection of your list of student questions for inquiry?
- What would it look like for students to be responsible for keeping the list of student questions for inquiry as a live document?

- How could you make your list of student questions for inquiry more efficient to manage?
- How does the list of student questions for inquiry support you in igniting inquiry? Sustaining it?
- How will you know if your topic is too narrow (or broad)?
- What is the connection between the product and student inquiry?
- How might you readjust if you discover that students are less than enthused about this project?
- How will you ensure that students have the opportunity for ongoing, extended inquiry throughout the development of the product?
- What feedback did you receive during your Critical Friends Protocol to help plan the inquiry process for students?
- How is the teacher scaffolding the students' inquiry?

### Questions for Students

- Did you come up with a list of questions that you're finding the answers to? How did you come up with those questions?
- Do you feel like you're asking more questions as you're getting deeper into a topic? Do you have an example?
- What strategies do you use to answer your own questions?
- Is learning in PBL different than learning in more traditional ways? How?

# Essential Project Design Element

## Authenticity

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Students are enthusiastic about the project.
- The context of the project is authentic.
- The tasks students are engaged in are authentic.
  - ▶ Students are engaged in tasks that mirror tasks of professionals in the real world.
  - ▶ Students are using the same tools that experts in the field use.
  - ▶ Students are challenged with dilemmas or problems that people face day-to-day.
- The project will have authentic impact.
  - ▶ Student learning and work will truly impact their community, their school or the world.
- The project is personally authentic.
  - ▶ Students are able to explore their personal interests through the project.
  - ▶ Students see their needs, values, language, or culture being addressed through the context of the project.

### Questions for Teachers

- What are you hoping your students already know about [topic]?
- What are you hoping they learn or discover?
- How will you sustain the momentum generated during your entry event throughout your project?

- What criteria did you use to choose your entry event?
- Are your students creating or designing something for the real world?
- How did you come up with the idea for this project?
- In what ways do you think this project will be meaningful for your students?
- Does this project connect to the school, community or world? In what ways?

### Questions for Students

- Why do you think you are working on this project?
- Do you like this project? Why?
- Do you feel like this project is important to you? In what ways?
- Does this project connect to your life?
- Do you think that what you're doing in this project is the kind of thing adults do out in the world, like at work or in their lives?
- What are you learning and do you think it's important?

## Essential Project Design Element

# Student Voice and Choice

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Student products vary.
- Student presentation of work and products vary.
- Students make decisions about the use and structure of their independent work time.
- Students make decisions about the use and structure of their collaborative time.
  - ▶ Students have opportunities to select mode of learning at various points throughout school day. Some may be using technology, some working independently, some with the support of a teacher, some in small peer groups.
- Students are answering questions they've devised.
- Students have significant control over the use of their own time and work independently from the teacher.

### Questions for Teachers

- How did you design your project to include opportunities for students to have voice and choice?
- Do your students have autonomy in determining how they'll demonstrate their key knowledge and understanding gained through this project?
- What structures are in place for student decision-making?
- How did you communicate to students where and when they would have voice and choice?

- How effectively do you think you incorporated voice and choice into your project? Was it difficult to allow this level of student autonomy? Why?

### Questions for Students

- What kinds of decision were you able to make with regard to your project?
- How did you decide what your end product was going to be?
- Were you able to make decisions about how to use your time?
- In what ways were you able to explore issues that are important to you in this project?

# Essential Project Design Element

## Reflection

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Students use journals or other methods to reflect during and after projects.
- Students are prompted to think about their thinking.
- Students are prompted to reflect on task performance.
- Dialogue around tasks and student performance is a part of classroom routine.
- Students goal set.
- Students offer the teacher feedback on how they think the project went.
- Students use their reflections to make recommendations about future projects.

### Questions for Teachers

- How do you think this project is going/went?
- What were some of your celebrations? Challenges?
- What do you know from this project that will inform future project design and implementation?
- Did you engage in a Critical Friends Protocol prior to launching this project?
- Did you have the opportunity to look collaboratively at student work with your peers?
- Did you have any dilemmas that your peers helped you work through? What were they? What were the results of that collaborative problem solving?
- Did you engage in a Post Project Reflection Protocol?
- Did you students do anything that really wowed you?
- If you could give advice to someone new to PBL, what would that be, based on your experience?

- How did you structure opportunities for the students to reflect through the course of this project? Did it feel authentic? Will you continue to use those strategies in future instruction?
- How engaged in the project do you think your students were?
- Did you get the results you hoped you would through the development of their products?
- Were there any lulls in the momentum during the project? How did you counteract that and regain momentum?
- Is there any element of PBL project design or implementation you feel especially confident in? Areas in which you need additional support?

### Questions for Students

- Did you like this project?
- What did you like about learning this way? What didn't you like?
- What are you proud of in this project?
- Are there things you would have done differently?
- What are some things you think you'll remember from doing this project?
- Would you like to continue learning through projects?
- Do you think you understand \_\_\_\_\_ (content/topic) pretty well because of this project?
- Do you think you're learning how to work as a team? How do you know?
- Did different people on your team have different skills that made the team stronger?
- Once the project was completed, were you able to answer the challenge, problem, or question?

# Essential Project Design Element

## Critique and Revision

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Structures are in place to support peer critique.
- Students are engaged in conversation around product development.
- Teacher models the use of effective feedback to refine product quality.
- Experts from outside the classroom are used to support product refinement.
- Students produce multiple drafts of a product.
- Students seek feedback from their peers on the quality of their work.

### Questions for Teachers

- What structures do you have in place for critique and revision?
- What strategies did you use to teach students how to give effective feedback?
- Have you used any outside the classroom experts to facilitate the process of critique and revision? Who? How did you use them?
- What did you notice about the quality of your students' work while engaged in this project?
- What do you find most valuable about the process of critique and revision?

- How did you use critique and revision in your own work throughout the course of this project?
- Did you use rubrics to guide student work? How did you use them?

### Questions for Students

- How do you know that the work you are producing is quality work?
- How do you know what good quality work looks like? Have you seen examples?
- Are you using a rubric to guide your work? Is it helpful?
- Do you look at each other's work and give each other specific feedback on how to make it better? How?
- Do you pause once in a while to think about how well you're...
  - ▶ working together as a team?
  - ▶ getting your work done?
  - ▶ meeting your deadlines?
- Do you pause once in a while to write in a journal or talk about what you're learning in the project? How you're learning?



# Essential Project Design Element

## Public Product

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Students have the opportunity to share their work publicly.
- Students engage with a public audience that includes a variety of people beyond their classmates.
- Students exhibit 21st century success skills during their presentations.
- The audience has a legitimate task and takeaway, beyond simply listening to presentations.
- The audience is encouraged to provide students with feedback and ask questions.
- Students share their work in a way that is authentic to the task and representative of the real world.
- Students reflect on their performance.
- Students ask and answer questions from an authentic public audience.
- Students employ the appropriate use of technology during their presentations.

### Questions for Teachers

- What connections exist between the public audience and the presentation results?
- How was your original intention for the culminating event met, exceeded, or less than expected?

- How did the audience evaluations of project presentations compare to your assessment of them?
- How did you prepare the audience to play the role you envisioned for them during student presentations?

### Questions for Students

- Did you have to consider your audience when planning your products or presentations? How did that impact your decision-making process?
- Did you have the opportunity to connect with experts from outside the classroom? How did that impact your products or presentation?
- Who are you going to be presenting your work to? How did that impact your products or presentation?

# Project Based Teaching Practices

## Align to Standards

*(Note: for the “Design & Plan” Teaching Practice, see above Essential Project Design Elements)*

### Classroom Look-Fors

- The teacher has identified an adequate number of standards to be taught and assessed throughout the course of the project.
  - ▶ The time dedicated to teaching the standards is realistic given the content.
- The products students are asked to create demonstrate mastery of project’s content standards.
- The challenging problem or question is derived from the content standards.
- Students are aware of learning targets for the project.
- Students understand how what they are learning is aligned to the challenging problem or question they are addressing and the products they are being asked to create.

### Questions for Teachers

- What considerations did you make in regard to standards when designing your projects?
- Did you begin with an interesting topic you wanted your students to explore, or with the standards first?
- Did your student products allow your students to demonstrate mastery?

### Questions for Students

- What learning did you gain through this project?
- What are the learning targets that you were working towards during this project?
- How do you know you met the targets? How does your product or presentation show you’ve met them?
- How does what you learn in other subjects support your work in this project?

# Project Based Teaching Practice

## Build the Culture

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Students are excited about meeting the challenge presented during the entry event.
- Positive slogans and student work are on the walls.
- Teacher uses structured processes to guide inquiry.

### Questions for Teachers

- How will you sustain the momentum generated during your entry event throughout your project?

### Questions for Students

- Did you feel like it was okay to make mistakes and that you'd have opportunities to fix them as you went through the project process?
- Did you feel like you had opportunities to work and make decisions independently from the teacher?
- Did you have the opportunity to ask questions and find your own answers to those questions?
- Are there times during project work where you received specific feedback about how you were working rather than what you were working on?

- Are individuals' ideas and opinions heard, respected and taken into consideration as you move through the project process?
- Did you set goals at the beginning of this project? Did you have an individual goal? Team goal?
- What processes did you engage in to make your work high-quality?
- Did you feel academically and personally challenged by your work on this project?
- Where do you get the help you need when you're stuck?

# Project Based Teaching Practice

## Manage Activities

### Classroom Look-Fors

- There is a detailed project calendar.
- Students have adequate time to complete the project.
- There is flexibility for the allotted time frame to be shortened or lengthened to accommodate students' evolving needs.
- The teacher sets checkpoints that protect time for feedback, revision, and for instruction to be adjusted.
- The size of the student teams is appropriate for the students' assigned roles and tasks.
- The teacher uses a process that includes student input to create balanced, effective teams.
- There is an observable process in place to establish team norms.
- Students are self-monitoring their team norms.
- The teacher promotes successful team behaviors.
- The teacher observes and checks in with teams or team representatives.
- Students are reflecting on their collaboration and the dynamics of their team throughout the project.

### Questions for Teachers

- What would it look like for you to make students' work public throughout the project, not just at the end?
- How have you planned events and activities so that they will hold students' commitment to the inquiry process?
- How will you plan for formative assessment to inform your instruction throughout the project?
- How do you know that your project is planned for the right time frame?
- Has the teacher gathered information to form teams that capitalize on student strengths and needs?

- What input should students have in forming their teams?
- How do you know that your teams are balanced and effective?
- How did your knowledge of students' strengths and needs guide your decisions about the teams that were selected?
- How are you monitoring students that are challenged by group work?
- What do you think students are reporting to their parents about the teams that have been formed on this project?
- How are you supporting students working in teams who are outside of their comfort zone?
- What has surprised you about the teamwork that has transpired to date?
- How have you addressed the dissonance that occurs when competing voices on a team want to take the project in different directions?
- What is the connection between your classroom norms and the norms that teams have agreed to follow?

### Questions for Students

- Do you have enough time to do what you need to do for this project?
- Do you feel like you know what to do each day during the project?
- Are you getting the help you need?
- Do you think the project has the right mix of time to work on your own and time for teaching by the teacher?
- How is your teacher monitoring your progress?
- Are you getting what you need to do your work (like internet access, materials) How?
- Did you decide who you would work with on a team, or did the teacher?
- How did you decide who was going to do what on your team?
- What systems are in place in your classroom that help you manage your project?

# Project Based Teaching Practice

## Scaffold Student Learning

### Classroom Look-Fors

- Structures are in place to support varied modes of instruction.
- Evidence of differentiation of lesson plan/delivery is clear.
- Teacher uses student grouping to support varied levels of learner needs.
- Appropriate tools are readily available for students who require additional support.

### Questions for Teachers

- What strategies did you use to pre-plan for the scaffolds necessary for today's work?
- What structures are in place for students to ask for and receive support?

### Questions for Students

- What strategies does your teacher use to support team work?
- What strategies does your teacher use to support you when you get stuck?
- How does your teacher support the class when you all need to learn something in order to move on in your project?

- Has the level of support from your teacher shifted from the start of the project to the end?
- What resources were available to you during your project?
- Did you feel you received the right level of support for you to be successful?

# Project Based Teaching Practice

## Assess Student Learning

### Classroom Look-Fors

- The teacher adequately assesses individual student learning.
- The teacher assesses student knowledge and understanding of subject area content.
- Students understand the criteria for proficiency.
- The teacher creates regular opportunities for students to document and self-assess their progress in developing competencies.
- There is evidence that the teacher has engaged in the Professional Learning Loop with this project.
- Students are receiving formal evaluations of their achievement.
- Students have the opportunity to critique and revise their own work, and the work of their peers.

### Questions for Teachers

- How did you develop the criteria for the evaluations used in this project?
- What sources of evidence is the teacher using to judge individual and team performance?
- What was your process for checking that students received high quality feedback throughout the process?
- What is the connection between how students are collaborating and the overall grade they are earning at this stage? Describe the anomalies.

- How are students evaluating themselves compared to your assessment of their performance?
- How are students receiving feedback on their progress?

### Questions for Students

- How does the teacher know if you're meeting the learning targets?
- How does your teacher assess your role as an individual as well as a team member?
- Does your teacher ask you to reflect upon your work and how you worked through the project process?
- Do you think your work in the project is graded fairly?
- How were you assessed during this project?

# Project Based Teaching Practice

## Engage and Coach

### Classroom Look-Fors

- The teacher uses probing questions to support rigorous thinking.
- The teacher encourages students to use resources such as technology and peers to answer complex questions.
- The teacher uses the Challenging Problem or Question to keep students engaged in project work.

### Questions for Teachers

- How will you sustain the momentum generated during your entry event throughout your project?
- What strategies do you use to keep students engaged in the project?
- What has worked well? What implications does that have for future project work?
- What challenges have you faced? How did you reconcile them?

### Questions for Students

- How does your teacher support you through the project process?
- How does your teacher encourage you to dig deeper, work harder, and challenge yourself?
- Did you engage in any team-building activities during the project?
- In what ways were you provided feedback about your products? About your processes?
- What kept you motivated throughout the course of the project?
- How did your teacher help keep you focused on your goals (both team and individual)?
- How do you think your talents were used and developed during this project?
- How does your teacher celebrate the work students are doing?