

# Your Project Based Learning Journey

**A guide for teachers**

Informed by educational research  
and the experience of more than  
100,000 educators.

BUCK INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION

**PBL**works



## LET'S GET STARTED!

Teachers who use Project Based Learning often say, **“This is how I’ve always wanted to teach!”** It’s exciting to see students actively engaged in learning, gaining deeper understanding, building skills and developing confidence. Instead of being the all-knowing expert who transmits knowledge, the PBL teacher is a well-informed coach, facilitator of learning, and guide through the inquiry process.

**But teachers don’t become PBL experts overnight – or even over one school year.**

The trip from traditional instruction to PBL is a journey of professional learning and reflection—one that can feel like a winding, uncertain path. It’s a trip best taken with someone who knows the terrain—like PBLWorks.

We’ve been guiding teachers and leaders on this journey for over 20 years, toward sustained, high-quality PBL practice. Our approach is informed by educational research, and the experience of more than 100,000 teachers who’ve received training and support from us.



TRAIL  
HEAD

# HERE'S YOUR TRAIL MAP

## STAGE 1

### Discover

The What & Why of PBL

## STAGE 2

### Learn

How to design & implement PBL

## STAGE 3

### Implement

Your Project in Your Classroom

## STAGE 4

### Reflect

Lessons learned & plan next steps

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### Share & Lead

To help others on their journey



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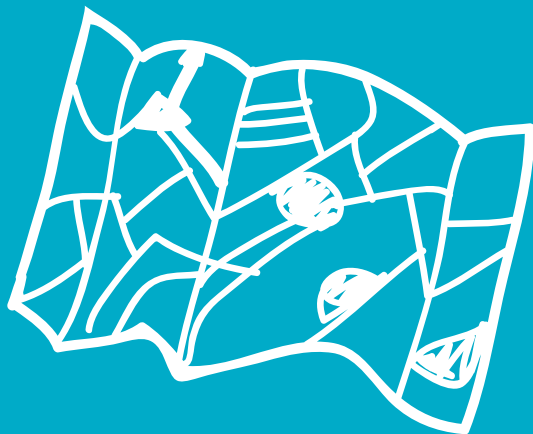
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## STAGE 1



# Discover

## THE WHAT & WHY OF PBL



**Here we go.** You've been hearing about Project Based Learning, and your antennae are up. You want to know what it's all about, and you're looking into how it will shift your teaching and impact your students.

This is the perfect time for a deep dive into the wide collection of resources, research, and stories at [PBLWorks.org](https://PBLWorks.org). Learn what high quality Project Based Learning is. Watch how a project develops from beginning to end in a classroom. Read the research about how PBL impacts student achievement.

We hope you'll emerge with the same insight we have: that Project Based Learning prepares students for college, career, and life. It offers transformative learning experiences for all students, including those furthest from opportunity, helping them discover meaning in their work, and in their lives.

# Discover

**PBLWORKS HELPS  
YOU PREPARE FOR  
THE JOURNEY WITH:**

- › Videos of PBL in action
- › Publications (books and articles)
- › Research studies
- › Stories from schools and districts
- › Clarity about the benefits for all students
- › The PBL Blog



# Discover



**FROM HERE,  
TAKE WITH YOU:**

- A basic understanding of what Project Based Learning is (and is not)
- Excitement about your reasons for taking the next steps in your PBL journey
- Awareness of the powerful impact PBL can have on your students and their lives
- Inspiration and examples from others on similar journeys
- Genuine enthusiasm for what's ahead

## STAGE 2



# Learn

## HOW TO DESIGN & IMPLEMENT PBL



PBL 101

You've decided to try Project Based Learning, and now it's time to figure out how to do it well. At this point on the path, you want a guide with the experience and training to get you where you want to go.

### We'd be happy to be your guide.

Helping teachers and school leaders develop the capabilities to design and facilitate quality Project Based Learning is more than just our mission. It's what we love to do. Our workshops are based on over 20 years of creating lasting changes in practice for educators.

Our immersive [3-day PBL 101 Workshop](#) is the best place to begin. You'll be in the company of our distinguished [National Faculty](#) — a hand-picked group of seasoned teachers, school and district leaders, coaches, authors, and PBL experts.



# Learn



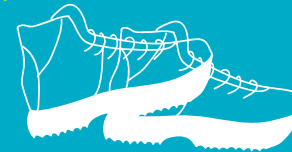
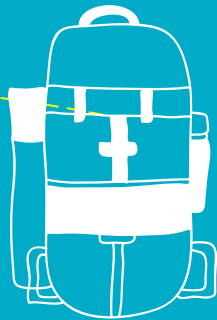
They've traveled this road before, and are passionate about helping others navigate step-by-step into a whole new mindset about teaching.

They'll help you shift your role from one who delivers instruction to one who designs experiences and facilitates understanding in a learner-centered classroom. A blend of direct instruction, video analysis, hands-on

independent work, resource sharing, and peer collaboration and feedback, the PBL 101 workshop mirrors the PBL process!

PBL 101 is based on our model for Gold Standard PBL, which sets a high bar for project design and implementation.

**Done well, PBL sets the stage for deeper learning of meaningful academic content.**



# Learn

**PBLWORKS TOOLS  
& SERVICES GET  
YOU THERE WITH:**

- › 3-Day PBL 101 Workshop – the perfect introduction to PBL
- › 1-Day Project Slice Workshop – a day in the life of PBL classroom
- › PBLWorks Project Cards – for inspiration and ideas
- › PBLWorks Project Planner – to help you design or adapt projects to your classroom
- › MyPBLWorks.org – an all-access pass for resources, tips, and tools

# Learn



**FROM HERE,  
TAKE WITH YOU:**

- › An understanding of high quality PBL and the ability to design effective projects
- › Your first self-created PBL unit – standards-aligned and ready to implement in your classroom!
- › A cohort of educators alongside you – available to connect with you, process the experience with you, and share the journey ahead
- › Powerful new teaching practices to transform your classroom
- › Inspiration and the confidence to begin implementing PBL with your students

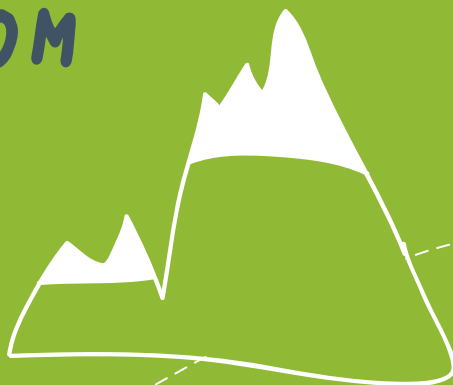
## STAGE 3



# Implement

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**YOUR PROJECT  
IN YOUR  
CLASSROOM**



**It's go time!** The foundation you built and plans you drafted in your PBL 101 workshop are the gear you'll need to travel the PBL terrain. Reference your 101 workbook, your growing toolkit of new ideas and practices, and your 101 Online Companion. Put the finishing touches on that PBL project you designed. Remember, this first project can be small! Start with one subject instead of an interdisciplinary project. Or begin with a two-week project, and save that extended project for later.



# Implement

## Feeling a little nervous?

That's normal. It's tough to set out into the unknown, and let your students take the lead. Don't worry, you already have the skills you need to get started. You know how to coach kids and organize your curriculum. You know good teaching practices, standards, and how to scaffold for different learners. You already manage activities in the classroom, and know how to assess formatively and summatively. Through PBL, you have the chance to use and hone your existing skills in a new way.

## Just get started.

You may feel challenged. You may lose your balance. You may even stumble, but we won't let you fall. We're always here with any support you need, whatever it takes to keep you moving toward the rewarding view at the top.

## You can do this!



# Implement



**PBLWORKS TOOLS &  
SERVICES ARE THERE  
FOR YOU WITH:**

- › **Online coaching** – small group sessions with a National Faculty coach to overcome implementation barriers.
- › **In-workshop Online Companion and post-workshop Learning Modules** – designed to help you with the most common questions that come up early in the PBL journey
- › **Online resources** – rubrics, worksheets, and other tools from MyPBLWorks
- › **Your PBL 101 workshop peer group** – who you can turn to for input and ideas



# Implement

FROM HERE, YOU'LL  
COME AWAY WITH:

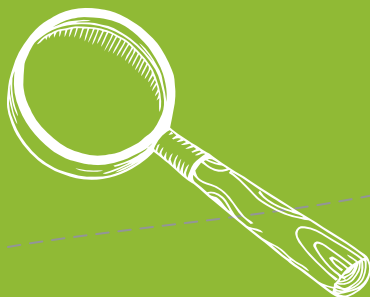
- The excitement of completing your first PBL Project
- The beginning of a new classroom culture
- A level of confidence with PBL in action—including the challenges. No more fear of the unknown!
- A firsthand view of PBL's impact on students.
- The trail map to a new adventure in education

## STAGE 4



# Reflect

ON LESSONS  
LEARNED TO  
HELP YOU PLAN  
NEXT STEPS



## So how did it go?

Wait, what? Your project didn't work out as expected on the first try? That just means you're human. This is an adventure through new territory, not a quick jog down a paved road... It's time to look back on what's working and what's not, and tweak your plan for the trail ahead. Reflect on what students learned, their inquiry process, the quality of their work, project activities, and obstacles that popped up.

During this stage, it's important to remember you're not alone. You have a big support crew all around you. You can reach out to your workshop peer group, as well as other PBL teachers in your school or district to compare notes, get feedback, celebrate your victories, and commiserate over your challenges.



# Reflect

**Your friends at PBLWorks are always there for you, too,** if you need a support visit, or advanced workshops to sharpen your practice. You might appreciate a deeper exploration of how to build a culture of high quality work in your classroom, or perhaps an advanced session about how to balance individual, small-group, and whole-group activities within your PBL unit. Or maybe you'd find it helpful to share your learning with colleagues through a structured presentation on your PBL implementation successes, challenges, and areas to grow.

With all these resources at your fingertips, this powerful stage of the journey is a time to deepen your PBL practice and solidify your next steps. You'll gather ideas for what you can do even better next time, and start drafting your next project plan.

Inspired to explore every inch of the PBL territory, you'll make your way back towards Stage 3—ready to implement your next project and experience the process on an even deeper level.



# Reflect

**PBLWORKS HELPS  
YOU GEAR UP FOR  
NEXT TIME WITH:**

- › Sustained Support Visits – a customized blend of mini-workshops, coaching sessions, and facilitated work time
- › **Teacher Presentations of Learning** – an end of a semester/year session for your team to share PBL implementation successes and challenges.
- › **PBL 101 workshop peer group online** – who you can turn to for input and ideas
- › Project cards – inspiration for your next project?
- › **Return to MyPBLWorks.org** – for reflection tools and planning resources

# Reflect



FROM HERE,  
MOVE FORWARD  
WITH:

- Key takeaways from your first project – and an even better plan for your next PBL unit
- Feedback from your school peers and workshop peer group online
- Customized guidance through a Sustained Support Visit
- Lots of energy to forge ahead with your next project!

# Mastering the terrain

You'll make the circuit through territory in stages 3 and 4 for awhile, getting stronger and stronger with each experience. As you continue to implement new projects and reflect and adjust, you'll become more and more at home here.

**Take your time and enjoy the view** as your practice deepens, and your students' experience becomes better and better.





## STAGE 5

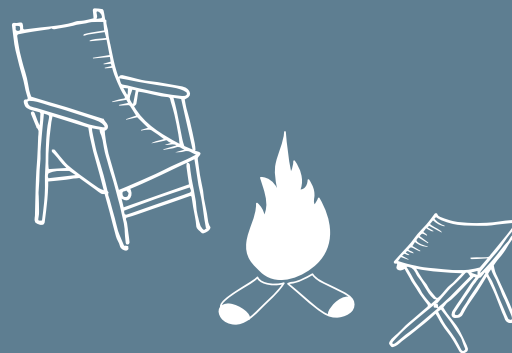


# Share & Lead

**TO HELP OTHERS  
ON THEIR  
PBL JOURNEY**

**Look at you now!** You're an experienced PBL teacher, and you've come a long way from the trailhead. How can you make the best use of all the experience you've gained along the way?

**Why not share it?** The benefit of your experience will help other teachers become strong PBL practitioners. It'll help the PBL community flourish and grow. And it gives you an even greater sense of mastery over your own PBL work.



# Share & Lead



You can post on our PBL Blog. Submit your story for us to post on our website. Give a presentation at a future PBL World user conference. Participate in our online community (coming soon), be a guest on our upcoming podcast series, and post about PBL on social media. However you choose to reach people, they'll be more effective with PBL because of what you can share.

## Or maybe you're interested in leading others in their journey,

serving as a guide for the newbies. If so, step on up. You might be asked to mentor other teachers, join a community of practice, or become a leader or coach for PBL in your school, district, or beyond.

There are so many projects to do, and so many ways to apply your experience. Once you start your PBL journey, it keeps taking you to new places!



# Share & Lead

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**PBLWORKS  
GETS YOU TO NEW  
HEIGHTS WITH;**



## FOR SHARING:

- PBL Blog
- PBL Podcast\*
- PBLWorks School & District Stories
- PBL events
- Your favorite social media

## FOR LEADING:

- PBL Coaching Workshop
- PBL Leadership Workshop

\* coming soon

## YOU'RE AT THE END OF THE GUIDE

**Looking for support as you navigate your way?**

**We're here to help.** Whether you're brand new to PBL or you're diving deeper, our workshops and services are designed to develop and improve your teaching practice. With PBLWorks, you can get the support you want throughout the PBL journey, to make sustained change in your teaching practice.

Learn more about bringing our teacher-focused services to your school!

And, don't hesitate to **contact us!** Our team is happy to talk through the details, answer your questions, and share tips on how to get started.



**HAPPY  
TRAILS!**



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