



2024 Year End Review

**Advancing Our Bold Vision:
Progressing With Purpose**

BUCK INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION

PBLworks

**Project
Based
Learning
for all.**

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Message from the CEO

Dear PBLWorks Supporters and Partners,

Thanks to our incredible team, dedicated partners, and the educators we serve, 2024 has been a year of immense learning, growth, and impact. We continue to listen deeply to the field and adapt to meet the moment—guided by joy and hope.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of education, we remain committed to creating learning experiences through Project Based Learning that empower both learners and educators.

This year, we convened educators and experts to explore performance assessments, resulting in a white paper that lays the groundwork for meaningful change in measuring student learning.

In addition, we've refined and shaped the next evolution of our services, now offering more flexible professional learning options and regional PBL Institutes to better meet the needs of educators.



We are also expanding into the curriculum field, providing high-quality PBL units that equip teachers with powerful, ready-to-use resources for deeper learning.

With our unwavering commitment to Gold Standard Project Based Learning, we are poised to make 2025 a year of bold impact—igniting deeper learning, empowering teachers, and equipping leaders to drive lasting change nationwide.

Every step we've taken reflects our bold vision and our commitment to shaping the future we aspire to. Onward with love and purpose,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Lenz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Bob Lenz
Chief Executive Officer, PBLWorks

About PBLWorks

Mission

At PBLWorks, we build the capacity of teachers to design and facilitate quality Project Based Learning and the capacity of school and system leaders to set the conditions for teachers to implement great projects with all students.

Vision

At PBLWorks, our vision is for all students, especially Black and Brown students, to engage in high quality Project Based Learning to deepen their learning and achieve success in college, career, and life.

Core Values

Racial Equity

We are committed to advancing racial equity, so...

- We identify and work to dismantle racial inequities in all facets of our work.
- We foster inclusivity to honor our diverse community.
- We apply what we learn about racial equity so that we model the changes we seek in school systems, schools, and classrooms.



Learning

We are learners. Consequently:

- We are courageous, innovative, and take calculated
- We are reflective and persistent in our learning.
- We consider failure as an opportunity to learn and grow

Quality

We are committed to working at the highest possible standard in service of our internal and external partners and to the field of education.

Integrity

We are honest and adhere to our vision, beliefs, and mission-driven principles in all of our endeavors.

Consequently:

- We have direct and productive conversations with our colleagues in BIE and with our partners.
- We make and keep agreements and demonstrate our respect for our colleagues and partners.
- We hold ourselves accountable for delivering on our commitments.

Collaboration

We believe collaboration creates synergy, efficiency, and richer solutions. Consequently:

- We work in teams as needed.
- We consider the consequences of our decision for others.

Core Beliefs

Since 1999, we have offered professional development in Project Based Learning (PBL) to teachers and leaders at the school and district level. Our core beliefs about high quality PBL are based on our collective experience seeing what is possible for all students, including Black and Brown students. When done well, PBL...

- Transforms students by inspiring them to think differently about themselves as learners, collaborators, and leaders
- Prepares students for success in college, career, and life
- Leads students to master core academic content and builds success skills
- Advances educational equity and empowers youth furthest from opportunity
- Enables teachers to make a difference in their students' lives

Racial Equity Imperative

We are focused on advancing racial equity through high quality PBL because it enables all students, especially Black and Brown students,¹ to gain the academic content knowledge and understanding, the success skills, and the sense of agency that will help them in college, career, and life. Given systemic and institutionalized racism and the oppression of Black and Brown students in the educational system, we strive individually and collectively to ensure that Black and Brown students experience Gold Standard Project Based Learning at least twice a year in their school. Our focus on advancing racial equity for Black and Brown students does not preclude us from addressing any and all other issues of inequity and oppression for any other people



and working for all students to experience Gold Standard PBL. Furthermore, we work towards all students experiencing Gold Standard PBL—excluding no one. As part of our commitment to advancing racial equity, the staff and board continue to sharpen our focus on:

- Building the capacity of our staff facilitators, including National Faculty, to effectively and productively address and interrupt implicit and explicit bias, racism, white privilege, and other barriers to advancing racial equity as it surfaces in our training with system, district, and school leaders and teachers.

- Creating workshop materials and PBL resources that will explicitly address how PBL is a vehicle to advance our racial equity vision and we will contextualize the relationship between racial equity and PBL in all our resources and materials.
- Purposeful collaboration with district and school partners that serve the national average or more of students furthest from opportunity, especially Black and Brown students.
- Learning as much as we can about racial equity, practicing skills to interrupt racial inequity, and setting and implementing organizational policies in a racially equitable way, so that we model in our organization the changes we seek in school systems, schools, and classrooms.

¹ Our use of the terms “Black and Brown” is meant to include students with heritage or familial association from the African diaspora, First Nations, Latinx, Southeast Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islanders, Middle Eastern, and many others.

2024 Year-End Review

Reach in 2024

We work to increase our impact on Black and Brown students by reaching teachers and districts who support them.

In 2024 we serviced 198 schools, districts, and educational agencies across the globe engaged in online and in-person professional learning.

Quality in 2024

PBLWorks has a legacy of consistent high-quality professional learning experiences.

97% of workshop participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were **"very satisfied"** with the experience.



58
Overall Excellent
Net Promoter
Score (NPS) of
58 for 1,281
workshops.

Impact in 2024

We measure our impact through
implementation of projects
by teachers in our district partner sites.

81%

of districts engaged
in district partner
services serve 50% or
more Black and Brown
students across 16
districts in 11 states.

53% of teachers

who engaged in our
flagship workshop, PBL
101, serve 50% or more
Black and Brown
students.

844

individual educators
engaged in 31 Open
Online Workshops,
including PBL 101,
Coaching, Leadership,
and SEL in PBL.

72%

of teachers who
participated in our district
services and who served 50%
or more Black and Brown
students implemented at least
one project.



2024 & Beyond: Updates on Our Bold New Vision

Building on the foundation of our Strategic Plan 2024–2028, we remain focused on expanding and refining our professional learning services to better support educators in implementing high quality PBL. This past year, 2024, we have made significant progress in advancing our offerings, including enhanced in-person and online learning experiences, a new subscription-based digital solution—currently in beta testing and set to launch this June—and improved performance assessment tools. These updates ensure that teachers and school leaders have the resources they need to implement and sustain impactful PBL practices.

2024 Spotlights

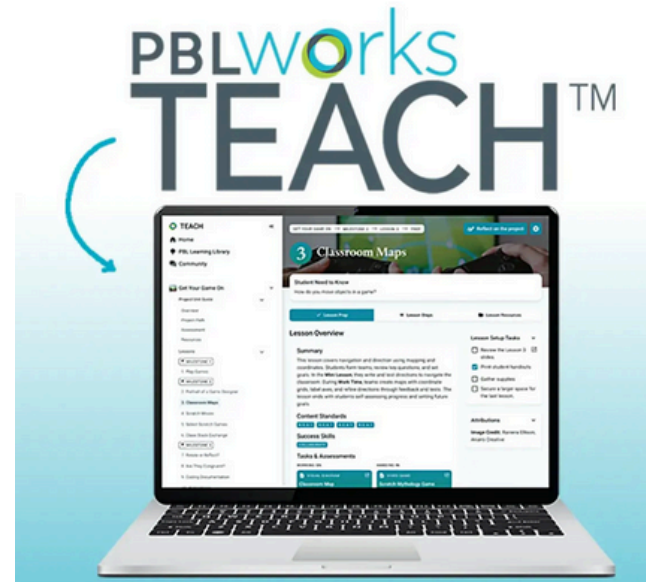
PBLWorks TEACH: Our New Digital Learning Platform Launching June 2025

We have made significant progress in the development of PBLWorks Teach, our innovative digital platform designed to simplify and enhance the implementation of Project Based Learning (PBL) in K–12 classrooms. Built to ignite student engagement and foster deeper learning, Teach provides ready-to-use, standards-aligned curriculum units for middle school math, science, ELA, and social studies.

PBLWorks Teach is a new Teaching Experience Platform (TXP) that includes everything a novice teacher needs to successfully implement high-quality, standards-aligned projects. Each curriculum unit comes with step-by-step lessons, editable student handouts and slide decks, PBL templates and tools, and embedded, on-demand professional learning. The professional learning library includes updated resources from the free MyPBLWorks library, along with new online learning modules, coaching videos, and classroom videos tailored to our curriculum units.

The beta version of Teach was successfully tested at PBL World 2024, receiving positive feedback from educators. This testing phase provided valuable insights, allowing us to refine the platform to better meet the needs of both teachers and students.

With Teach, educators will have access to high-quality instructional materials that support the creation of relevant, engaging learning experiences, while embedded professional learning modules boost teacher confidence and advance professional growth.





2024 Spotlights

From the Field: Development of Our PBL Curriculum Units

Starting in January 2024, we began piloting our middle school mathematics and social studies PBL units in classrooms across Massachusetts and Kentucky. This pilot phase is critical for gathering real-time feedback from educators on student engagement, alignment with teaching practices, and achievement of educational goals. The insights we continue to gain will help us refine the units to maximize their effectiveness. By 2028, 104 PBL units—two per grade level in the four core content areas—will be available for teachers nationwide.

Mathematics Curriculum Development

From the Field: Development of Our PBL Curriculum Units

Our team has developed six middle school PBL curriculum units—two per grade level—aligned with Illustrative Mathematics. These units are designed to replace existing materials and can be implemented over a three- to four-week period per semester, providing teachers with one complete unit each semester. Each unit comprises 17–21 lesson plans enriched with embedded professional learning, slide decks, and student handouts. Supplementary resources—including unit overviews, customization suggestions, assessment maps, and templates (e.g., family letters, team contracts)—ensure alignment with state standards, Gold Standard Essential Design Elements, Gold Standard Project Based Teaching Practices, PBL Equity Levers, and culturally responsive practices.

Key Highlights:

- **Six units developed** (two per grade level)
- **Implementation:** 3–4 weeks per semester
- **Resources:** 17–21 lesson plans, professional learning, slide decks, handouts, and additional support materials
- **Standards Alignment:** State standards, Gold Standard practices, and culturally responsive strategies

“PBL allows students to make mistakes, learn from those mistakes, try again, and eventually arrive at real understanding—not just of how to do something, but also of what they’re doing, why they’re doing it, and how it works.”

—Robin Lasko-Brodeur, Math Teacher, Westfield Public Schools

Our director of mathematics curriculum design and our curriculum writer led a comprehensive development process. In fall 2023, the team collaborated with 35 mathematics teachers to gather input on unit ideas, identify key standards, and generate multiple project ideas using the PBL Mathematics Writer's Guide. Feedback from classroom educators and internal PBL experts was critical in refining these units.

Pilot testing began in January 2024, with 18 teachers in Massachusetts implementing the units as part of their second-semester projects. These teachers participated in a one-day professional learning workshop and received online consultancy support. Concurrently, 11 teachers in Kentucky piloted the units independently, providing detailed feedback through classroom visits, an online learning community, and Teacher Online Consultancies.

Social Studies Curriculum Advancement

Our social studies curriculum is progressing with rigor and continuous collaboration. Utilizing established design templates and our curriculum writing guides, we mapped social studies standards across states, conducting a cross-state comparison between Colorado and California and integrating the C3 Framework. For grades four through eight, we assembled a team of experienced writers, including National Faculty and veteran educators, to develop high-quality PBL social studies units.

Key Collaborations:

- Partners: Envision Learning Partners, WestEd/SCALE, and Learning Tapestry
- Focus Areas: Performance assessments and technology infrastructure
- Future Plans: Developing a unified digital platform for curriculum units, professional development, and resource tools

Collaborations with our partners were focused on developing performance assessments and creating a technology infrastructure that integrates with the PBLWorks platform and local Learning Management Systems (LMSs).

“ The PBL units are incredibly interactive! Much of the content I've encountered in the past has been very surface-level, but the PBL unit I implemented allowed us to dive deeper into sources. As a result, these learning experiences have significantly elevated my students' writing and critical thinking skills.

—Brook Rajnowski, Middle School, Social Studies, Poudre School District

”

Curriculum-Based Professional Learning and Pilot Data

Our director of curriculum-based professional learning has designed a robust sequence—anchored in our Knowledge in Action (KIA) model—to support the implementation of our PBL units. In January 2024, a one-day workshop in Massachusetts with 18 teachers yielded a 61 Overall Net Promoter Score (NPS). Every participant agreed that the PBLNow units integrated well with their teaching practices, with 94% reporting the development of tailored project calendars for their schools. Pilot data showed that teachers rate the units as “very effective” in engaging students (68%) and as relevant and authentic (75%).

Pilot Data Snapshot:

- **Overall NPS:** 61
- **Teacher Feedback:** 100% agreement on unit integration; 94% developed tailored project calendars
- **Effectiveness:** 68% “very effective” in student engagement, 75% rated as relevant and authentic

Ongoing professional learning initiatives include two additional one-day pilots in spring 2025, which will guide revisions ahead of the three-day workshops planned for PBL World 2025.

Our new digital solution further embeds professional learning through:

- Tutorials on core PBL routines
- Welcome videos with practical tips
- On-demand key resources
- Continuous access to an online community

One teacher shared her experience, saying, **"This has been very helpful in learning the process of PBL and gave me the opportunity to see how a unit operates. In the beginning, we were trying to create PBL units, and that was difficult... now I feel more confident."** As we continue to gather feedback from our pilot teachers, we are excited to further refine and enhance the units.



PBL World 2024

In 2024, we hosted our 13th-Annual PBL World in person for more than 1,450 educators from across the globe.

PBL World is a one-of-a-kind, four-day gathering of K–12 teachers, instructional coaches, and school and district leaders focused on advancing their work with Project Based Learning. Interest in PBL World continues to grow—in 2023 and 2024 we reached the highest number of attendance in the event’s 14-year history.

Overall Excellent Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 67.

87% of PBLWorld participants reported their overall event experience as **very good or excellent**.

100 Net Promoter Score (NPS) rating by district leadership teams engaged in Partner Summit.

The **top three reasons** participants say they attend PBL World:

1

To upgrade their PBL Skills

2

To engage in in-person professional learning

3

To network with other educators in the PBL community

"The student panel at PBL World was the highlight for me. Hearing students articulate how PBL shaped their learning and prepared them for the future reaffirmed why I do this work. Their stories inspired me to continue creating authentic learning experiences for my students."

—Bethany Thomas, Computer Science & Robotics Teacher

2024 PBL Champions

The recipients of the PBL Champion awards are given to everyday leaders in Project Based Learning (PBL) who demonstrate a commitment to PBL; have done quality, lasting work; and have shown evidence of impact on students. They are *champions* of Project Based Learning in their schools, districts, and in the education community. In 2024, we were thrilled to see so many great nominations showcasing high quality PBL in action in classrooms, schools, districts, and states across the country.

Individual PBL Champion: Keisha Tyson-Johnson

Keisha Tyson-Johnson, a district math and science coach for Atlanta Public Schools, demonstrated a profound commitment to Project Based Learning (PBL). Through her efforts, she empowered her school community to develop a PBL framework that allowed students to identify problems, conduct research, and propose solutions, thereby advocating for themselves and their communities. Her dedication was evident in her work at Drew Charter School, where she delivered STEAM-focused PBL to 140 students annually, led PBL planning sessions, and secured a GADOE math grant for developing math-centered PBL units at M. Agnes Jones Elementary School.

Keisha's impact extended to both students and educators, as reflected in the achievements of her school. Under her guidance, the school's Continuous Improvement Plan resulted in significant increases in proficiency across various subjects, with improvements of 8 percentage points in math, 3 percentage points in ELA, and 10 percentage points in science. The College Career Ready Performance Index Attendance Rate also saw a 5 percentage point increase. Recently promoted to Elementary Science/Math District Specialist, Keisha's dedication and success as a STEAM instructional coach are truly commendable.



School PBL Champion: Paul Culley Elementary School

Paul E. Culley Elementary School in Clark County School District, Las Vegas, stood out for its strong commitment to Project Based Learning (PBL). Over the past three years, the principal and PBL Leadership Team embraced a PBL mindset. Their unwavering belief in PBL led them to tackle these issues head-on, continuously affirming that "we can do PBL."

At Paul Culley Elementary School, teachers and leaders crafted transformative learning experiences by connecting students with community leaders and experts through their projects. This approach fostered rich learning opportunities, emphasizing cognitive demand and student agency. The school prioritized building relationships—first between teachers and students, then with the community—inviting caregivers to engage in and celebrate student learning. Projects were deeply rooted in authentic connections and honored students' unique contributions, making Paul E. Culley Elementary School a shining example of PBL's potential to enrich education and foster community ties.

District PBL Champion: University Prep Schools

University Prep Schools in Michigan have been on their PBL journey for seven years, and we've had the privilege of partnering with them for the past three. At the beginning of our collaboration, UPrep developed a truly inspiring vision through a collaborative and inclusive process.

With this vision in place, UPrep's leaders took several strategic steps: evaluating their systems and structures, forming a Steering Committee to ensure coherence, engaging building leaders in purposeful professional development, collecting and analyzing evidence to gauge effectiveness, and planning how to celebrate and highlight the achievements of their leaders, schools, and teachers. What distinguished UPrep was their focus on joy—creating an environment where both students and staff felt valued and enthusiastic about being part of their community.

2024 John Larmer “JL” Lifelong Learning Award Recipients:

The John Larmer “JL” Lifelong Learning Award acknowledges teachers who are impacting and expanding the work of Project Based Learning (PBL) for all students. We encourage teachers in the United States to apply for this annual award. This award acknowledges JL’s significant contributions to PBLWorks and the field of education, advancing high quality PBL for all students for over three decades.



Katrice Dixon - Teacher Leader, Math 6-8

Katrice Dixon is a teacher leader for 6th–8th Math at Lake Worth Community Middle School in Lake Worth, Florida. Katrice was chosen for this award because of her focus on student engagement and ownership, as well as her drive toward creating high-quality experiences for all students.



Jeromy Payne - 3rd Grade Teacher

Jeromy Payne, a third-grade teacher at John P. Freeman Optional School in Memphis, Tennessee, was chosen for this award because of his passion for student ownership of learning, his design and facilitation of authentic projects, and his desire to positively impact his community.



Marivi Hardy - Special Education Teacher

Marivi Hardy is a special education teacher who focuses on math and ELA at Mission Achievement and Success Charter School in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Marivi was chosen for this award because of her dedication to increasing student confidence and her desire to share her learning with others to build their capacity.

INTERNATIONAL ENDEAVORS

This year, PBLWorks expanded its global footprint through impactful collaborations and initiatives in China, Spain, and Barbados, furthering our mission to bring Project Based Learning (PBL) to educators around the world.

China: In 2024, our team had the honor of participating in the Project Based Learning Symposium hosted by the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission in partnership with our long-time educational collaborator, TeachFuture China (TFC). This event brought together a diverse group of educators and PBL leaders from across Shanghai, creating a dynamic space to share insights, best practices, and innovative approaches to PBL.

About TeachFuture China (TFC): TeachFuture China (TFC) is an organization affiliated with the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education, focused on delivering high-quality teacher training and promoting educational equity. At the symposium, our team led sessions on PBL Leadership, PBL Coaching, and PBL in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). It was a privilege to contribute to this event, helping educators gain the knowledge, tools, and resources to implement effective PBL practices in their classrooms.



We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to ensure "PBL for all learners," extending our reach beyond physical boundaries.

Barbados: In September 2024, we launched a successful partnership with the Ministry of Education of Barbados. As part of this collaboration, we facilitated workshops for Education Officers and secondary school principals. This initiative aligns with Barbados' *Reimagining Education* goals, with a focus on fostering economic sustainability and providing equitable learning opportunities through Project Based Learning.

We are excited to see how PBL can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education in Barbados.

Spain: Our CEO, Bob Lenz, led an inspiring session on "*Project Based Learning: The Path to Student Success*" at the Ministry of Education of Catalunya in Barcelona. This session was a key part of our ongoing efforts to expand our international outreach and share the power of PBL with educators around the world.

Through these endeavors, we continue to spread the impact of Project Based Learning and deepen our global connections, helping educators everywhere provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences for their students.





MA STEM Week 2024

Each year, PBLWorks participates in Massachusetts STEM Week. In 2024, more than 35 teachers engaged in professional learning focused on the Carbon Busters project. Carbon Busters, created for middle and high school students and educators, offers a high-quality, meaningful K–12 applied Project Based Learning experience with an added emphasis on flexibility to meet educators and students where they are.

Students have the opportunity to focus on redesigning a specific room in their school to improve energy efficiency. They explore the driving question, *"How can we redesign our school to significantly reduce carbon emissions and create a more energy-efficient future?"* As a final product, students collaborate with their school to develop a proposal for the Massachusetts Clean Energy Challenge and have the chance to present their work at the One8 Applied Learning Student Showcase in the spring of 2025.

Check out the **Carbon Busters** project [here](#).



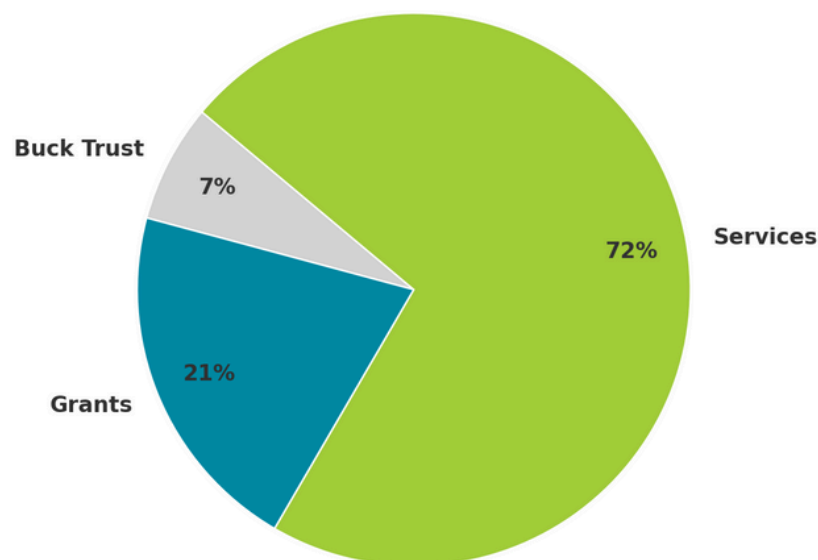
2024 Team & Financials

Our Team

In 2024, PBLWorks maintained a team of 52 full-time and 70 part-time staff members. Our professional services and facilitation teams include experienced teachers, school leaders, and district leaders who use Project Based Learning (PBL) as a transformative practice to create more equitable learning experiences for all students. As part of our ongoing commitment to advancing racial equity, we continue to implement anti-biased hiring practices and equity-centered strategies to recruit and retain a diverse staff. In 2024, 53% of our full-time staff identified as people of color (POC). Among our National Faculty—our part-time staff who facilitate professional services—36% identified as POC, consistent with 2023.

Financials

PBLWorks is a 501c3 with a sustainable financial model that is supported by, and not dependent upon, philanthropy. In 2024, **72%** of our revenue was from fees for services and products.



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