

2016-17 PROGRAM EVALUATION ABSTRACT

Teacher Center:	Bronxville Teacher Center
Title of Program:	Project Based Learning (PBL)
Target Audience:	K-12 Faculty
Facilitator:	Al Summers, Buck Institute for Education
Method of Delivery:	Consultant (Face-to-Face)
Frequency and Duration:	Three three-day training sessions (18 hours per teacher); On demand online consulting and classroom visitations

Program Goal: To investigate the impact of project based learning, as defined by the Buck Institute for Education, on students' acquisition of the dispositions of the Bronxville Promise: innovation, critical thinking, leadership, engaged citizenship.

Program Overview: A Buck Institute for Education (BIE) faculty member provided three, three-day PBL 101 trainings for a total of eighty-four staff members (18 hours per teacher), as well as online and in-person consulting services. In addition, a small group of teachers and administrators attended PBL 201 training at a national BIE conference, and served as turnkey trainers during summer and conference day workshops. To date, all elementary school classroom teachers have received PBL training. Five middle school teachers have not received training (guidance, mathematics, science, technology, world languages). Eighteen High School teachers have not received training (English-1; Guidance-4; Mathematics-5; Science-3; Social Studies-1; Special Education-3; World Languages-1). Seventeen shared staff members have not received training (Performing Arts-7; Physical Education-9; Visual Arts-1).

Objective 1: At the conclusion of the program all participants will have the skills needed to design a PBL unit of instruction.

Objective 2: By the end of the school year, all participants will have documented their implementation of a PBL unit of instruction.

Assessment Methodology for Objective 1: All participants completed a questionnaire in which they answered the question, "What factors contribute to the success/failure of Project Based Learning?" and were asked to submit a PBL unit design.

Assessment Methodology for Objective 2: All participants completed a questionnaire in which they responded to a Likert scale "PBL has had a significant and positive impact on student learning in my classrooms." A small sample of high school students was interviewed to gauge their response to PBL. Teachers submitted samples of student work.

Results and Relevance: 100% of the participants successfully designed a PBL unit of instruction that met the criteria outlined on the BIE PBL design rubric. All of the unit designs included a description of how the dispositions of the Bronxville Promise would be fostered.

96% of elementary school, 92% of middle school, 100% of high school and 80% of shared staff teachers strongly agreed or agreed that PBL had a significant and positive impact on student learning. A focus group of high school students indicated that “effort counts” in PBL, and that the instructional strategy encouraged them to push themselves to do their best work. The students found the use of technology in PBL to be helpful, and they valued the opportunity to interact with authentic audiences. They indicated that they would like to have input into the design of the driving question for the PBL, and that they would like greater freedom in designing the way in which they present the outcomes of their projects. The students valued teachers’ efforts to help them manage their time and learn the requisite content and skills, but would like teachers to consider alternatives to rubrics and to their practices for grading group work.

As a result of Project-Based Learning, students engaged in multi-year research on the Bronx River (K-12), designed a playground (Grade 1), researched and advocated for fair trade (Grade 3), researched and addressed human rights issues such as child marriage (MS ELA), advocated for change in gun laws (HS SS), received statewide recognition for National History Day projects (HS SS), conducted statistical analyses of authentic research data (Grade 6 & HS mathematics), created documentary films (HS ELA), used mathematical concepts to create works of art (HS mathematics), engaged in service learning, providing online English instruction for children in Cambodia and support for an orphanage in Tanzania (HS Guidance & SS), explored immigration and cultural issues (MS/HS World Languages), created and implemented personal fitness plans (HS PE), and composed an opera, string quartets, and movie soundtracks (HS Performing Arts).