

Project-Based Learning: An Answer to the Common Core Challenge

The Common Core State Standards pose many challenges for educators. The change to fewer, higher, and clearer standards calls for deeper study of fewer concepts. The other key change introduced by the standards is the focus on preparing all students for college and careers by high school graduation. Because the Common Core standards call for more student focus, responsibility, and independent learning, educators must rethink their curriculum and methods of instruction.

Project-based learning (PBL) is a promising pedagogy that supports the implementation of the Common Core standards. PBL encourages student-centered learning. Planning for and executing projects that students choose and construct requires a level of autonomy that many students, as well as teachers, may be unprepared for. Although once students master the art of PBL, teachers will see how students become highly motivated from doing important work around issues that are relevant to them.

In this course, you will learn how to prepare your students for PBL and guide them through the process. You will come to understand the roles that teachers and students play in planning for and conducting project-based learning experiences. The importance of assessment, both formative and summative, to student success in PBL is emphasized. And the key motivational elements of PBL, including student voice and choice, creation of products, and presenting findings to an authentic audience are described in detail.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

Module 1

- Identify characteristics of PBL and how using it in the classroom prepares students to be college- and career-ready.

- Summarize and reflect on why PBL is an effective way to increase student motivation, deep content understanding, and achievement.
- Interpret how PBL addresses the standards and the shifts in instruction called for in the Common Core standards.

Module 2

- Understand the foundations of and research about PBL.
- Examine a PBL plan; evaluate the driving questions; and analyze the authenticity, skills, and Common Core elements that the plan addresses.

Module 3

- Determine skills and strategies that students need to successfully participate in PBL experiences.
- Prepare students for the level of collaboration and thorough research they will face in PBL.

Module 4

- Design a PBL plan with students by clearly identifying learning goals and generating authentic questions.
- Create a PBL plan using elements that make the plan effective, authentic, motivating, and purposeful.

Module 5

- Investigate Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessments for the Common Core State Standards as well as formative and summative assessments and how they can be embedded in PBL.
- Create or modify an assessment that aligns with a PBL plan; formative assessment, summative assessment, or a rubric.

Module 6

- Identify the differences between teaching and coaching and when each is needed in PBL.
- Understand, implement, and reflect on elements of PBL (research, cooperative learning, differentiation, and coaching).

Course Syllabus

<p>Module 1</p>	<p>Why Use PBL for the Common Core Standards?</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video 1: Welcome to New Tech • Reading 1: How Project-Based Learning Addresses the Common Core Standards • Reading 2: <i>EL</i>—Making the Shifts • Video 2: How Does PBL Support the Common Core Standards? • Knowledge Check • Application: Show the Relationships Among PBL, Shifts, and the CCSS • Post-Module Reflection
<p>Module 2</p>	<p>PBL Essentials and Challenges</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video 1: Teaching in a PBL School • Reading 1: <i>EL</i>—8 Essentials for Project-Based Learning • Reading 2: Facing the Challenges of Project-Based Learning • Video 2: Integrating New Skills • Reading 3: The Importance of Inquisitiveness • Knowledge Check • Application: Analyze Your Plans • Post-Module Reflection
<p>Module 3</p>	<p>Setting the Stage for PBL</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 1: Cooperative Learning Groups and PBL • Video: How to Teach Math as a Social Activity • Reading 2: Research to Build and Present Knowledge • Knowledge Check • Application: Preteaching Project-Based Learning Skills • Post-Module Reflection

<p>Module 4</p>	<p>Collaborative Planning</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 1: Backward Design • Reading 2: How to: Inquiry • Video: Student-Directed Learning • Reading 3: Diving In • Knowledge Check • Application: Collaborative Planning • Post-Module Reflection
<p>Module 5</p>	<p>Assessing Throughout the PBL Process</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: Assessing Throughout the PBL Process • Video: Performance-Based Assessments • Media: PARCC and Smarter Balanced Assessment Items • Knowledge Check • Application: Draft a Rubric for Project-Based Learning • Post-Module Reflection
<p>Module 6</p>	<p>Facilitation and Celebration</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 1: Teacher as Coach in Project-Based Learning • Video: Facilitating PBL • Reading 2: <i>EL</i>—Speaking of Speaking • Knowledge Check • Application: Celebrate with an Authentic Audience • Post-Module Reflection

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