

Project Based Learning in Oak Ridge Schools

What is PBL?

Project Based Learning is a research-based instructional model where the focus for learning is on the course standards and relevant 21st century work skills such as the 4 Cs of STEM literacy (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creative problem solving) and self-management. It is an opportunity to join forces with other content teachers for STEM-infused lessons.

Central to the project is an authentic, real-world challenge. Students should be participants in the decision-making, including how they work and which products they will create. Throughout the project, instructor and peer reviews allow for assessment and feedback related to the effectiveness of the PBL, which improve both process and product. An essential culminating event of a PBL is to have students present their work in a public setting beyond the classroom.

What are the PBL Requirements?

- The project is designed around creating a product that requires extended thinking about academic state standards and utilizes 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and project management. The timeframe of the project should be determined by the number of standards and skills covered; anywhere from one week up to an entire school year.
- The project is based on a challenging problem or question that is open-ended, engaging, and aligned to state standards. You cannot “look up” the answer and there is a possibility for multiple solutions.
- The project is relevant to students’ lives and makes connections to the real-world.
- Students are regularly asked to pose questions, investigate, and develop and evaluate solutions.
- Students are given opportunities for voice and choice throughout the project and work independently from the teacher at appropriate times.
- Students are given opportunities during and after the project to reflect on their learning and project design.
- Students are given opportunities to receive feedback from several sources and make revisions based on that feedback.
- Students must share product/communicate findings to a public audience. The audience must extend beyond the teacher and their peers. Examples of a public audience include community members, content experts, business/industry leaders, academic competitions, conferences, other teachers, administrators, central office staff, school board members, etc.

