

Mythbusting PBL

Dr. Jenny Pieratt, CraftED Curriculum

Thursday Nov 7, 1:45 - 2:45 pm, Delta Lobby A, SL13 - Table K

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Meet Dr. Jenny Pieratt~ mom, author, educator, PBL nerd



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The current wave of PBL adoptors is fighting to survive in conditions that can be extremely challenging to this style of learning.

GOD SAVE THE ROUTINE

JENNY PIERATT

DEBUNKING FIVE MYTHS AND AVOIDING ANARCHY IN THE PBL CLASSROOM

The sounds of papers shuffling, little fingers typing or building, and low voices discussing the task in front of them, accompanied by the blissful noise of purposeful footsteps and the soothing hum of young voices engaging in academic discourse. These are the productive sounds that every innovative educator hopes will permeate their classroom. In the world of project-based learning (PBL) we call it *the buzz*.

People casually refer to this buzz as something dreamy that magically happens once a teacher has mentally committed to PBL. However, in my work supporting PBL implementation across the country, I have found that there is a growing disconnect between the vision of the healthy buzz that comes from student engagement while working on a project and how we as educators actually get our students there. Truth be told, it is anarchy in the classroom more often than it's not. Teachers often think that in order to get to this type of student-driven engagement, they must almost completely remove themselves from the equation to allow students to drive their learning. This mindset is rarely productive, often leaves all stakeholders frustrated with the PBL experience, and doesn't ensure that our children are actually learning.

As educators, we have romanticized PBL in many ways and have not been honest about the reality most teachers face in their classrooms and the adjustments they must make for PBL to be effective. As a result, we have sacrificed the rigor that is essential to deeper learning. It's time for some #realtalk about PBL. Debunking these five myths tones down the hype around PBL and instead honors the struggles of teachers in the trenches who make up the new wave of mainstream educators looking to adopt this approach to teaching and learning.

Myth 1

All things must be collaborative in PBL.

With collaboration as one of the four Cs central to the 21st century skills movement, schools have placed a great emphasis on students working in groups, and PBL is frequently seen as an easy vehicle for facilitating collaboration.

Myth 1

All things must be collaborative in PBL.

Crafting Collaboration

via
CraftED Curriculum



Start with some critical reality checks



Reality Check 1

Is this a task a student could complete on their own? Do they NEED each other to learn more deeply?

Do all students have the necessary background knowledge to enter into the task?

Reality Check 2



Reality Check 3

Is the task open-ended so all group members can continue to contribute?



Does this task ensure equal thinking, not just equal doing?

Reality Check 4



Reality Check 5

What issues of status do you need to be mindful of with this task?

What types of (differentiated) scaffolds might you need?

Reality Check 6



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**Student voice & choice
does NOT mean anarchy!**

Some structure in PBL is OK, people!



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MYTH 3

*The teacher should
always take the back seat.*

MYTH 4

*"Management" is
so 20th century.*

Don't let
maverick PBL
facilitators
fool you—
they are
orchestrators
that have
put in place
a great deal
of structure
and routine.





Assessment isn't a dirty word in PBL

Benchmarks, ongoing (and sometimes even traditional) assessment & feedback lead to high quality projects



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Additional Resources

- *Keep it Real with PBL* by Jenny Pieratt
- PBL e-courses www.coursesbycrafted.com
- PBL Resources: <https://craftedcurriculum.com/project-based-learning-ideas/>
- Teaching Channel: Assessment and other dirty words <https://www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2018/01/assessment-dirty-words/>



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Session Evaluation

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