

Title of Session: Constructivism: PBL in the Classroom

Moderator: Elizabeth Willoughby

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Room: After School Online Room

BJ: we'll start in a few minutes. You're all here for project based learning in the classroom?

PaulaWi: Yes.

LisaHS: That's it!!

ElizabetW3: Anyone with any experience in it?

MaryJaneP: Yes. I am new to all of this. I may be the slow learner.

ElizabetW3: Well, I created this chat topic

ElizabetW3: because it is something I've always been interested in,

LisaHS: Thanks for that!

LisaHS: It sure beats dry workbook pages

ElizabetW3: lol

ElizabetW3: Can everyone introduce themselves, starting with Mary Jane?

MaryJaneP: I am a 3rd grade teacher in Va. I am working on a Masters in Administration.

ElizabetW3: What's your interest in PBL?

MaryJaneP: I am hoping to learn how to utilize this with my students.

PamLB: I am working on an ed, degree --

ElizabetW3: Thanks...

PamLB: math 4-8

ElizabetW3: In a classroom yet Pam?

PamLB: not yet

ElizabetW3: Thanks!

ElizabetW3: What's your interest in pbl?

LisaHS: I am Lisa from the New Orleans area. I taught Music in private schools for ten years. Presently, I am homeschooling my 6 year old girl and 8 year old boy. There are great discussions and resources on Unit Studies in the homeschooling circles. It seems to be similar approach to the project based studies. We have really enjoyed our experience with Westward Ho (Leni Donlan) so we are looking for more ideas like this.

ElizabetW3: I checked out Westward Ho too, very interesting

ElizabetW3: Paula, and you?

PaulaWi: I have the computer lab at a school that houses grades k through 7. I'm trying to make the most out of the time I have with my students and faculty.

ElizabetW3: very interesting approach for PBL

ElizabetW3: David, can you introduce yourself and tell us why you are interested in PBL?

JeffC: I'm previously an Education Technology Specialist for the College of Education at Pacific University... laid off due to budget cuts.

LisaHS: ouch

ElizabetW3: Sorry to hear that Jeff, and why are you interested in PBL?

DavidWe: Hi. I'm David Weksler. I help teachers learn more about technooogy and math and science. I like problem/project based learning

JeffC: Just thought I'd pop in and offer a few links.

ElizabetW3: Very nice.

ElizabetW3: And Susan?

SusanR: I am a K to 8 Occasional Teacher and former educational technology integrator

MargaretTK joined the room.

ElizabetW3: And why are you interested in PBL?

DavidWe . o O (who isn't?)

ElizabetW3: Welcome Margaret, we are doing introductions.

DavidWe grins

ElizabetW3: lol

MargaretTK: yes

MargaretTK: I got taken in by the term "constructivism" in the title

ElizabetW3: lol

ElizabetW3: Its one in the same to me.

ElizabetW3: and tell us why you are interested in PBL

SusanR: I am interested in any learning environment in which the problem drives the learning.

ElizabetW3: Very interesting.

SusanR: and in cooperative learning

ElizabetW3: BJ, why don't you introduce yourself, also.

MargaretTK: I'm a librarian, I work for SPED on the district level. I need to facilitate standards-based activities with my teachers.

ElizabetW3: interesting.

BJ waves hi. I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania for a juvenile correctional facility. I'm interested in anything that will get my students to think and problem solve

ElizabetW3: Thanks.

ElizabetW3: Well, I invited an "expert" today, I think she might have forgotten about us....

DavidWe: Who is the expert, Elizabeth?

ElizabetW3: Beverly Battle...she teaches elementary in D.C. and is a long-time advocate of PBL.

DavidWe nods

DavidWe: Technical problem?

ElizabetW3: don't know...

ElizabetW3: but we can discuss without her I believe.

DavidWe can drive to D.C. - in about 3 hours

LisaHS: LOL

DavidWe smiles

ElizabetW3: I took a philosophy of education class in college

ElizabetW3: and became entranced with Dewey

MargaretTK: I think project based learning is the best way to teach special needs learners, esp high functioning autism or gifted

DavidWe: That sounds dangerous, Elizabeth

ElizabetW3: which lead me to an interest in PBL

ElizabetW3: Everyone told me it couldn't be done with standards,

ElizabetW3: but I don't believe it.

ElizabetW3: Anyone with any experience in PBL?

DavidWe attended a very Dewey-ish elementary school for two years outside Washington, D.C.

MargaretTK: how can you really do standards without PBL?

ElizabetW3: I agree Margaret, it takes care of those who don't fall in the middle.

ElizabetW3: David, did they utilize PBL?

DavidWe: Well, it was mid-60s

ElizabetW3: I see.

DavidWe . o O (I'm not sure the term existed then, but I don't really know)

ElizabetW3: lol

LisaHS: He was interested in recess

MaryJaneP: Next to none. I am anxious to hear some ideas. I was hoping to hear from the lady in D.C. since she is close to me in proximity.

JeffC: I have to run to the store in a minute... but wanted to leave a few links that can help with PBL.

ElizabetW3: Go ahead Jeff...

PamLB: let the kids be kids ... recess was always a good time

ElizabetW3: lol I agree

JeffC: Here's a Powerpoint presentation that has several slides good for PBL
<http://web.ntjcpa.edu.tw/collabtools/collaboration1.files/frame.htm>

ElizabetW3: Thanks bunches

JeffC: I strongly recommend www.takingitglobal.org

MaryJaneP: Thanks, I will look these up.

ElizabetW3: me too

JeffC: Get kids involved with learning on a global level.

BJ: these links will be in your transcripts

ElizabetW3: great

BJ: you also can click on a link to open a new window

PamLB: what is the taking it global site all about , Jeff ?

ElizabetW3: Thanks for coming Jeff, hope you can make it back next time.

PaulaWi: I'm anxious to check them out.

BJ . o O (you may have to hold your ctrl key down if you have a pop up blocker)

PaulaWi: Thank you for the hint about pop up blockers.

ElizabetW3: Because PBL integrates many of the subjects together, it is suggested

JeffC: I also wrote an article entitled "Building 21st Century Collaborative Learning Communities" at <http://snurl.com/netc1> ...which discusses some virtual projects I did... and is heavily hyperlinked.

ElizabetW3: that you start your project with a Driving Question....

JeffC: Takingitglobal is a student run and operated site that allows students a chance to become involved internationally.

SusanR: and this site as a starting point <http://pblchecklist.4teachers.org/>

ElizabetW3: a question that will force the students to delve in at a deep level to find the answers.

MaryJaneP: Is PBL difficult to incorporate with curriculum maps and SOL's causing time restraints?

PamLB: thanks

DavidWe . o O (SOL?)

ElizabetW3: True PBL should drive the curriculum, as opposed to being on the peripheral of the curriculum

ElizabetW3: We've always done projects in school, but true PBL should be at the center.

MaryJaneP: Standards of Learning, Items tested at the end of 3rd and 5th at the elementary level.

ElizabetW3: I believe these Driving Questions can come from the standards.

LisaHS: Acronyms!

DavidWe: thanks for the explanation, MaryJane

ElizabetW3: Of course, some of the information we are forced to cover

ElizabetW3: is best suited to direct instruction.

MargaretTK: One problem I see is that projects are considered to be homework

ElizabetW3: But the standards that require deeper knowledge are perfect for PBL

DavidWe . o O ("cover" is a key word, right?)

ElizabetW3: lol

DavidWe smiles

PaulaWi: Could webquests be an example of PBL?

ElizabetW3: Yes, traditionally projects are homework

ElizabetW3: yes

ElizabetW3: Webquests are great!

PaulaWi: I usually like them done in my lab.

ElizabetW3: They can incorporate all the subjects

DavidWe: What lab do you have, Paula?

BJ hopes everyone is familiar with Bernie Dodge

PaulaWi: That way I can assist. I also try to get core subject teachers involved with this.

ElizabetW3: But with PBL, the project drives the curriculum.

BJ: Bernie leads a monthly event here in Tapped In

PamLB: projects can be strictly in class, also! Yes?

MargaretTK: Nope

MaryJaneP: I hope not all. I have had mini projects to take a deeper look at background of text. Is that a part of what we are talking about. And no , I am not familiar with Bernie Dodge.

BJ: Bernie is the 'father' of webquests

DavidWe agrees with BJ

ElizabetW3: I love webquests

BJ: his next event is on Feb. 17

ElizabetW3: There are no rules with PBL, projects can be strictly in class

PaulaWi: I have a computer lab that services k through 7th grade at a school of about 600 students. My time is limited to 40 minutes a week with each class.

PamLB: here ?

ElizabetW3: or you can incorporate them into homework.

DavidWe: Wow, Paula. That's tough

PamLB: here on the 17th ?

ElizabetW3: Paula, you are best suited for smaller projects,

ElizabetW3: or

ElizabetW3: it may suit you to collaborate with other subject area teachers

ElizabetW3: into one bigger project.

ElizabetW3: PBL is a great catalyst for collaboration.

DavidWe: Yes, Pam, 17 February at 9pm East coast time

DavidWe . o O (Bernie Dodge)

LisaHS: Right after Leni D

MargaretTK: Everytime the teachers at my home-base school do PBL (in class--not homework), they always say how focused their students are; how much they accomplish.

ElizabetW3: So, we have to find that driving question in order to create a worthwhile project.

PaulaWi: I try, but so far only a couple of sixth and seventh grade teachers of science and social studies have collaborated with me to construct project for the students.

LisaHS: Leni's Civil War chat

PamLB: thanks D.We

EmilyW: what exactly is pbl?

DavidWe . o O (project/problem based learning)

ElizabetW3: PBL is a teaching method that engages students

ElizabetW3: in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process

ElizabetW3: structured around complex, authentic questions

ElizabetW3: and carefully designed tasks.

MaryJaneP: Any ideas for simple machines, animal habitats, biographies?

ElizabetW3: In one of those themes,

ElizabetW3: can you find a driving question that can incorporate all of the above?

DavidWe: Build a simple machine, MaryJane - like a lever or pulley

DavidWe: or find them in the real world (ramp for wheelchairs)

LisaHS: In order to solve the problem at hand

MaryJaneP: I do those types of activities. I was thinking more in terms of a problem to solve.

MargaretTK: I'd like to see a webquest followed by hands-on activities for simple machines

ElizabetW3: Mary Jane,

ElizabetW3: maybe you can find a driving question for one or two of those themes

DavidWe thinks that some science museum web sites might have good examples - the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia - www.fi.edu

ElizabetW3: and use another form of instruction for the one that is difficult to incorporate.

MaryJaneP: Can you give me an example of a driving question, Elizabeth?

LisaHS: Please give an example

ElizabetW3: OK, let's say the theme is simple machines,

MaryJaneP: I will check out the science museum.

ElizabetW3: a driving question might be, why was the pulley invented?

MargaretTK: My son actually visited Franklin Institute when he was in the 5th grade & he thought it was fantastic. Now he's majoring in electrical engineering

ElizabetW3: This could allow us to incorporate

DavidWe: That's a nice story, Margaret

LisaHS: Now that's results, Margaret!

ElizabetW3: Egyptian history, building of the pyramids,

ElizabetW3: the building of a pulley itself, experimenting with how it works and how it helps...

MaryJaneP: I get the idea. I like that. Thanks.

ElizabetW3: You can use the theme as a writing prompt for LA

LisaHS: It lends itself to art also

ElizabetW3: PBL forces teachers to plan a bit more, but it allows us to spend more time with the kids during the project.

ElizabetW3: yes, all subjects can be incorporated, but of course,

MaryJaneP: They always learn more while engaged.

ElizabetW3: areas like reading and computation have to be taught more directly.

MargaretTK: I disagree

LisaHS: Let's hear it

ElizabetW3: I'm no expert, but I think the challenge is to start the project around an authentic, important topic.

MargaretTK: I don't think we ever really teach reading or math--we just facilitate learning

ElizabetW3: Yes, I agree with that.

ElizabetW3: Just making a point that some activities

LisaHS: I think she meant the process of decoding the letters and numbers into concepts they understand

ElizabetW3: actually don't lend themselves well to PBL

MaryJaneP: good comment, Margaret.

MargaretTK: yes and no

ElizabetW3: Like teaching the times tables, etc.

DavidWe: Well, people might argue that point, Elizabeth

ElizabetW3: lol

ElizabetW3: oh yes

ElizabetW3: they would

ElizabetW3: The same goes for spelling David

SusanR: Would this be a good example of PBL using the webquest format?

SusanR:

http://whyfiles.larc.nasa.gov/text/educators/activities/2002_2003/pbl/blueprint_pulleys.html

ElizabetW3: the controversy is never ending

LisaHS: Funny, when we were kids, no one gave a rip if we were interested. It was MEMORIZE or FAIL.

MaryJaneP: I think there is room for problem solving in math at most grade levels. I do feel an urgency to get basic facts taught. I am interested in web quest as well. I know little about this.

ElizabetW3: lol

MargaretTK: I'm putting my reading specialist hat on now. I don't think that the reading act, like other language skills, is ever directly taught, It just happens, but a good teacher can make it happen sooner and better.

PaulaWi: Kids today must see the relevance in what they must learn.

ElizabetW3: Yes Susan, this is a good project, and if you wanted to incorporate more subject areas into it, you could.

ElizabetW3: But it starts with an authentic question, how were the pyramids built?

ElizabetW3: and then it forces the students toward the learning challenge of discovering the answer.

ElizabetW3: it's perfect.

MaryJaneP: I will definitely look up this site, Susan.

PamLB: yes, how were the pyramids built ? LOL

ElizabetW3: Teachers complain that PBL is ambiguous, and "messy" and hard to plan.

ElizabetW3: But if you start with a good driving, authentic question,

ElizabetW3: I think it takes care of itself.

ElizabetW3: it's like writing a thesis, if you come up with a good thesis question, the paper writes itself..

ElizabetW3: well almost, lol

MaryJaneP: I agree. If we aren't willing to put in time to plan, we better not be in the classroom.

PaulaWi: My second graders were asked how do bats use echolocation to find food? Would that be a good driving question?

ElizabetW3: I think so Paula.

ElizabetW3: It states a problem, and asks them to solve it.

ElizabetW3: I agree mj

ElizabetW3: I am interested in incorporating all of the subject areas into projects.

MaryJaneP: This is a great opportunity for differentiation.

ElizabetW3: coming up with a question that will allow me to pull in all the areas.

PaulaWi: Since my time is so limited, I try to use mini web activities with questions like this for grades 2 to 7.

ElizabetW3: in a meaningful way.

ElizabetW3: Yes Paula, that's perfect for your situation.

PaulaWi: They must research and answer.

MargaretTK: I think traditional teaching is getting too hard, too time-consuming

ElizabetW3: interesting Margaret

MaryJaneP: And doesn't always get all engaged.

ElizabetW3: That's my problem with 'sage on the stage'

ElizabetW3: boring

PaulaWi: We are lucky in that the reading series our school district uses has great sites for the stories so I can do these activities.

ElizabetW3: I have really bought into constructivism and pbl

LisaHS: Any more examples?

MargaretTK: Speaking of reading, our district subscribes to Teaching Books.net

ElizabetW3: Well, I hope to use the standards to drive my projects,

ElizabetW3: this way I won't get any guff in this era of accountability and standardized testing.

ElizabetW3: Are the students capable? this is another common question.

MargaretTK: You HAVE to use the standards to drive the project, but you can pretty much drive them anywhere you want.

ElizabetW3: We have to be tuned into our students autonomy

MaryJaneP: How about - In reading you are doing a story about puffins, and one group of students research Iceland to see what makes it conducive for puffins, and another group work on habitat and need.

ElizabetW3: Yes, that would work quite well!

MargaretTK: sounds good to me

ElizabetW3: Piaget would love it!

LisaHS: Puffins are cute! LOL!

ElizabetW3: Kids learn from kids

ElizabetW3: very social creatures

MaryJaneP: kids or puffins????

ElizabetW3: lol kids

ElizabetW3: It is suggested not to utilize PBL until you get a feel for

ElizabetW3: what your kids are capable of.

ElizabetW3: This will help us determine how much of a manager we need to be

ElizabetW3: At first, we will have to manage quite a bit,

ElizabetW3: but slowly we can move into the facilitator role as

ElizabetW3: they begin to understand their own roles and expectations.

MargaretTK: Did y'all see that BECAUSE OF WINN DIXIE is now a movie?

MaryJaneP: Setting goals and format is helpful.

DavidWe: Wow, the movie!

ElizabetW3: Yes, and if we examine our own curriculum and

ElizabetW3: look for the most important ideas and concepts

ElizabetW3: and incorporate those into projects,

ElizabetW3: we can leave the remaining topics to deal with through direct instruction.

ElizabetW3: This is more realistic, I believe.

LisaHS: Elizabeth, that must really transform the attitude in the classroom. It must lift their self confidence and esteem. Great life skills too as they learn how to research and solve on their own.

ElizabetW3: Yes, that's one of the most beneficial aspects of PBL,

ElizabetW3: it gets them ready for real life expectations

ElizabetW3: and it meets the needs of learners with varying skill levels and learning styles.

ElizabetW3: not to mention that it engages the bored kids, lol

LisaHS: and teachers, lol

ElizabetW3: lol

ElizabetW3: yes

MargaretTK: I just don't know how effective Direct Instruction is except with the most able learners

ElizabetW3: yet, in the classroom, direct instruction still rules the day

MaryJaneP: OK. Another brainstorming request for ideas. We are studying John Henry next week as part of African American History Month. Question - Why is he a legend, or something more complex. Remember these are 3rd graders.

PaulaWi: Kids need to be involved in their learning, not just standing by catching it as it passes them.

PamLB: that's a tough one ... 3rd graders, eh ?

ElizabetW3: Well Mary Jane, I did a webquest once on the holocaust and I had my kids take on the role of survivors

LisaHS: omg what age students?

ElizabetW3: middle school

LisaHS: ouch

ElizabetW3: important topic

ElizabetW3: the webquest didn't leave them into too much of the horror end,

MargaretTK: I've been doing a lot with folklore lately. I find that the American tall tales and legends are really intertwined with the economic & social history of their times.

MaryJaneP: Do you create the webquest? I don't know how to do that yet, but am hopeful.

ElizabetW3: but I wanted them to get a sense of the holocaust from a more realistic perspective

ElizabetW3: there are lots of website that will show you how to do a webquest

ElizabetW3: actually they are very easy

ElizabetW3: you can create them in word

ElizabetW3: then convert them to html format

PaulaWi: The trick is finding the sites to use that are good resources for the grade level you will use it for.

SusanR: find a webquest on your topic and use it as a base

MaryJaneP: I'll check that out tomorrow. Thanks.

LisaHS: There are so many kook sites concerning the holocaust though

ElizabetW3: Yes Margaret, I agree

ElizabetW3: I've done some work on Tall Tales

LisaHS: You would really need a good filter to let them research that

SusanR: filamentality let's you create them on the fly

ElizabetW3: in a webquest

PaulaWi: Be careful to find one with good readability and no inappropriate pop ups.

ElizabetW3: Lisa, you control

ElizabetW3: where they go

ElizabetW3: the webquest brings them to specific pages that you set up

ElizabetW3: on your wq

ElizabetW3: See how much PBL opens us up to?

MargaretTK: Maybe a Holocaust WebQuest would also be a great place to introduce good and not-so-good websites

PaulaWi: Many wq I used were found on the web and streamlined for my students.

ElizabetW3: even better, lol

SusanR: why reinvent the wheel

ElizabetW3: I enjoy doing webquests

ElizabetW3: and sometimes you have to create your own when thinking of that driving question, ya know?

PaulaWi: I sent our faculty on a webquest on webquests to expose them to it on a staff development workshop day.

ElizabetW3: That's great Paula!

MargaretTK: That sounds like a great idea

ElizabetW3: so many teachers are computer illiterate

LisaHS: How did the administration respond? LOL

PaulaWi: They had to evaluate the sites.

PaulaWi: The administration is supportive

MargaretTK: I'm going to offer that one up to my principal

MaryJaneP: This has been very helpful. Are you able to give me the webquest on webquests?

ElizabetW3: Couldn't think of a better Staff Development Day idea than that!

PaulaWi: They worked in groups of four which helped the illiterate ones

ElizabetW3: lol

ElizabetW3: I'm lucky, I came from the business world before entering into teaching,

ElizabetW3: so I came with all that tech know how

ElizabetW3: but I am always shocked at the number of teachers who are afraid of the computer

PaulaWi: I found this wq through www.google.com

MargaretTK: what did you do in your other life

LisaHS: Teachers from the "old school" get comfortable with the old way and are intimidated by new ideas

ElizabetW3: Taught the Toyota Production System to American companies, lol

LisaHS: Jeepers!

ElizabetW3: I'm in Detroit, everyone works in the auto industry, lol

MaryJaneP: Well, I am an old teacher, and open to ideas. But not any more tonight, good night, and thank you all!

ElizabetW3: Thanks MJ, have a good night!

MaryJaneP left the room (signed off).

MargaretTK: I was a public librarian in the 70's which created a lot of tech lust

SusanR: of interest is a webquest about webquests

SusanR: <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/webquestwebquest.html>

ElizabetW3: Thanks everyone...

ElizabetW3: Margaret, can I ask you a library question?

PaulaWi: Thank you!!!

MargaretTK: Yes

PaulaWi: Good night!

ElizabetW3: Good night Paula!

LisaHS: Will we reschedule with Ms Battle? I want to be there if so

PamLB: thank you Elizabeth

ElizabetW3: Thanks for coming?

PamLB: goodnight

ElizabetW3: I will try to get a hold of Beverly,

ElizabetW3: I think she just forgot

ElizabetW3: She is very nice

MargaretTK: I'll try too

LisaHS: I liked her testimonial on video

SusanR: Thanks Elizabeth..looking forward to your next session

ElizabetW3: Thanks for coming!

MargaretTK: good night

ElizabetW3: good night Margaret, and thanks again for the tips