

Common Types of Projects*

* NOTE: These are meant to be good but not perfect examples of projects. How might you critique them?

1. Exploration of a Philosophical Question

Secondary Example:

Project Title: Old Enough To...?

Grade: 9

Project Idea: Students read *The Catcher in the Rye* and short stories whose themes are adolescence and growing up. They conduct interviews with people of various ages, survey their peers, then write their own reflections on the topic, which they publish on a class blog.

DQ: When do we grow up?

Content: (ELA) theme in literature (RL.9-10.2); narrative writing (RL.9-10.3); knowledge of language (L.9-10.3)

Major Products: Various literary analysis writing assignments, interview questions and edited responses, survey and analysis of results, blog posts

Public Audience: online readers of the class blog

Elementary Example:

Project Title: Pizza and the World of Work

Grade: 2

Project Idea: Students interview adult family members and friends and visit local businesses to find out what it's like to work. They plan how to run a pizza restaurant in their classroom, gather ingredients and supplies, test recipes, create menus and advertisements, and operate it for two days.

DQ: What does it mean to work?

Content: (Math) measurement & data (MD.2.A.1-4); addition & subtraction (NBT.2.B.5-9); (Biological Science) types of plants; (Social Studies) community & economics; (ELA) reading informational text (RI.2.1-2); informative writing (W.2.2.5-6)

Major Products: Journal, recipes, schedules, advertisements, menus, pizza

Public Audience: school staff, other students

*This project is described in more detail in BIE's book, *PBL in the Elementary Grades*

2. Investigation of a Historical Event, Time Period, or Natural Phenomenon

Secondary Examples:

Project Title: It's the Bomb

Grade: 10

Project Idea: Students act as advisors to President Harry Truman in July, 1945, who must recommend whether to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.

DQ: Should the U.S. drop the atomic bomb on Japan?

Content: (World History) World War II, European & Pacific theatres, (Science) atomic energy, (ELA) literacy in history/social science (RH.9-10.1-6)

Major Products: Briefs describing the status of the war; oral presentation to the President and a panel of key decision-makers

Public Audience: guest adults will act as the President and his panel

Project Title: Evolve or Die!

Grade: 6

Project Idea: Students, in the role of scientists, make predictions about how various animals might evolve in response to changes in their local environment due to climate change. They create illustrated pages for the website of a state wildlife protection agency and present them to a representative of the agency.

DQ: How might animals evolve in a changing climate?

Content: (Biological Science) habitat, anatomical structures of animals, evolution, natural selection and adaptation, ecosystems, (Earth Science) climate change, (ELA) integration of knowledge and ideas (RST.6-8.7-9)

Major Products: Research notebooks, written and illustrated pages for website, oral presentation

Public Audience: other science teachers, representative of state wildlife agency

Elementary Example:

Project Title: What am I?

Grade: Kindergarten

Project Idea: Students study what it means to be "alive" and learn by observation, listening and reading what makes animals different from plants. They reflect on what they themselves are, but also how they share some characteristics of plants too ("I like to turn toward the sun!" or "I need water") as they create a picture book.

DQ: Are animals like plants or are they different?

Content: (ELA) reading informational text ask and answer key ideas and details (RI.K.1-3); informative writing (W.K.2/K.7); (Biological Science) what distinguishes living from non-living things; characteristics of animal and plant life

Major Products: picture book with text, showing the differences and similarities between animals and plants, with the children's reflections about themselves

Public Audience: parents and visitors to the school's "Science Wall" display

3. Problem-solving Situation

Secondary Example:

Project Title: Grub Up!

Grade: 11-12

Project Idea: Students act as consultants who need to help a small business transform an old restaurant in their community into one that is more up-to-date and profitable. (May use case studies or actual local restaurants.)

DQ: How can we update an old restaurant?

Content: (Career/Tech) budgeting, pricing, business plan, market analysis, advertising, food service, (ELA) informative writing (W.11-12.2a-f), research projects (W.11-12.7-8), presentation of knowledge and ideas (SL.11-12.4-6)

Major Products: Business plan, cover letter, oral presentation with visual aids, sample marketing & advertising materials, sample menus

Public Audience: owners of the business (role-played or real)

Elementary Example:

Project Title: Go Mice Go!

Grade: 1

Project Idea: Students find out that mice are living in the school building and decide what to do about the situation. They learn about how mice live in this habitat, make estimates of how many mice there might be, draw pictures and read & write stories about mice. They study different ways to deal with mice in a building and make a recommendation in a presentation.

DQ: What should we do about the mice in our school?

Content: (Math) adding and subtracting whole numbers (NBTC.4), (Biological Science) habitat, basic requirements for life, (ELA) narrative writing (W.1.3), shared research (W.1.7)

Major Products: storybook about mice, presentation of recommendations

Public Audience: school principal & custodian, district representative

4. Examination of a Controversial Issue

Secondary Example:

Project Title: Get 'em If They Smoke 'em

Grade: 12

Project Idea: Students research the relevant political, economic, and social issues as they weigh the pros and cons of raising taxes on cigarettes. They draw conclusions and write persuasive essays in the form of op-ed pieces for local print and online media and letters to state legislators.

DQ: Should we raise taxes on cigarettes?

Content: (Government) state government, taxation, public health policy, (ELA) argumentative writing (W.11-12.1a-e), informative writing (W.11-12.2a-f)

Major Products: Research report, persuasive essays

Public Audience: Readers of print and online media, state legislators

Elementary Example:

Project Title: To Bus or Not To Bus
Grade: 5

Project Idea: Since the district is considering the elimination of school bus service, students study the issue and make recommendations. They interview administrators, survey parents, collect data, and write reports, which they summarize and present at a school board meeting.

DQ: Should our school keep the buses?

Content: (Math) fractions (NFA-B), decimals (NBT.A.1), (ELA) opinion writing (W.5.1a-d), presentation of knowledge and ideas (SL.5.4-6)

Major Products: Written report and presentation to district administrators & school board

Public Audience: district administrators & school board

5. Challenge to Design, Plan, Produce or Create Something

Secondary Example:

Project Title: Equations of Art
Grade: 8

Project Idea: The principal feels the school lacks visual artifacts of school spirit and culture, so she asks students for proposals for an interdisciplinary mural for the wall near her office. Student teams use algebra to design murals and principles of art to create prototypes.

DQ: How can we use algebra to artistically showcase our school spirit?

Content: (Math) linear equations, graphing, coordinate points, slope of a line (EE.B.5); (Art) mural design and materials, use of color and shape; (ELA) presentation of knowledge and ideas (SL.8.4-6)

Major Products: linear equations for mural design, written design rationale, design pitch presentation

Public Audience: school leadership team and staff members

Elementary Example:

Project Title: Local Pride!
Grade: 3

Project Idea: Students learn about the history of their community through field trips, guest speakers, interviews with residents, and reading primary source documents. Working in teams, they write reports on various topics, create exhibits focused on different aspects of their history—economic, social, and geographic—which are displayed at an evening event they plan for the community.

DQ: How can we create museum exhibits and plan an event that explains and celebrates the history of our community?

Content: (Social Studies) local and state history; (ELA) reading informational text (RI.3.1-6); informative writing (W.3.2a-d); (Math) geometric measure (G.A.2 & MDD.8)

Major Products: research report, visual display, with written explanations of visual elements; community event

Public Audience: parents and community members attending the evening event