Project Based Learning: A Summary and Reflection of a Pilot Classroom In A 5th Grade Class At Hacker Middle School

Mr. Wallaert and Mr. Young

2016-2017 School Year
Introduction

John Dewey once said, “Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.” Learning best occurs when students are actively engaged through doing something in the classroom. When students are given autonomy and choice in a structured classroom, student motivation increases (Hofferber, Eckes, & Wilde, 2014; Evans & Boucher, 2015). When students are interested in what they are learning, learning no longer becomes a chore. Instead, learning becomes something that is fun and exciting. The goal of the classroom is to encourage inquiry and learning in the student. This involves actively engaging students in the learning environment through essential questions and real world situations that they need to solve.

During the 2016-2017 school year, two teachers set out to increase student motivation, engagement, and interest in learning through teaching style known as Project Based Learning (PBL). Another great benefit to PBL is better student performance in academics (Kaldi, Filippatou, & Govaris, 2011). Mr. Wallaert and Mr. Young, both 5th grade teachers, put in over 100 hours of research to fully understand and properly implement PBL. The goal of this program was to teach 21st century skills through real world situations that students had to research and solve through collaboration and teamwork. This program asked students to solve essential questions through critical thinking, research, and problem solving. Project Based Learning has been proven to increase student motivation and engagement in the classroom. With the approval of the district superintendent and administration, we were given the green light to pilot a Project Based Learning classroom for the 2016-2017 school year. The following is a summary and reflection of the Project Based Learning pilot classroom:

Summary

The pilot Project Based Learning (PBL) classroom was a dual taught classroom with a beginning class of 60 students. The two teachers in the classroom had a combined teaching experience of over 12 years. Mr. Wallaert has a Masters in Teaching and is currently earning a Doctorate in Administrative Leadership. Mr. Young has a bachelor's in teaching and is currently earning a Master's in Administration. Both teachers worked throughout the summer of 2016 to research and learn how Project Based Learning should be correctly implemented in the classroom. Both teachers attended a three-day Project Based Learning summer course on their own time and money. Both teachers were invested in ensuring the proper implementation of PBL in the classroom.

Throughout the year, students were given multiple projects that were standards driven and required them to collaborate and work together in order to answer essential questions about real world problems. Teaching was concentrated on essential content standards that would guide students in thinking and learning. The projects that students were given ranged in all subject areas. However, every project included reading and writing as an essential content standard. Projects ranged from hands-on building, presentations, art, writing projects, and much more.

The classroom was designed around student collaboration, autonomy, and problem solving. The desire was to engage students in the learning environment through engaging projects that encouraged 21st century skills. All projects were given criteria that had to be met, but students were given the choice on how they were going to meet the required criteria. All projects were graded on a rubric that was given to the students before the beginning of every project. This ensured that all students knew the requirements and expectations of the project. Students were placed in groups that ranged from 2 to 6 students per group. The groups were required to stay together and collaborate throughout the project. If students needed help, they had each other to work
with. Students were encouraged to talk, research, and work together to create a project that answered the essential question.

Projects

All projects were designed around the 5th grade state standards. All projects were led with an essential question that students needed to answer with their final product. Curriculum was used as a resource in order to enhance learning. Technology was a staple within the classroom to encourage typing, writing, presenting, and research skills.

A side note needs to be made here; both teachers financed their projects with their own time and money. There were times when they had to purchase materials for their projects, while there were other times that they went out and gathered materials from people who generously donated items to the class.

In the first semester, students had completed 8 different kinds of projects. The first project that the students were introduced to was the design and explanation of the Newton’s Cradle. Students were given Popsicle sticks, string, and marbles. They were told to build a Newton’s Cradle using only what was given. However, they were given no instructions on how to do it. On top of that, students were asked to explain what scientific laws were present in the Newton’s Cradle. This was the quickest project the students had for the year. All in all, every student completed the project and wrote a small paper explaining the three laws of motion that were represented in the Newton’s Cradle. This project took place the first week of school. Not only were the expectations set, but students quickly learned their potential for problem solving and work ethic.

Other projects included writing and performing plays, writing poetry, building planter boxes, researching and presenting biomes, writing a narrative story, creating, defending, and proposing ideas through presentations, building bridges using balsa wood, creating and displaying a timeline that covered 280 years of U.S. history, collaborating with the Mountain Home Newspaper to write an article with a photo attached, cooking part of a 4 course meal, and several others. The final project students were given was to create a web page that highlighted academic content of their choice and gave information of that content by answering “Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?” Throughout all of these projects, students were taught through direct instruction, student collaboration, small groups, and one on one interventions. Each project hit multiple standards at once and many times overlapped standards.

All work that was done on the projects were done in the classroom. Students never took work home. This allowed students to go home at the end of a long day and be kids. Research has shown that homework in younger grades doesn’t improve students’ performance and can actually have a negative effect on the life of the student (Parker, 2014; Center For Public Education, 2007). In fact, other research has shown that the more students are able to play and be active, the higher their academic performance and motivation will be (Strauss, 2015).

Rigor

According to an article by Idaho Education News (2017), “75% of Idahoans believe hard work, persistence, and responsibility should also be taught in the classroom.” In the PBL classroom, students learned the meaning and importance of perseverance, hard work, and rigor. Students were forced to think outside of the box. Students had to learn the art of problem solving, critical thinking, and using resources. Answers were not given to them. They had to work to find what they needed. The teachers were guides throughout the process. They walked with the students, but it was the students who had to work for what they wanted.
Students learned the importance of responsibility. If students did not get a project finished by the deadline, they had to take responsibility and explain why they didn’t get it finished. However, on the opposite side, students who finished their projects found out what it felt like to proudly give an account for their responsibility. Students were pushed to think outside of the box, solve problems, and critically think in order to finish a project on the deadline.

Throughout projects, students had to give written accounts of their work and progress on their projects. Students had to write summaries describing their work that they accomplished throughout the day, and they had to write a reflection piece that answered the following questions: What was difficult? What went well? What will I do to improve? These questions and summaries were kept in a continuous journal that students wrote in most every day. The focus was on the reflection piece for the students. Research has shown that student creativity and self-reflection has a positive impact on student engagement, motivation, and academic progress (Ion & Stingu, 2014; Autry & Walker, 2011).

Assessment

The students were continually assessed throughout the year in order to ensure that students were showing growth. The students were given multiple forms of assessment to ensure accurate data. Students were given CBMs, classroom tests and quizzes, project rubrics, and Idaho State Interim Assessments. This allowed the teachers to address any weakness or struggles that students might have had. This also directed projects within the classroom. When the teachers saw a struggle or weakness that students had, they would direct their projects to address those struggles and weaknesses.

Throughout the year, students showed a steady improvement in scores through assessments. When the teachers saw students who were struggling more than others were, they would intervene with more one on one instruction and involved Title I services. This would ensure that students were getting the extra support that they needed and would not be left behind.

The district decided to focus on the Measurement and Data Interim Assessment to show growth throughout the year in math, and Reading for Information Interim Assessment to measure growth in reading. This was required for all 5th grade classes. Below are the end of the year results for both math and reading:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1 - ELA Interim Assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Avg. Number of Students</strong></td>
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<td>5th Grade</td>
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The students took multiple interim assessments throughout the year. Other interim assessments that students took were Number and Fractions, Numbers Base Ten, Reading Literature, Editing, and Research Interim Assessment. These assessments were used to get a clear understanding of students’ academic skills and were given great consideration when creating projects for the class. If we saw that students were struggling in specific areas, we then created projects that centered around the weaknesses of our students.

### Technology in the Classroom

With the opportunity to have one to one technology in the classroom, students were able to research at any time. Along with researching, students were able to collaborate and work together on documents for their projects. Another way technology was utilized in the classroom was for reflection journals. Students were given time during class to type a summary and reflection of their day. This gave students time to work on typing skills and language art skills. The teachers were able to give instant feedback and assess the students writing immediately. Technology also cut back on paper usage for the classroom.

Students were able to work on presentations in Google Slides. This made students’ work easy to access and assess. Students were given immediate feedback in order to better their projects. Instead of students relying on a flash drive to keep all of their research and work, they were able to keep it in their Google drives.

Students also used technology to complete assignments in Google Classroom. The teachers would assign the students an assignment that related to their projects in Google Classroom, and students could then access their assignments from anywhere at any time. If students had internet access at home, they were able to retrieve any work they needed to complete instead of relying on paper that could have been easily lost, forgotten, or ruined.
Technology in the classroom enhanced the student’s ability to engage in their learning and research. It also enhanced PBL by helping students collaborate, problem solve, and work together on documents. Technology also helped students stay on top of their assignments, which led to fewer late or missing assignments. Overall, students were introduced to and became involved in 21st century skills.

**Community Involvement**

Another focus in the classroom was community involvement and civic duty. A few of the projects that students engaged in required them to think about their community and how they could have a positive impact where they lived. One project focused on community service. Students were given the following essential question: “How can we, as 5th grade students, have a positive impact on the community of Mountain Home.” Students were put into groups of 3 and were tasked to create and design an idea that would give back to their community. Students had to build a slideshow that explained their plan and explain how they would accomplish their plan. The top three groups were then given the opportunity to present their ideas in front of the city council. Groups came up with projects ideas that included helping the homeless, fixing up houses in the community, helping the animal shelter, restoring vacant buildings in the community, and helping the elderly. Three groups presented in front of the City Council, and are still currently working on making their project a reality.

Another project that focused on community involvement came from the flooding that occurred during the winter months in Mountain Home. The essential question that students had to answer asked, “What does the city of Mountain Home need to know about protecting its infrastructure during a flood and how can people in the city be safe before, during, and after a flood?” Students had to create a presentation that would answer the essential question. They also had to create a preparation kit that cost less than $100 that citizens in the community could afford in order to be safe before, during, and after a flood. Students were tasked to ask questions about their community and how a flood might impact the city of Mountain Home. Groups came up with questions like, “How can we improve the drainage system of Mountain Home, and how can we pay for it out of our budget?” Another question that students asked was, “How can we protect the important infrastructures within Mountain Home?” Throughout the project, students were engaged, and were focused on bettering their community.

**Parent Involvement and Communication**

The teachers made it a point to ensure constant conversation took place with parents. To do this, the teachers collaborated every day in writing a daily email that would be sent out to all parents. The email gave a detailed description of what the students did throughout the day and any assignments that might have been due. It also gave reminders to the parents of any important dates or information that they might have needed to know.

Along with a daily email, the teachers opened the classroom to any parents who wanted to come in and participate with the students. Parents were welcome to come in, ask questions, and engage with the students. Parents were asked to come observe students final products, whether it be a presentation, skit, or something the students had constructed.

The teachers also created a classroom webpage that kept parents up to date with projects, resources, and rubrics. This allowed parents the opportunity to seek out what was happening in the classroom and hold their child accountable. Parents were also able to read all rubrics for each project and watch any slideshows or videos that the teachers posted for the class.
Parents were welcome to participate in the classroom during any project. The teachers had an open door policy with parents. They believed that communication and involvement were extremely important when it came to the education of the whole child. Throughout the year, the teachers had more than 15 parents involved in the classroom throughout different projects. Parents were engaged in the learning process, worked with multiple student groups, and worked with individual students to help guide them in their thinking and projects.

Overall, the communication between the teachers and parents was always open and engaging. With an open door policy and almost instant response via email, parents were always kept up to date with the class, and rarely had questions or concerns about student progress or expectations.

Reflection

I, Mr. Wallaert, was approached by a student near the end of the year and asked, “How will PBL prepare me for high school, college, and life?” To that I said, “What have you learned to do in this class?” The student thought for a moment, and I asked, “Have you learned to problem solve? Have you had to learn how to critically think? Have you had to learn how to research and find resources?” All of these questions were answered with a “Yes.” I then explained to the student that life is not separated into content areas. Life includes all content every minute of the day. Learning how to work through problems, critically think, and collaborate with others is how content is learned.

It was a fun filled year of projects, hard work, problem solving, and collaboration. There were many things that went great, and there were other things will get better. Confucius is quoted as saying, “Learning without reflection is a waste. Reflection without learning is dangerous.” In this section of the report, we would like to focus on our reflection of the last year. We want to emphasize the parts that worked well and where research held true. We also want to emphasize the areas that were difficult, but will only get better with time.

Parent Support

According to the district's Continuous Improvement Plan, the mission statement reads: "Committed to learning today for tomorrow's world." It goes on to state in the vision, “In partnership with students, parents, and community, the Mountain Home School District creates an exciting & challenging instruction that has value and meaning for each student, encouraging them to become responsible contributing members of society.” We feel that we have not only met this goal in our classroom, but we greatly exceeded it. We had more than 20 parents and family members volunteer their time in our classroom, spend time with the student, and come in to work alongside of our students.

In the beginning of the year, we held a parent/teacher meeting for all the parents of the students in our room. We explained the design, purpose, and layout of our Project Based Classroom through a slideshow presentation. In the meeting, we had a few parents who were very excited to hear about what we were doing and already supported the classroom. The majority of parents were on the fence with the new classroom, and there were a few parents who didn’t like the idea.

As the year progressed, we only had one student move out of our classroom due to their desire to learn in a traditional classroom. We supported their decision to move 100%. However, the rest of the class and the parents started to quickly see the benefits of the classroom and were quickly expressing their gratitude and support for the classroom.
Parents were excited to see their child coming home wanting to talk about their day. They were excited to see their child wanting to get up in the morning and go to school. They were excited to hear their child’s joy and even frustrations that they were having in the classroom. Parents were feeling more involved in their child’s education; more so than they did in the past. Parent’s wrote us emails expressing their gratitude and support of what we were doing.

**Community Involvement**

Just like it was stated in the parent involvement section, the vision for the Continuous Improvement Plan for the Mountain Home School District states, “In partnership with students, parents, and community, the Mountain Home School District creates an exciting & challenging instruction that has value and meaning for each student, encouraging them to become responsible contributing members of society.” Again, we feel we not only met this expectation, but exceeded the expectations. We had a total of 19 members within our community volunteer time, materials, or money for the students in our classroom. We had multiple individuals give up time during their day to visit and conduct interviews with our students. Some of these individuals included the Mayor, County Commissioner Bud Corbus, Brian Orbin, Nick Schilz, Gene Palmer, John Cristobal, and many others. We also had many people within the community donate materials to the classroom as well. The greatest part to all of this, was that our community was willing and wanting to help out wherever they could.

When it came to the Pay It Forward project, students were given the opportunity to present in front of the City Council. At the meeting, each council member expressed their appreciation, amazement, and encouragement to each group that presented. From the groups that presented at the City Council, a community service group has been started by the students.

What we did at Hacker during the 2016-2017 school year was spread throughout the community. We had people who didn’t have students at Hacker express their joy and excitement for what we were doing. We had multiple parents ask how they could make sure their child gets into our classroom. Ultimately, what we did was shared with the community, and the community responded with support, encouragement, and excitement.

**Student Engagement and Engaging Students**

One of the greatest success we had with our pilot PBL classroom was student engagement in learning. Students had greater, more positive, attitudes toward school. We had multiple parents express their joy in hearing their child get excited about school and didn’t want to miss a day unless they really had to. Not only were students excited to be at school, they were excited to learn and engage in the learning environment. Students learned the art of collaboration and teamwork. They learned how to work with difficult people and overcome struggles. They learned what real perseverance felt like and looked like. Students learned how to make mistakes and overcome them. They learned the art of failing, but always looked for ways to get better. Students were given the opportunity to personalize their learning.

All research that we looked at expressed that student motivation increased when they were given autonomy and choice in the classroom (Cetin-Dindar, 2016; Evans et al., 2015; Stolk & Harari, 2014; Hofferber et al., 2014;). With a PBL classroom, students were given choice in how to solve or answer essential questions. Instead of a scripted academic workday, students came to school with something new and exciting waiting for them. They were given tasks that allowed them to work at their own pace as a group. They were given new ways of thinking that didn’t include a script from a textbook . They were introduced to new ideas and
possibilities that engaged them as students and as individuals. Students wanted to be in class and wanted to learn.

Along with student engagement in the learning environment, we, the teachers, had the opportunity to engage with the students. PBL frees up the teacher to allow for more time with the students. Everything in PBL is assessed through rubrics. Because of this, we were able to engage with the students throughout the project. We were able to work with all students throughout the day without stressing over paperwork and grading. We were able to stay out from behind the desk, and engage with the students. It also gave us the opportunity of giving instant feedback to students. Research shows that giving instant feedback engages the student and enhances learning (Jones & Blankenship, 2014).

Our time was no longer bogged down by daily worksheets and busy work. We had the time to create deeper level learning opportunities for our students. We were able to put our focus into our projects and give students the opportunity to find value in what they came to school for. Students were no longer worksheets and segregated time throughout the day. Students became the focus. We were able to truly invest into the well being and academic progress of our students. We knew our students, their struggles, and what drove them. We were able to reach them on a completely different level than in a traditional style classroom.

**Dual Teaching**

Having two teachers in one classroom made a world of difference when it came to student accountability, attention, and behavior. If students were off task during a lesson, the other teacher could intervene with that student without taking up valuable learning time. We were also able to bounce ideas off of each other and hold each other accountable in the classroom. Another perk of dual teaching was the ability to observe the class during instruction time and be able to switch gears when one of us saw the students becoming disinterested and off task. This allowed us to keep the classroom moving and engaged at all times.

Another great benefit of having two teachers in the classroom was collaboration; not only when it came to each other, but also with students and parents. During parent/teacher conferences, we were both able to talk with the parents and give greater detail and support for their child. We were able to give dual accounts of a student’s progress, struggles, and victories. If an issue or problem arose in the classroom with student behavior, one of us was able to take the child to the hallway and address the problem out there, while the other stayed in the classroom continuing instruction.

Nothing was done without trust and communication between the two of us. When one of us was having a hard day, the other could pick up more responsibilities for the day. There was never a day where students suffered due to our attitude during the day. At times, we had to be tough on each other. We had to give each other constructive criticism and be open to what the other had to say. Not only were the students challenged, we were also challenged as professionals.

**No Homework**

When it came to homework, we saw an increase and desire in learning and education performance because students didn’t have homework to take home. Everything was done in the class. Students were willing to work harder in class knowing that they didn’t have to take any work home. Students were also more apt to stay in during lunch and work on assignments. They also came to school more motivated to learn and engaged in the learning environment.
When we did our stint in textbooks during the year, we had parents tell us that they saw a drastic change in their child’s attitude and motivation toward school. During the second portion of parent/teacher conferences, we had multiple parents express their approval and joy of having their child in a Project Based Class due to the joy they had for school and the desire to want to talk about their day.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, research has shown that homework in younger grades doesn’t improve students performance and can actually have a negative effect on the life of the student (Parker, 2014; Center For Public Education, 2007). Having no homework alleviated the frustration of incomplete assignments being turned in or even missing assignments. Students only had to worry about the work that was being done in class. They knew they were free to be kids once the bell rang at 3:05pm. This gave them the energy and desire to want to come back and work even harder.

Rigor

Our Project Based Learning class took students out of their comfort zone when it came to academics. For 4 years, our students were used to opening textbooks, reading off the pages, and finding answers in their textbook. Not only did this disconnect students from the real world, it also gave them no joy or desire to want to do well due to not having a personal connection to their learning.

Instead of the textbooks, students were introduced to the world of research. Answers were no longer in bold print waiting for them to find. Instead, students had to dig deep, read for information, and find what they needed to know. They were introduced to more than one source to find their information. Students quickly learned the art of finding sources that supported their research.

Students were faced with figuring out how to solve real-world problems. They were given the tools to learn, but it was up to them to use them. They were guided in their learning, but they were never given answers. It was up to the students to figure things out. If they did not know an answer, they needed to go find it. They had to do the heavy lifting in understanding and learning. This took students to a new level of learning. Students were forced to think for themselves, something textbooks didn’t offer. They were forced to answer difficult questions and learn what it meant to persevere.

Students were no longer told what to think, but how to think. They were put in the driver seat for learning. It was up to them to find answers, problem solve, overcome struggles, and learn to persevere. They were the ones who controlled their learning, and it meant something to them. It was never easy, but it was worth every tear, every frustration, and every victory. Students were excited to learn. They were being taught new ideas, concepts, and ways of learning. There were many times where students didn’t want to go out for recess because they were so enveloped by what they were researching.

Students had to learn the art of failing, something they feared. We believe failure is something to embrace not run away from. It is only through failure that one can truly learn. Our students figured this out first hand. We had a motto in our classroom: “We will never settle for okay.” This meant that everything we did was to the best of our abilities and nothing less. If students failed to meet standard, they were held accountable for their choices and were asked what they had learned and how they will improve. Students were never allowed to do “okay” work. They were pushed to give it everything they got. We raised the bar of expectation, and what is amazing is that the class strived to reach that bar.

Due to the rigor of the class, students grew by leaps and bounds. Students saw what success looked like and they wanted more of it. They wanted to be their best and do their best. They showed tremendous growth in
writing, reading, and mathematics. We believe that part of the success of the students is because of the rigor of the class, and that students rose to the challenge.

**Parent Responses**

We sent out a final parent survey at the end of the year. Below are questions and some of the responses that we received from parents. We are not able to share all responses due to the amount that we had. However, there was a major theme that ran through all the answers.

**What are your thoughts about not having assigned homework?**

I am not a fan of homework. Exceptions would be when work is not completed in class or at the parent's request. My children are at school seven hours a day, and adding 1-2 hours of homework after school is unnecessary and typically causes more frustration than anything. With only a four hour window between the end of the school day and bedtime, I would prefer my children use their free time playing outside and/or spending time as a family.

I LOVE IT!!!!!!! My kids have SO much going on after school and I have 5 of them. Between 4h, piano, library and our family farm, we are so busy all the time. There are a lot of times on the weekends that Bennett WANTS to work on his projects. Because we don't have internet at home, I let him go to work with me on the weekends to work on projects. This last weekend, he was at work with me to work on his project. He kept telling me everything he was learning and making connections about what it meant.

It was hard for me to get use to at first and at times I still struggle, but the kid is happy and seems to like school and doing ok. I have read that homework does not really improve their academic grades. Crazy I know.

There is no assigned homework however, she has a strong sense of accountability to want to come home and want to work on her projects so they can be "achieving greatness".

I really like the fact that when my child came home from school she didn't have another two or three hours of homework to do period I gave us more time as a family.

My child isn't stressed or sleeping late trying to get it done.

**What are your thoughts about the community involvement with this classroom?**

This classroom environment has been a great experience for Josiah and has brought him out of his shell quite a bit. His communication skills have excelled and his ability to speak in front of larger groups has improved. The group aspect allowed him to keep accountable for his work and actions. His writing has also improved. I believe this is because he was able to write authentically about real-world situations from his own perspective. Along with his classmates, Josiah was able to attend the city council meeting and the school board meeting, as well as formulate plans to engage with the community. This gave him the opportunity to see the importance staying informed on current social issues and the effectiveness of connecting with his community leaders.

Again, I love it. It's good for the community to be involved with our youth and it's crucial for our youth to realize they are part of something bigger than themselves.
I love and support this 100%. The life lessons and community involvements she has been able to do speaks volumes to their long term success and what kind of people we are shaping our kids to be.

My daughter has interviewed the mayor (and received a coin), she has presented to the school board, and I don't see any other kids her age being given these opportunities to explore and learn.

I think that the community involvement has been amazing! My daughter was so excited every time the mayor or city hall or a firefighter was involved in one of her projects.

It's amazing!!! Not only do they have your constant support but having the community back them up shows them a purpose and how life affects everyone.

Please give a short explanation of your level of satisfaction.

I pick 10, because my kid has improved more than ever.

This class has been what education should be. Rather than memorization, Bennett has pursued knowledge. This class has made it so students can't "coast." At the same time, it's enjoyable. I wish project based learning was the normal curriculum.

Ricky has just thrived this year.

I have also done further research on PBL and used the information to support my classes and educate others. I am completing my masters in Early Childhood Education and have found that although it is a form of play in others' eyes, the education that is taking place does not feel like learning and therefore will be retained longer. Also, through this type of learning it builds life long skills children will take with them past their educational careers. My child will now have also the mastery of what she is required in her grade level but in a system which she loves and will retain the skills for life; but also has learned some valuable life lessons that take people eons to learns. These lessons are the pay it forward, how to work as a team, responsibility, and to always try to achieve greatness in all that you do.

My child has grown so much over this school year, both academically emotionally and in terms of hard work and dedication.

For what you set out to do with PBL, I have observed 100% success.

The introduction to this class was hard for us as parents to just let our kiddo do things his way, but we have grown as well. We have learned that just because we have prior experience our way is not his way, and his way is beautiful. This class has given our kiddo the confidence to be himself when it comes to his education, to have his own voice, and not be lead by a text book. You both lead him down that path and he took off on his own. A lesson that he has learned at the age of 10 take others decades to learn, we are so very thankful and humbled!

It's the best school year my child has had.
Is there anything that you would like to share that was not already addressed previously?

I already asked the administrators at Hacker to allow Mr. Young and Wallaert to move to 6th grade with their class to keep teaching them project based learning. I know I am not the only parent who has done so. I genuinely hate thinking about my child having to go back to a traditional classroom setting next year. Now that I have seen his brain turned on and have seen him so excited to learn, I don't want to go back to him just sitting at a desk, reading to answer a question, while being tested on what he can memorize, rather than practical knowledge and intelligence.

Just hoping to have a class like this for next year!

When my child had to go back to the textbook style learning, she hated it but did well because that is the learning style she has been programmed to perform. By introducing PBL to her is caused her to think differently and apply knowledge to real situations but not just for self. The projects that are done are done with selfless acts to the community. We are developing and guiding our future leaders and community contributors, this style supports that 100% in a way that we want our country to strive for.

I do not know how we are going to cope next year without Mr. Wallaert and Mr. Young and PBL.

Mr. Wallaert and Mr. Young are pioneers that deserve so much credit. The amount of time and creativity that they have put into the classroom this year is inspirational! I applaud them for standing by their beliefs that children should be independent and strong. When they were told they were wrong they just stood taller!!! Every student deserves to have leading educators like them. They will always be appreciated and always be two of the greats!!!!

I think this type of class worked very well for Lilly but may not work as well for my other children who are not as responsible but also might as they haven't had the opportunity.
References:


Stavroula Kaldi , Diamanto Filippatou & Christos Govaris (2011) Project based learning in primary schools: effects on pupils' learning and attitudes, 1, 35-47.
