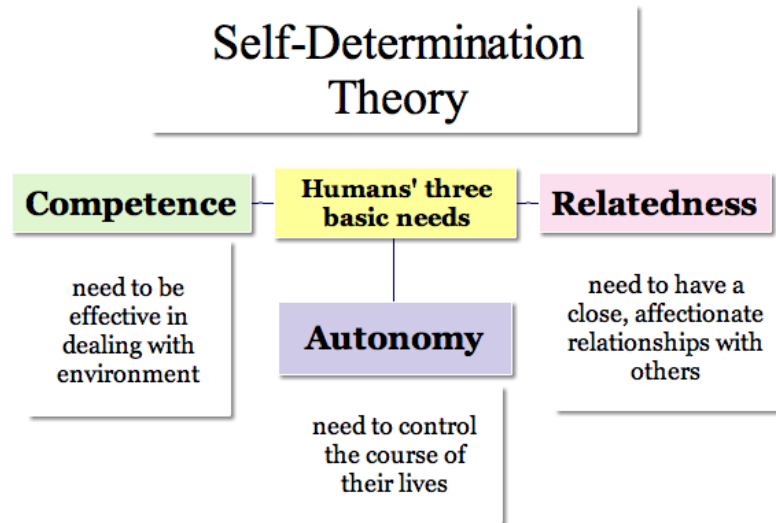
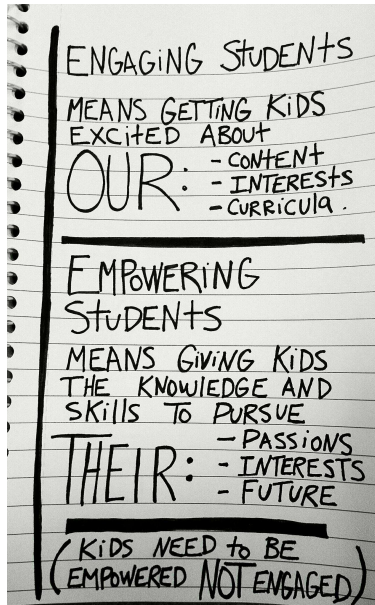


2023 Nadel -- Solving Real-World Problems with PBL



*Students with consistently high levels of eudaimonia (how well they feel they are functioning; incorporates feelings of **competence, motivation, and self-esteem**) outperform their peers. ... No such link was found between academic performance and life satisfaction [basic happiness].*

-- [University of Cambridge study](#)

[My grandfather] taught me that music was so much more than just making songs...that they are not just isolated outbursts of creativity. They are windows into the thoughts, souls, and emotions of people. They are essential to creating powerful moments of community...of coming together and changing the world. That makes them powerful modalities for transformation. -- activist and antiracism educator [Eric Dozier](#)

KEEP IT REAL: Students want to learn about things that have an impact on them in their daily lives. **KEEP IT RELEVANT:** Students want to be connected to their learning and in control of it. **KEEP IT RELATABLE:** How do we [offer choice to allow students to connect their interests to the subject matter]? -- [Peg Grafwallner, Edutopia](#)

Opening echo song: “**We Are Young**,” by [Eric Dozier](#), based on a traditional Spiritual call-and-response tune, with last couplet and **refrain** text by Assata Shakur. Used by permission of Eric Dozier.

We are young, but we are mighty --
We are young, but we are strong.
We must love and support each other --
We’ve got nothin’ to lose but our chains.

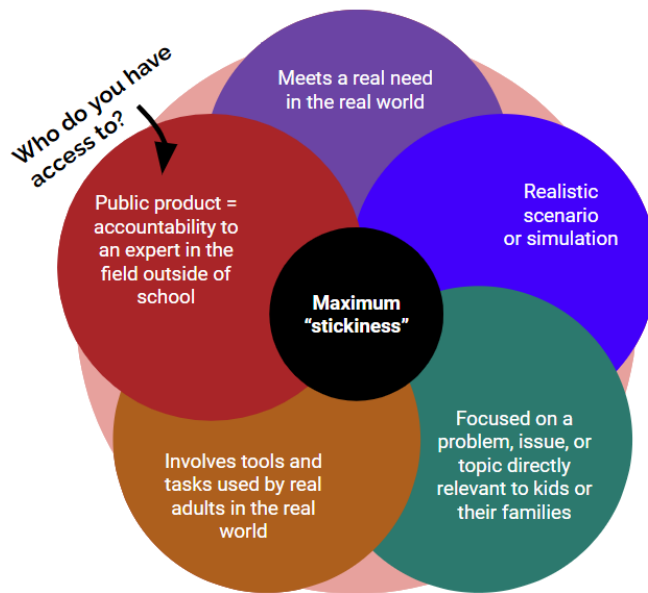
We may be young, but can’t we help you --
Help you build a better world?

It’s our duty to fight for our freedom --
It’s our duty to win.

We teach so much more than music and movement. Just a cursory list includes communication skills, social-emotional understanding and strategies, critical thinking, creative thinking, adaptability, resilience, time management, teamwork and collaboration, leadership skills, empathy, problem-solving, self-confidence, ethical decision-making, digital literacy in specific tools, and cultural competence as well. Wouldn’t it be nice to hit as many of those critical “soft skills” in a given project as possible, while still keeping the students engaged and excited about the work?

PBLWorks Essential Product Design Elements to consider:

- **A challenging problem or question**
- **Sustained inquiry** - students engage in an extended process of posing questions, finding resources, and applying information
- **Authenticity** - The project involves real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact, or the project speaks to personal concerns, interests, and issues in the students’ lives
- **Student Voice & Choice** - including how they work, what they create, and how to express their ideas in their own voices
- **Reflection** at every step of the project
- **Critique and Revision** from teacher(s), peers, and (ideally) outside-of-school experts
- **Public Product** - share and explain the project outside the school



What subjects can be bases for Real-World PBL units?

- **A real-world problem, at a personal, community, local, or larger level** (BUT, the closer to literal and metaphorical home, the better for relevance)
- **A timely opportunity** (something fresh in the news, ideally local)

Whom can students collaborate with to make the project more meaningful?

- **Start by considering to whom you have easy access!** A family member or friend with an interesting job or leadership position somewhere?
- **Students in other grades** -- partner with younger classes or their teachers to create meaningfully helpful teaching materials; partner with older classes to help with their special events, original films or podcasts or other projects, etc.
- **School leadership** -- everyone, from janitorial staff to curriculum specialists to district arts coordinators to communications office staff, has messages they want help delivering
- **Local establishments**, including sports teams, universities with music education or dance departments, businesses with local headquarters, and especially nonprofit organizations (tie into service learning initiatives!)
- **Local preschools and retirement/assisted living communities**

Consider: What's something you care about A LOT?

Basketball? OK! Are you connected to any players, journalists, managers, publicists? **Consider the needs** of those people who are involved - might they have a need music or movement could help meet? **Is there anything about basketball that's always bothered or annoyed you** that you can address with music or movement? What parts of a basketball practice or game or team operation resembles a music or movement activity, experience, or ensemble? **(Make a Venn diagram of basketball and music/movement - what overlaps?)** Is there a local kids' basketball team or club that could use a pump-up song?

Just a few sample kid-friendly projects:

- Protest Song Project -- share with related nonprofit organizations
- Modern Folk or Party Dance Project -- share with CDSS, dance callers, or DJs
- Pedagogical/Mnemonic Song Project -- collaborate with younger-grade teachers to learn their needs and help out (could also be a Parody Project)
- Write a new, easier-to-sing, and non-offensive Happy Birthday song, Sports Team Fight Song, State Song, [National Anthem](#), etc.
- School Telephone Hold Music Project -- share with communications office
- Write a new, personalized lullaby for an expectant school community member
- Write music for a local nonprofit organization's grand opening (and considering the nature and values of the store while writing the music)
- Set older students' original poetry to music and movement for Poetry Slam or community gatherings
- Write soundtracks or do Foley SFX for older students' video projects

1. What topics or problems **really matter to your students** right now?
2. Pick one, then consider what music or movement might have to do with it. (**Where is an "in"** for a **meaningful** music or movement project?)
3. Frame it as an **open-ended puzzle or problem** to solve, and **write the "How could you..." or "How could we..." prompt**
4. **What might the public performance/presentation look like?** (Who will your experts &/or audience be, to raise the stakes for the students?)
5. Brainstorm at least two possible "entry events" or **"hooks"** you could use before giving the challenge
6. What **requirements** will you impose? (Are they *really* necessary??)

How to assess these kinds of projects? [Here are five different possibilities!](#)

If you made it to the end of these notes, you deserve some bonuses!

- [A giant list of possible project prompts](#), inspired by [this recommended book](#)
- Access to the [photo slideshow](#) I've made to intro the **Protest Song Project**
- Access to my list of [protest songs with school-appropriate language](#)