

Getting Started with PBL at Home

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- **What is Project Based Learning?**

It's learning by doing. It's hands on learning. Children learn by building, putting together, making and doing. (Constructivist philosophy). I look at it as physically needing to act out the connections that are being made in the brain. Kids are builders and creators. Learn by doing, by putting things together, by being makers.

They learn the general process of making and doing and then you can apply it to anything that you do later in life

Importance of developing creativity and creative thinking skills beyond being useful for the arts, relevant and necessary for any field that your child will go into. Being "in the moment" - that feeling when you're so engaged in what you're doing that everything else disappears.

It's learning how to make connections in all different areas of life/learning/thinking by using practically applying your student's learning to work that is curiosity driven and intrinsically motivated.

Intrinsic motivation is key to long-term engagement and creativity - and it will carry over into all areas of life as your student grows and matures.

Kids want meaningful learning experiences. They want to understand why and how the world works. They can very easily do this through projects.

2 different types - student driven (my preference) and teacher/parent driven (also useful for teaching skills, but does lower the natural intrinsic motivation that student driven projects hold) Both have pros and cons and it's up to you to decide what's the best fit for your family - if you as the facilitator of the project are not going to be willing to support your student, nothing will get done. Collaborate so that both parent and student are getting their needs met.

- **Why do we do it?**

Creative learning spiral (Imagine, Create, Play, Share, Reflect, Imagine....)

Meaningful work with purpose and a deadline - it's so much easier to get a project to a finished place if there's a deadline or a reason to share the work - sharing your work is a very important part of the process. Can be small (sharing work on a playdate with a friend) or bigger (blog/website/YouTube video/display in a library, etc)

Cross-Curricular, can use this style of teaching to cover all kinds of topics, fields and work journal requirements

Can be more than just supplemental, can be as big or as little a part of your homeschooling as you want it to be. Can use observations you see in their project time to see where they need a little extra instruction time, becomes very easy to see gaps in your child's education and a great opportunity to build it in.

- **How to do it?**

For your first project, keep it small. Creativity is like a muscle and you need to build it up. If you're too ambitious when you first start, it's much easier to get discouraged and not want to try again. So start small. Get your feet wet, learn how to listen to your creative voice and how to support your child's work without taking over. You'll get there. :-)

Start with mind mapping - have a topic and start brainstorming all of the ideas that you/your child have around it. Get as big, small, wild, silly, practical, ambitious, conservative as you want to be. All ideas are welcome at this stage.

You'll probably start to see some patterns emerging and something will have more "juice" to it and you child will be excited to start digging in. That's the avenue that you're looking for. Start planning your project there.

It's your job to help document the process, take pictures when needed, take notes about the work that you are seeing done, help them shape the project when they get stuck - but LET THEM MAKE MISTAKES! Those mistakes and the places where you see something going wrong are where the learning opportunities happen. Problem solving. If solutions are coming from your brain then your child is not learning that process. Give yourself something to do. Take notes and observe!

Notes also help you keep momentum going when there are breaks in time between project sessions. You want to know where you are going next so that when you sit down to work again it's not like you are starting from scratch. If you do get stuck, mind map again to get the creativity flowing.

Make sure you have a deadline and a way for your student to share their work. But don't force it. Keep it meaningful for the work your student is doing.

Reflect on the process while you are working and at the end. Reflection helps you celebrate what you did right, and what you want to improve next time.

CREATIVE LEARNING

character. The two children go back and forth, continually adding to the story. As the castle grows, so does the story.

As the kindergarten children play, they learn many things. As they build towers, they develop a better understanding of structures and stability. As they create stories, they develop a better understanding of plots and characters. Most important, they learn about the creative process, and they begin to develop as creative thinkers.

I like to think of the creative process in terms of a *Creative Learning Spiral*. As kindergarten children play with blocks, build castles, and tell stories, they engage with all aspects of the creative process:



