

Mary Osteen, Teachers College of San Joaquin, 2011

Let's Go Digital! Let's Go PBL

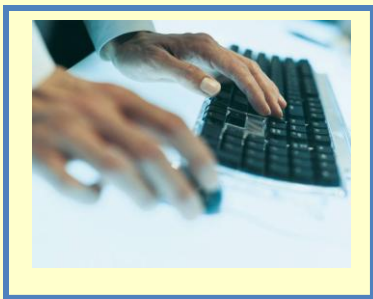
A Kick-start Guide for Middle School Teachers



Let's Go Digital! Let's Go PBL!

A Kick-start Guide for Middle School Teachers

Mary Osteen, Teachers College of San Joaquin, 2011



Giving students the chance to have authentic “say-so” in their learning pays off big time!

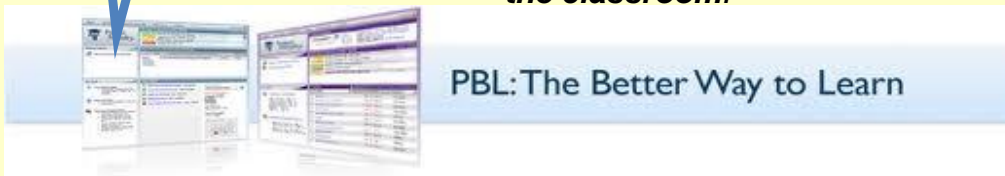
If you've found this guide, I bet you're trying to figure out how to share some kind of technology with your students. Maybe you're thinking of something small scale, maybe dreaming of something big time; then again, maybe you're not quite sure. A few years back, I was in the same situation – I was interested – but didn't have a clue as how to begin. Since that time, through trial and error, I created the first student-run middle school news broadcast class in my district. So, before you go through what I did (please don't!), check out this guide; I've included the best “trick” I know for getting technology into the classroom – Project Based Learning – along with practical steps to Go Digital! Good luck! Hope this helps kick-start your dream!



Here's the Big Deal about Project Based Learning

Students learn
how to learn

1. Students engage in projects, problems, and real-world challenges of their own choice.
2. It invites students into **higher order thinking**.
3. **Student-driven** problems are central.
4. It fosters **21st CENTURY SKILLS** in a collaborative teamwork setting.
5. Student projects and **creativity are shared beyond the classroom**.



Here's a great little video to give you an idea of where we're going:

<http://youtu.be/LMC7vGesRz8>

Huh? How Would that Work to Get Technology in the Classroom?



Students build on the knowledge of their peers and learn the cooperative skills essential to success.

1. **Getting kids engaged means...** giving them the “real deal” from the “real world” In my class, I throw out several big “dares” to the students throughout the year; “I dare you to create a school news program that most students like.” “Dare to show me a television commercial you’ve created that helps the student store”; “I dare you to make a documentary about school bullying.” But those are my ideas, now **HOW ABOUT YOURS?**

2. **High-Order Thinking!**

Students hitting the top of Bloom's is easy through PBL. After all, let's face it, once you give them the "dare" (aka real-world-authentic problem or situation), the game is on! Let's take just the news show project and see the kinds of things students will have to do that gets their thinking "high." Check this out:

Students will be **CREATING**

a weekly or monthly middle school news

program and they will **DESIGN** and

PLAN its format. To get to that point

though, the actual successful news show,

students will have to **EVALUATE** their

own work (the video clips, music, digital

stills, the scripting, the sound...) and

EXPERIMENT with different ideas and

DETECT problems and **HYPOTHESIZE**

solutions. But before that is possible, the

students will be **ANALYZING** and

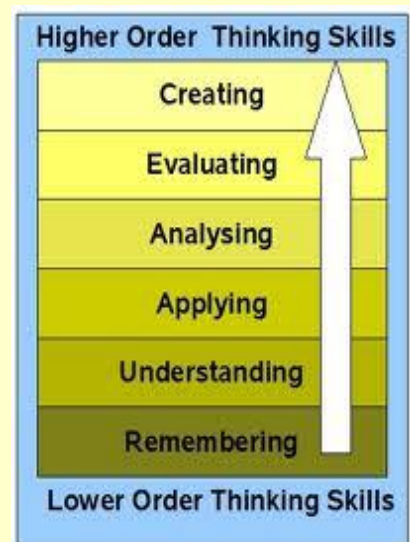
COMPARING different news formats in the

REAL WORLD, RESEARCHING stories to

tell, and **OUTLINING** their ideas through

storyboards.

Bloom's Taxonomy



3. **Student-Driven Projects -- Sound Scary?**

My advice? Don't be afraid! Let me tell you this, giving students the chance to have authentic “say-so” in their learning pays off big time. Think of yourself when you explore something that really sparks your interest; you focus and have an energy that is quite different from when you're forced to do something that you think is boring. Don't get me wrong. I'm not promoting classroom anarchy or anything like that; that's not what PBL is about. But you decide for yourself.

Here's a snap-shot of what that looks like in my class. Imagine this – a group of students has the “dare” to create an anti-bullying piece using some kind of digital media. Here comes the student-driven part (and there are lots!). I can tell them to use a Photo Story format; or I can let them choose what sort of format to use. Think of it – they could use Power Point with digital stills, Photo Story with digital stills, or Movie Maker with video. But, maybe I'm a bit nervous about letting them decide, so I set the format – use digital stills and Photo Story.

Okay, stay with me here. That group then might have one student who really is hot for exploring photography, another student who loves doing research on the web, another kid who loves buffing up pictures with special effects and maybe a couple of experts who *live* to find the perfect music to fit the story. So you see, we don't force the kids who love music to go snap pictures. We let them fool around with what would work for the story. The good news is, in this process, they're learning about the story (content) and the technology to boot – *without you driving the learning*. These students are picking their own “rides” to drive and are learning fast and furiously because it's *their* interest!

Back to reality: Now, it's your turn – how would you set up a PBL with student-driven learning?

Think about it and then hop in for a great ride!



4. **21st Century Skills – Hey, Isn't That What Obama Wants For Our Students?**

Yep! You heard right. Even the president gives a nod to what's at the core of a good Project Based Learning: ***students thinking critically, solving problems, communicating and collaborating.*** When your students have a big “dare” to step up to and accomplish, maybe it's that anti-bullying example, they're going to be hit square in the face with a ton of problems that are unimaginable. And, somehow, somehow, your students have to work it out; Just like life. Just like the work world. Maybe the student that's picking out the music, chooses a piece that the digital still guy hates. And maybe the digital still guy can't figure out how to change the transition time between slides. And then there might be the overzealous student researcher who wants to insert whole paragraphs of information on slides in between digital stills that makes everyone in the group want to scream. This is when you must step back, and unless a fistfight breaks out, let your students *think critically, solve their problems through learning how to better communicate and collaborate.*



5. **Student Work Going Public – Yikes!**

I know, I know – you’re thinking, “What if it isn’t perfect or it’s just really bad?” I’ll be the first to admit, these were my thoughts when I learned that a fundamental of PBL is showing off student work to the community. I was scared of what my peers and parents might think of **ME** if projects fell even slightly below perfection. So, I’m not going to sugar coat reality for you here. But I’m going to shoot from the hip; sometimes it *will* be less than perfect and once in awhile, pretty darn bad. But the fact that we allow students to enter into the *risk* of producing a project that will be publically scrutinized proves that we sincerely honor their right to authentic learning. If that anti-bullying Photo Story has some technical glitches in it and it gets aired at a Back-to-School Night in the cafeteria with all the parents present, I guarantee you, the parents will marvel at the creativity, not the problems.

global awareness	effective speaking
critical thinking	problem solving
adaptability	information literacy
collaboration	creativity
media fluency	analytical skills
entrepreneurialism	
innovation	effective writing
synthesis	curiosity

These near misses and mistakes are plentiful and require you to be ever-ready to coach and teach on a variety of subjects. But, your investment will pay off. The next time they produce a Photo Story, they will find a way to fix the technical glitches before they even show you a first run!



Take a deep breath and dare to dream about which one of these ways to “go public” with student project work might fit for you:

- Collegial sharing of videos with other classes
- Broadcasting a news program or documentary school-wide
- Setting up a video show for local community service groups like the Parent Teacher Association or the Lions Club
- Providing special video projects for a digital gift to the local retirement homes
- Entering the student digital work into local, regional or national contests



PROJECT BASED LEARNING IN ONE MINUTE OR LESS!

Just kidding. I wanted to make sure I kept your attention. I think you've probably figured out by now that it takes a whole lot more than a one-minute read to launch PBL. Here's a re-cap of the basics:

1. Figure out what "dares" you will give the students. What real-world challenges or driving questions will you pose? Consider themes or state standards first and mull it over until you come up with some possibilities that students will latch on to.
2. Decide what you want the students to produce. Depending on the PBL, there could be many different products. Once the end is in mind (products), then it's time to brainstorm how to **assess**.

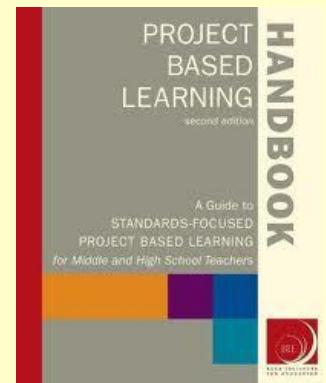
There definitely must be sync between the two – between what the students produce during project activities and the ways you're going to evaluate what they've learned. So, decide **what you want them to learn, what they might be producing and how you're going to assess** the learning.

3. Sketch out the big picture and get the details down. What materials will you need? How long will project activities take? Who can you count on to help you? What do the students already know? What do they need to know before the PBL starts? Some people call this part "mapping"; I like to think of it as *detailed dreaming*. Dream your vision for the students and fill it in with all the nitty-gritty have-to's and must-do's to make the dream a reality.
4. Project strength = project structure. If you want a good, strong PBL (of course you do!), then you've got to find ways to manage the structure along the way. That means you've got to make what you expect clear from the start, both to yourself and to your students.

Questions to Ask Yourself: Who's designing the PBL? You, the students or the students and you? How will what happen? (Details, details!) Who controls the project activities? Will it be you, certain students or a combination of all the students and you? What are the deadlines for rough drafts and final public viewing? How will peer-evaluations be paced and handled?

Since this is a guide to get you started, a glimpse into what you'll need and what PBL is all about, now is the perfect time to give you the good news. There are several fantastic, easy-to-use, step-by-step books and online resources out there that you've got to have if you're seriously going to do PBL. **My top recommendation for doing project based learning** is the Buck Institute for Education's *Project Based Learning Handbook*. It's got everything! Rubrics, planning forms and evaluations guides for both the students and YOU! I used it myself, so get on line and buy it! Here's the link:

http://www.bie.org/store/item/pbl_handbook



LET'S PUT MEAT ON THE PBL BONES!!
Use Some of Your Summer to Plan for the Fall

#1 **Guidebook Tip: Get the Tools**

● **Software**

I'm not going to kid you. You've got to use the summer to kick-start the launch of the PBL. How? Well, first, download and install the software for video editing and digital photography. You don't have to become an expert overnight, but you've got to get used to how each one works. An easy way to do that is through some of the cool online "how-to" tutorials – like the ones I've got here. Also, if you're like me, money is a *huge* issue, so I'm sharing software ideas with you that range from beginner through the professional and they are all **free!**

FREE SOFTWARE!

1. **Windows Movie Maker** (part of Windows Live Essentials, but you may want to download just this software if you do not need all the bells and whistles that come with Windows Live Essentials)

Link for download: http://download.cnet.com/Windows-Movie-Maker-Windows-XP/3000-13631_4-10165075.html

Link for tutorial: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nh5MCGJWRUU>

2. **Windows Media Player**

Link for download: <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/products/windows-media>

3. **FotoFlexer**

Link for download: <http://fotoflexer.com/>

Link for tutorial: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mRaaORRO1E>

or

Picasa

Link for download: <http://picasa.google.com/>

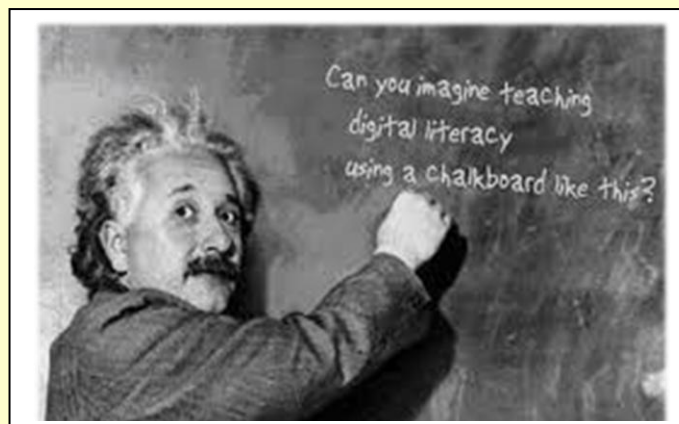
Link for tutorial: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rskC6c_5L1M

4. **Windows Photo Story**

Link for download:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/default.msp>

Link for tutorial: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtB6_D_toVQ





- **Hardware**

Here are **my top recommendations for the “big five”** equipment items to launch a PBL that builds technological literacy. These links help you make those tough buying decisions for each piece of hardware.

1. **Digital video camera:** “How to Choose a Digital Video Camera”
http://www.ehow.com/how_2314396_choose-digital-video-camera.html
Price comparisons: <http://reviews.cnet.com/camcorders/>
2. **Tripod:** “How to Choose a Tripod”
<http://www.mediacollege.com/video/camera/tripod/choose.html>
3. **External Video Camera Microphone:** “Before You Buy a Camcorder Microphone”
<http://desktopvideo.about.com/od/desktopeditinghardware/bb/externalmic.htm>
4. **Computer:** Since most new digital cameras and video camcorders use small memory cards, it is important that the computer has this specific port. In addition, to accommodate the software and hardware interface, the computer should be updated with the latest browser of choice.



#2 Guidebook Tip: Get Digital Media Training for the Teacher

● Local Cable Companies and Television Stations

Good news! Cable companies want to help you! They're falling over themselves to create a new customer base for the future, and the "future" means kids and "kids" mean you! Be sure to check with them for digital media workshops or specially prepared video training. The Sacramento Educational Cable Consortium (SECC), for example, provides an excellent training series along with student digital videos for use in the classroom. The two links are:

- www.secc.org
- <http://videoinstructor.blogspot.com/2009/10/seva-training-effective-psa-powerpoint.html>

Television Stations Too! Television stations sometimes have "digital journalist" programs that include teacher or student training. It's a cool deal because the kids get their video news story featured on the local station. It's a win-win situation for the television station, the student, and, yes you! Here's a little taste of what I'm talking about. (News10 "Student Reporting" highlights the support given to students and teachers as their project is aired on television: <http://www.news10.net/news/education/student-reporting/default.aspx?menuid=329>)

● Community Colleges

Money is tight – so don't over look this option! It's affordable and usually close to where you live or work. Keep in mind the "lingo" differences when class-shopping. Training classes for digital media vary. Some fall under "Art New Media," others under "Applied Art & Design" and then there are those called "Digital Media". Yes, they all sound different, but it's all the same good stuff.



e



#3 Guidebook Tip: Make Connections

Don't try to start this PBL on your own! Connect with expert and non-expert help out there in your community. Take it from me, parents and business people alike will donate time and talent if you play your cards right. The key? Get the word out about your project – your big dream!

Post an enticing digital flier through personal or professional websites and blogs and/or school newsletters.

Feature community members on video, Power Point or Photo Story specials. How? Get students to video interview a couple of business owners about “good character” for a video special on character education. Or, do a digital slide show on war veterans for a special about Veterans’ Day.

Use the academic connections too. High schools, community colleges and universities are just waiting for you to tap them on the shoulder. In fact, some high schools require community service. Translation: you might get a high school student to lend a hand for an entire semester. And, remember, some college courses require “field experience” so, picture a college intern lending digital expertise to the PBL.

What I’m trying to say is simple: Get the community hooked and they’ll help!



#4 Guidebook Tip: Cross-Curricular is Cool

Going cross-curricular is also easy! It's all in the planning though, so don't forget to give details to your dream ahead of time. Let's take a look at a couple examples of how you might fuse middle school standards with the digital PBL:

History: 7th graders study the history of the fall and rise of the Roman Empire, so they could make a Power Point that depicts the causes through their own words and pictures that graphically speak to their peers. Then, dreaming a little bigger and aiming for that PBL essential “public sharing of student product” the student Power Point could be shared with all the 7th grade history classes.

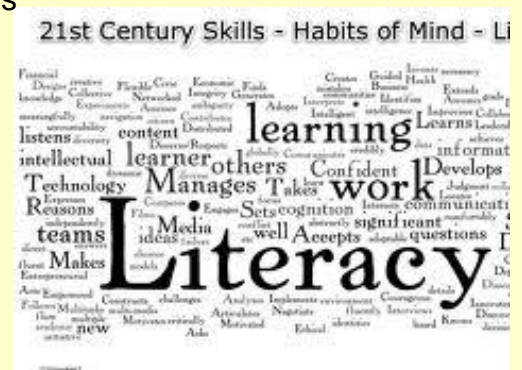
Math: 8th graders might create a video project filming runners from the track team to demonstrate concepts of rate, speed and distance.

Science: 7th graders are all about the “cell.” Maybe setting them loose with the driving question, “How will you make a one-minute movie trailer for the imaginary film entitled ‘My Life as a Cell,’ will spark their creativity. One thing for sure, they'll be problem-solving and getting knowledge of the “cell” down pat by the end of an activity like that.

Literacy: Okay, I'll admit it. This is one of my favorite things about PBL because the facts are in: PBL builds up overall English literacy. How can it not? Check this out:

- Students do research
- Students get cozy using info-based articles
- Students “own” new words and phrases
- Students create written steps and storyboards
- Students write scripts (narration for documentary, commercial or news edition)
- Students present informal and formal speeches to pitch ideas to their classmates and teacher

So, be cross-curricular cool and don't forget: Coordinate with colleagues and become familiar with the state standards.



#5 Guidebook Tip: Planning is Panning... for Gold!

Have a clear idea what you want students to learn by the end of the PBL and get that information to them loud and clear from the start!

• Plan to Give Students the Basics



An “Overview” of PBL

They know nothing about PBL – face it!! This will be like entering a brave new world for the kids – most won't have ever done anything like it. So, that means they may be scared to start or just plain confused unless you do this part right. Take time to front-load your expectations – like what *you're going to do* in the project and what you *want them to do* in the project. There are tons of examples of “overviews” out there on the web. Just be sure to customize one for you and your students and for your specific project and activities. To save you some internet sleuthing time, here's a link to a good example:

<http://www.studygs.net/pbl.htm>



• Group Work Guidelines, Self Management

This is NOT your regular class room group work, so put away the popsicle sticks for choosing groups for PBL! The work kids do in PBL groups is unlike any academic or social scene they've ever experienced. Before you create guidelines and form your own expectations, you've got to assess the collective experiences of your kids. Then, as the PBL progresses, as group work problems arise, and/or student expertise in these situations increase, revise, revise, revise! Consider these questions:

- What experience do students have in “active listening”?
- What kind of “group work” experiences have the students had?
- What are the main ways students have chosen to solve group communication problems in the past?
- What strategies are students using to manage their time and self pace their own progress toward goals?

(Planning, continued)

- **Teacher Expectations and Student Roles**

What is my role in all this? And what are my students going to do? You've got to ask yourself these questions and, yes, find the answers before you even start. Only then can you "sell" the PBL to the students. Trust me on this. If they don't know who's driving, they won't want to take this ride! Maybe you'll decide to design a PBL on your own, without a lot of student input. Or maybe you're feeling daring enough to take on student ideas, mix it with yours, and create a design together. Still there are those among us, the brave ones, that dive into the deep end, who opt to allow students the freedom (and responsibility) of figuring out what's going to be learned and choosing topics for the PBL.

PBL activities work the same way. So, just accept it and get to it. Decide the level of student autonomy versus teacher control. Start with these questions to yourself: Who decides what's going to be created in this PBL? Who decides the deadlines and benchmarks for the project? **Decide on the roles** that are played in a PBL (for teacher / students), then **communicate your expectations** from the start through action and modeling.





- **Basic Operation of a Digital Camera**

Bet you think students know how to take pictures.

Well, sort of, but not really. Sure, lots of middle school students have clicked off a picture on a digital camera or an iPhone, but don't let that fool you. Hardly any of them really *know about cameras* (not the parts, how to operate it, or how to upload/organize digital picture files). It's up to you to front-load this knowledge before launching the activities of the PBL. Let's give a "high-five" to the couple of kids in the class that walk in totally ready to roll and able to help out with peer-coaching and for guided practice. You find them or they'll find you. It always seems to work that way. If you want get a snapshot of what's out there on the web, see what I've picked out for you:

- For students (and teachers) who are visual learners and learn by watching what is being done, try this site from eHow:

http://www.ehow.com/video_4956848_digital-camera-components.html

This video series includes:

Digital Camera Components; Wide & Telephoto Modes; Exposure Modes; Lighting Modes; LCD Screen; Zooming; Flash & Timer; Auto Focus; Photo Quality; File Deletion

- For the students and teacher who just can't get enough of "informational" manuals and "step-by-step" written instructions, the internet is a goldmine. Take a look at topics from Digital-Photography-School:

- a. How to Hold a Camera

<http://www.digital-photography-school.com/how-to-hold-a-digital-camera>;

- b. Digital Camera Maintenance

- c. Explaining Digital Camera Modes

<http://www.digital-photography-school.com/digital-camera-modes>.

HINT: Make sure you get a load of sources ready to "rumble with" that cover all modalities of learning so students can hit the ground running with these camera basics.

- **Camera Angle/Shots**

- Taking Digital Stills**

Point-and-shoot moments with an iPhone is not good photography! Like I've said before, most students don't have a clue when it comes to photography. Because of that, they don't have a grip of the language of this technology either. Take the time to cover these basics so your kids don't get lousy shots their first time out. I'm making your life easier – try these out – and thank me later!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkgK2dalyLs>

<http://www.thewildclassroom.com/wildfilmschool/gettingstarted/camerashots.html>

- **Taking Digital Stills: The “Rule of Thirds”**

Digital photography has a rule? Yes! And it's so important that it deserves at least one entire lesson at the start of the school year. I don't know about you, but when I first started taking pictures, I thought that centering the subject within the view finder was the best way to capture an image. Wrong!!! The fact is, that centering ends up making the subject appear flat and, well, boring to the eye. The “rule of thirds” fixes that. The rule states that a picture could be imagined divided into nine equal parts by two equally-spaced horizontal and two vertical lines, with cool compositional elements being placed along these lines or the points the lines intersect. To see what I'm trying to get you to imagine, wander through the links I've found. Bet you find a great supplement to a lesson plan.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiYHT-JvoqI>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPeOBpxV8iE>

HINT:
Plan on several days of practice to get this rule cemented into a habit in your class.

(Camera Angle/Shots, *continued*)

- **Using Photoshop to Create a Video from Digital Still Pictures**

Movies without video? That's right! The options available through such software make it possible for students to explore the basics of digital storytelling and create top quality work without a video camera. Included within the software options are a variety of tools to create transitions, special effects, titles and text as well as narration and music. This link from Backyard Film Makers will help you "get the picture":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXFzcP25mDY>



- **Basic Operation of Video Camera**

Don't drop that video camera!! Since the video camera is probably the most complex and \$\$expensive\$\$ equipment in the PBL, invest your time well! Teaching those kids how to properly hold the camera, its parts and how to record a video might take several days. To "hook" the students at the beginning of the year, show them a few well produced student videos (see my links below). What worked for me was to spend time modeling good techniques and then grouping students for lots of practice. The first link is for you; the second – your students will love!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlzx1_RAY6A

Student popular:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1japlhKU9I>

- **Zoom/Pan/Tilt**

Zoom, pan, tilt are not words from a rap song! They're basic "video cam moves". Take notes. Here goes. Zoom is focus from far to close up or close up to far. Pan is moving the focus from left to right or right to left. Tilt moves the camera upwards or downwards. But don't go away with these simple thumbnail definitions --- check out this great video:

Great one by students!!! Backyard Film School <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0D4hj687iDI>

- **Using Windows Movie Maker to Create a Video**

Don't "go pro" to start making movies! Start with easy-to-use software like Windows Movie Maker. I made the mistake of buying some expensive video editing software when I started out. Talk about confusion! Movie Maker has a user-friendly interface that will get you and your students making videos quickly. And the best part, it's free! As always, I've scored a great link for you to help your students make their way to that first Oscar.

This is from the site BeYourOwnIT:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nh5MCGJWRUU>

- **Computer Keyboarding Basics**

Don't tell me I have to teach typing! Okay, I won't. But you'd be wise to make sure that all your students know their way around the keyboard. The biggest shock I got in this whole process was realizing lots of kids don't know how to open or save a document or, get this, some don't even know there's a difference between right click and left click on the mouse. For some reason, I thought kids walked into my classroom pre-packed with keyboarding prowess – NOT! I did lots of scouring around the web to find something that I would have liked to have had "back in the day" when I started my first PBL. Here it is for you:

Using Microsoft Word – Tutorial:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9L-iOWPgNc>



#6 **Guidebook Tip: Intentionally Configure the Class for PBL**

Hint: Try to schedule a balanced composition of students into the elective course. Set up scaffolding, grab all kinds of learning modalities and all sorts of student levels—from English Language Learners to Gifted and Talented – and configure them into your PBL dream!

Remember what I've said all along; planning is the big ticket item here. To get your class set up just right for PBL, you may be working with the school “scheduling team” or the administrator as far out as the spring preceding fall just to get a balanced mix of students. Though this is especially true for electives classes, I'm giving you ideas to think about and “hints” regarding both regular education and elective classes.

● The Elective Class

Didn't we lose all electives to budget cuts? Yikes! No way! Classes like Digital Media, Television Production, Broadcasting, Website Design or Podcasting are still thriving at middle schools. Course length could be one semester, year-long or two years. Sure, some PBL projects and activities will only be possible in the longer term situation, but take heart, if you do your planning, I guarantee you any PBL you launch is gifting those kids with authentic, real-world learning. Talk about setting a good foundation for success in high school, college and career – PBL rocks!

Consider setting up an application/ interview process at the school to select students. Also, since most sixth grade students don't have any clue about what “Digital Media” or “TV Production” classes are all about, you'll have to get some promotional activities going with the local elementary schools.



(Configuring the Class, continued)

- **The PBL Within a Regular Education Middle School Classroom**

May “Regular Ed” be regular no more! PBL can be done in *any middle school content setting*. How it’s done is up to you. Use your imagination. But, again, I’m going to keep beating the same drum: plan, plan, plan! Let’s look at the typical middle school class period. Some class periods run 55 minutes. If that’s the case, you can set up “mini” PBL experiences in 15-minute segments. On the other hand, you could focus a full 55 minutes of PBL once a week. Choose what works best for you and your kids. Get out the academic calendar, an imagination, and see what PBL might offer the students in the space of one year’s time.

Creating Teams: No matter in what situation you find yourself, an elective or a regular ed classroom, the way you set up teams is a big time deal. Here’s what I’ve discovered:

For the PBL in a two-year elective course, choosing the returning 8th graders to be group leaders is wise. It’s a natural fit and everyone wins! The student leaders thrive by coaching and teaching the new students. Try it. You’ll see their skills, techniques and knowledge take off at an unbelievable rate! Likewise, the newer students, getting this extra hands-on, one-on-one support, will dazzle you too! All that reinforcement, guidance and review by peers and by the teacher spells one thing: Success through good grouping in PBL.

For the PBL in the regular education classroom, build student groups after you think about possible categories and levels. Here’s what I mean: standardized test scores (high end, mid level and low end), technological literacy level (high, middle, low), information processing styles (extrovert/introvert), and learning preferences (visual/spacial/auditory/kinesthetic). If you want maximum learning going in your PBL, get a good balance of all kinds of students in each group.

Here’s a last bit of advice about creating teams: No matter what situation you’re in, regular education classroom or elective course, creating teams is, pure and simple, a dynamic process.

Hint: Select members of the groups to mirror the overall academic and demographic composition of the class— that is an equal number of all types of learners from the array of cultures within the school.

#7 Guidebook Tip: Project and Activity Ideas

School News Broadcasts
 Public Service Announcements (this like “PBS” specials)
 Mini Documentaries
 Commercials
 Movie and Book Trailers
 How-To Projects
 Oral Histories
 Re-Telling History
 Future-Casts
 Forensics Showcase (Dramatic Interpretation,
 Spoken Word, Debate)

As you’ve guessed, the list could go on and on. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination. It’s about coming up with rich, multi-layered learning ideas for students. As always, I’ve scored a few links to get you started:

<http://www.youthlearn.org/>
<http://www.buddyproject.org/resources/pbl/links.asp>
<http://www.teachersdomain.org/>
<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/>
<http://www.schooltube.com/user/HowardMiddleSchool>



Hint: Take time to get to know your students before grouping them and to make group member changes along the way to ensure both individual and group accomplishment of PBL goals.



#8 Guidebook Tip: Before the Big “Dare,” Upload Skills & Understanding

You can't give the big “dare” to your students on the first day! These sample lessons will help you through the first weeks in which direct teaching, team-building and guided practice are so essential. That way, when you give your students the big “dare” they have the digital and teamwork skills they need to get started on the PBL.

Whether you're a history teacher with plans for 30 minutes per week for the PBL, or you're an elective teacher of TV Production who hopes to devote 50 minutes a day, this sample unit plan will give you a snapshot of what needs to come first.

Lesson One. Theme: Team Building Activities

Choose activities that get students to share about themselves.

Carousel “what is PBL”.

Lesson Two. Theme: Team Building Activities

Student groups list qualities (maybe through a group poster) that describe a “good team” and also a “team player”.

Lesson Three. Theme: PBL

Explain student-friendly PBL outline/introduction.

Students compare their PBL ideas (from Carousel).

Student groups create questions about PBL.



(Sample Unit Plan, *continued*)

Lesson Four. Theme: PBL / News Production Jobs

Discuss/answer student questions from the previous section. What makes the news? Create a scavenger hunt activity or something interactive to get the students to figure out the differences and similarities between news for adults and news for kids.

Lesson Five. Theme: News Production – School

Show student samples of student digital video news segments. Create questions as they watch; make list of jobs needed to produce the news. Share out/discuss.

Give the “big dare” (i.e., “I dare you to create your own weekly news broadcast”).

Lesson Six. Theme: News Job #1 – Photography

Show “digital camera” video.

http://www.ehow.com/video_4956848_digital-camera-components.html

In groups, have students practice and demonstrate basics from video. Remember: When the cameras come out for the first time, so do the challenges for students. This is a good time to emphasize responsibility and cooperation and what that looks like in your classroom.

Lesson Seven. Theme: Rule of Thirds

Show “rule of thirds” video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiYHT-JvoqI>

Groups create poster or skits, etc. depicting “rule of thirds”.

Ready to Go Digital – Go PBL?

Hopefully, by now you've got a grip on just how cool PBL can be for gearing up student learning and for getting kids locked into the excitement of exploring things they like and things that matter. And going digital – well, that's where we're all headed any way – so it's a natural fit to combine the two together. Check this out. I read recently where one college is going totally digital by switching from books to iPads for the entire student body! No books! Hey, I'm a "digital foreigner" (not a digital native) and here I am, on the back page of this guide with you. Let's do this thing. Bookmark those links, watch the tutorials, group all kids, frontload the skills, plan, revise and plan some more, and let's ride this thing! Let's go Digital! Let's go PBL!



©2011 Mary Osteen
Teachers College of San Joaquin
Stockton, CA.

