

## Creating Products to Show and Share Learning

December 04, 2014



Nowadays students have a variety of ways to show what they know and to express themselves. Let's take a look at sample projects and some of the hottest apps for showing, explaining, and retelling. These tools can turn students into teachers and are great for sharing their answers to a project's driving question.

This post is the third in a series of posts about **project based learning**. You may want to read the first two posts, [Crafting Questions That Drive Projects](#) and [Investigating Authentic Questions](#).

**Audience is Key**



*Tony's Tweets*



Looks like lots of Everyday Mathematics & McGraw-Hill iOS app have gone free today:

<http://t.co/5Bkj7H26DY>  
[#iosedapp](#) [#ipaded](#)

An hour ago



Subtraction Top-It for iOS is free right now. Two players practice 2 digit subtraction:

<http://t.co/glDX9x3nWL>  
[#iosedapp](#) [2ndchat](#)

An hour ago



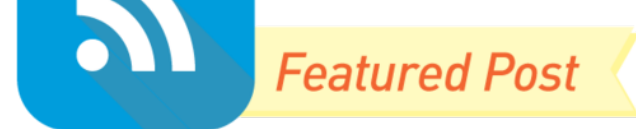
Are you following @craigyen? You should if you're into [#edtech](#) & [#flipclass](#). Check out his blog:

<http://t.co/bqYRGGqm8u>  
[#ff](#)

2 hours ago



As youngster I always loved making things. Whether it was a pretend building made out of a cardboard box, a public service announcement recorded on my Fisher-Price tape recorder, or a short film made with a very large VHS camcorder. As an adult, I continue to enjoy creating things. Maybe you have seen my [iPad app](#) and some of my [videos](#), [infographics](#), and [resources](#).



## Creating Products to Show and Share Learning

20 HOURS AGO

These days my creations are almost always digital. I love the ability to easily make revisions to my digital productions (I'm thankful everyday that most apps have an Undo option). Furthermore, I can share what I have made with the world through my website and social media. Because I know my creations will be seen by others, I take the time to make them as polished and perfected as possible.



## Resources from Miami Device

3 WEEKS AGO

Having a genuine audience is a key component in project based learning. A project's driving question is its mission statement. That statement or question may already have a built-in audience. For example, "Convince the principal we should have a party in December," clearly states who the audience is. So does "How can we teach second graders about helpful insects?" Other driving questions may require students to choose an audience. Knowing who a project's spectators are helps students make key decisions about their end products.



## Take a Chance with This HTML: Random Messages & Links

4 WEEKS AGO

When I was a young student the most important audience my school projects had was the teacher. Sometimes she would be the only audience. Sometimes projects would be put on display in the classroom or hallway so students and parents could see them. But, my teacher was ultimately the one I wanted to please because I wanted a good grade.



[Rushton Hurley](#) makes the observation, “If students are sharing their work with the world, they want it to be good. If you’re just sharing it with you, they just want it to be good enough.” With websites and social media, students certainly have the ability to reach a potentially global audience. Knowing they can reach people worldwide with their projects, learners will want to make those productions W.O.W. (Worthy of the World).

Students need to know that the work they do matters. Sharing their brilliance online is one way to do that. In fact, [Angela Maier’s You Matter Manifesto](#) lets students know that their contribution is valuable and necessary. It reads:

- You are enough.
- You have influence.
- You are a genius.
- You have a contribution to make.
- You have a gift others need.
- Your actions define your impact.
- You are the change.

## Samples Really Help

My students produced a lot of media, including [podcasts](#). Before my students scripted and recorded a podcast, they would

listen to several sample episodes and critique them. We would make a list of what was really good about the episode and what could be improved. I reminded students of the items on these lists periodically as they worked on their own episodes. Yes, you can tell students what makes a great production. However, having them be the ones to delineate the qualities of a great production is much better. My students really wanted to create something that was better than any of the samples they listened to. They really wanted



Get [Stick Around](#) for iPad and turn what you know into a game!



to avoid the mistakes they heard others make.

Because students might have some harsh criticism of sample projects, I made sure those samples were not by students at our school. I didn't want negative feedback to get back to the samples' authors. Luckily, we can find student-created media online. I like to pick some really good ones and some not-so-good ones, so students can describe what they should and should not do/include/say in their own productions.

[Padlet](#) can help capture students' observations about example media. Here's a Padlet wall, [What Makes a Quality Podcast?](#), where teachers in my workshop posted their thoughts after watching and listening to a variety of podcasts. Padlet works on just about any device with a web browser. The teacher can create a wall and share the link or QR code with students. Students simply double-click the background to add a post. The teacher can organize the posts and refer students back to the wall as a reminder of what students wrote about the sample productions.

*Padlet Tip:* In a wall's Settings, click Privacy and turn on Moderation so that nothing is posted without your approval.

Some questions that help guide a discussion about sample productions:

- What did you notice?
- What did you really like?
- What could have been better?
- What is missing?
- What could have been left out?

That last question above is a good one for students to ask themselves about their own projects. Oftentimes students think that everything they have written, recorded, or filmed needs to be included. That's just not so. Trimming a

production to what is essential may be difficult, but the audience will appreciate it. A concise message is usually more powerful than a longer one. French author Antoine de Saint-Exupery has a great quote: “A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.”

What’s better than samples from the web? Samples made by the teacher! Doing a project yourself is one of the best ways to know if the project is doable. You might discover hurdles that students will encounter when they do their projects. Best of all, doing the project conveys the importance of the work. I like what Will Richardson said in [this article](#): "Schools and classrooms should support a deep culture of 'doing work that matters,' where the adults in the building serve as models for the type of creating and learning we might expect from kids.”

Seventh grade teacher [Pernille Ripp](#) has a great take on doing your own projects. She says, “Before you ask students to do something, ask yourself if you would do it willingly. If the answer is no, then don’t expect your students to do it either.” I would add, “If the answer is yes, then do it!” Don’t worry. Your model project doesn’t have to be perfect. In fact, students enjoy critiquing their teacher’s work. They like finding flaws and telling you about them. Challenge your student to produce something better than you did.

## See These Samples

I’ve collected some end productions generated from project based learning. Many of these examples are superb.

Others could be better, but teachers and students can still learn from them.

A good production should do two things. It should show





evidence that the creators learned something. It should also somehow make a dent in the universe. That dent could be made by doing things like educators others, documenting a learning experience, solving a problem, calling people to action, or inspiring others.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SAMPLES



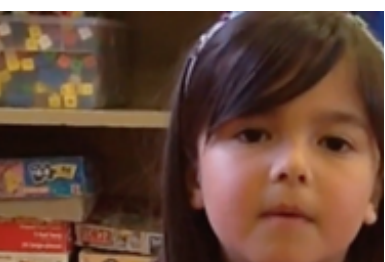
How can we share what we know about butterflies?

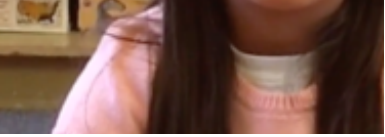
Documentary with kindergartners who talk about sharing their learning about butterflies



How can we raise awareness for the problems facing giant pandas?

iBook by 4th graders





Should we kill  
spiders?

Video by  
kindergartners



What should we  
teach others about  
the metric system?

Digital book by a 4th  
graders



How do people buy  
and sell goods?

Video by 1st graders  
about how they sold  
trail mix



What would it be like  
to be friends with a

historical figure?

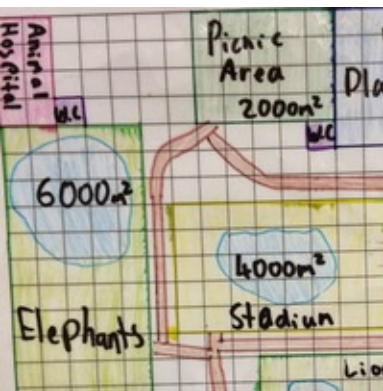
Comics by third graders

## MIDDLE SCHOOL SAMPLES



How can we conserve water?

Video by 7th graders  
is Hawaii



The Safari Park board  
has asked you to help  
establish an animal  
friendly park.

Blog post with photos  
of 6th graders'  
products.



Prove that corporal



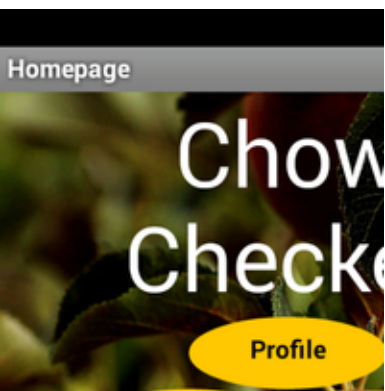
punishment should not be used.

Video by an 8th grader



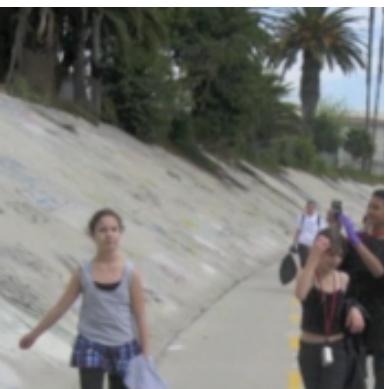
How can I convince others to dress for success?

TED style talk by an 8th grader



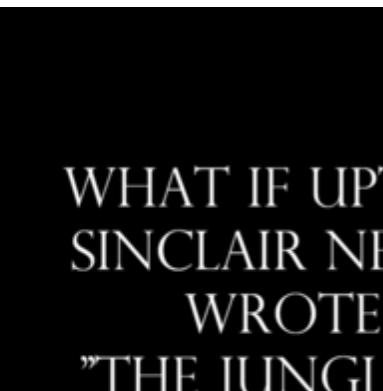
Design an innovative app.

Middle schoolers in New Hampshire developed Checker, an Android app



How can we improve the quality of the water in our community?

## HIGH SCHOOL SAMPLES



[What if Upton Sinclair never wrote The Jungle?](#)

Video by a history student



[Books to Films](#)

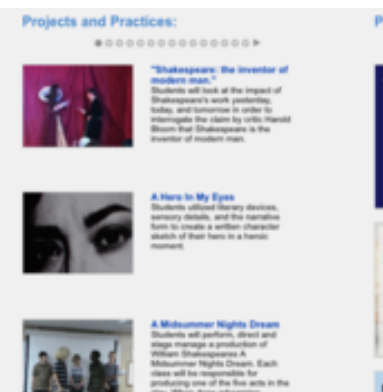
Students write, act, direct, produce, and screen adaptations of short stories



[Westside Wired](#)

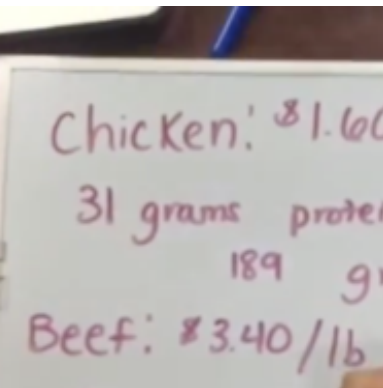
School news website

completely produced  
by students



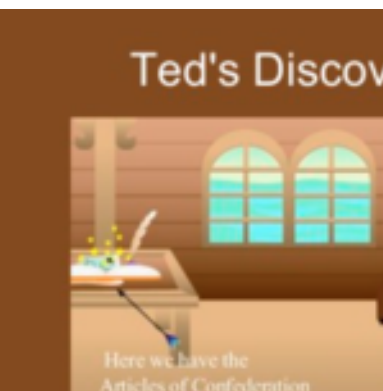
## High Tech High

Links to dozens of  
projects and books  
authored by students



What amount of meat  
should be served in  
the dining hall to  
achieve the lowest  
cost?

Video by calculus  
students at Madeira  
School



What should 5th  
graders know about  
the Constitution?

Shyann published an  
online book to teach

kids about the U.S.  
Constitution

I have to say that finding products made through project based learning is difficult. I know that not all projects are posted online. I realize that many projects have a discrete audience and don't need to be publicly available.

Unfortunately, some terrific projects that were public have disappeared. It's a shame that a project's life on the web expires when the school year does. If you have a great project to share, [please let me know](#). I'd love to make my list of sample end products better!

I found several projects through Twitter. If you search for the hashtags [#pbl](#) and [#pblchat](#), chances are you'll see photos from classrooms that are currently involved in project based learning. It's inspiring to get a glance at what's going on in other classrooms!



**Linsly School**

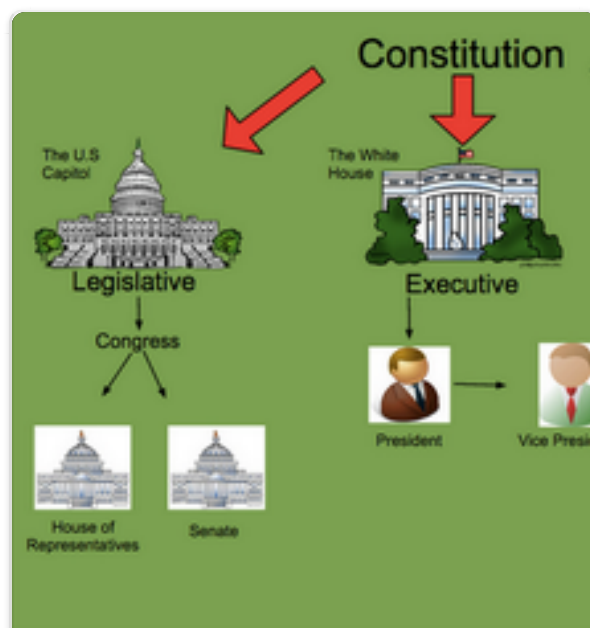
@linslyschool



6th grade students run the concession stand after learning about money and profit [#pbl](#) [#hotdogstand](#)

7:49 PM - 4 Feb 2014

2 FAVORITES



**Brandon Sligh**

@SlighBrandon



Check out our Constitution Visuals created by some of our awesome students!!

[#PBL](#) [#CCNTH](#)  
[#historyisfun](#)

11:21 AM - 10 Oct 2014

1 RETWEET 1 FAVORITE



**Crittenden Middle**  
@crittendenmvwsd



Andrea O and Ari F: "How often do students go to the library? How long do they stay?" [#PBL](#) & [#statistics](#)

11:45 AM - 16 Oct 2014

1 FAVORITE



**Kathy Walcott**  
@kathy\_walcott



[#pbl](#) thanksgiving dinner

11:36 AM - 25 Nov 2014

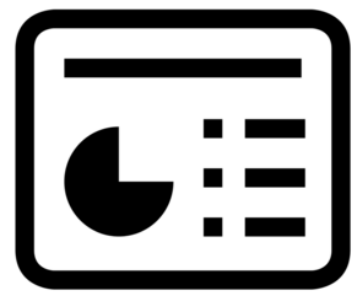
## Cool Tools

These tools are cool because they make slick products and are fairly simple to use. You probably don't want to have to teach students how to use an app or website. It's best when students can figure out how to use it themselves. If students get stuck, they can refer to the website's help section or Google their issue. This means that the teacher doesn't have to be an expert in the apps students use. Being somewhat familiar with what's available is helpful, but you don't have to be a know-it-all in order for students to use a digital production tool. Most of the tools below are free and run on a variety of devices. It's by no means an all-inclusive list. I know I've left out loads of great tools, but I want to let you know about some possibilities.





## SLIDESHOWS & VISUALS



### 30hands

Import images and record a narration for each photo. It's only available for [iOS](#).

### Canva

Use Canva's templates to design beautiful visuals. It's available for [Web](#) and [iPad](#).

### Google Slides

Google Slides is part of Google Drive and can be used to make slideshows that can be shared online. It's available for [Web](#), [Android](#), and [iOS](#).

### Haiku Deck

## AUDIO & VIDEO



### Explain

#### Everything

Use an interactive whiteboard to annotate, animate, narrate, and export instructional videos.

It's available for [Android](#), [iOS](#), and [Windows 8](#).

### GarageBand

Record and edit audio. You can add effects and music. It's only available for [iOS](#) and [Mac](#).

### iMovie

Edit together videos, photos, and narrations or create a movie trailer. It's available for [Mac](#) and [iOS](#).

## BOOKS & COMICS



### Book Creator

Use drawing and text tools to make digital books. It's available for [Android](#) and [iPad](#).

### Comic Creator

Create simple comic books, by adding speech bubbles, pre-drawn images, and your own pictures. It's available for [Android](#) and [Kindle](#). A similar app is available for [iOS](#).

### InkleWriter

Tell an interactive story by writing branching/choose your adventure stories. It's only available for [Web](#).

### Pixton

Create and share simple slideshows. Haiku Deck includes handy copyright friendly image search and citation features. It's available for [Web](#) and [iPad](#).

### **Pic Collage**

Combine text and images to make stylish posters. It's available for [Android](#), [Kindle](#), and [iOS](#).

### **Powtoon**

Create animated videos and presentations. It's only available for [Web](#).

### **Prezi**

Create and share presentations that zoom around a large canvas. It's available for [Web](#) and [iPad](#).

### **ThingLink**

Make an image interactive by

### **Record MP3**

Simply click the record button to start audio recording. When done, copy the link to share the mp3. It's only available for [Web](#).

### **Shadow Puppet Edu**

Combine photos and videos with images from the web and record a narration. It's only available for [iOS](#).

### **Soundation**

Online audio recording and editing with over 700 free loops and sounds. It's only available for [Web](#).

### **VideoScribe**

Create your own whiteboard-style animations. It's available for [Web](#), [Android](#), [Kindle](#), and [iPad](#).

### **WeVideo**

Add your own images or use Pixton's character generator and clipart to make and share comic strips. It's only available for [Web](#).

### **Smore**

Create beautiful online flyers by selecting a template and inserting your information and images. It's only available for [Web](#).

### **Strip Designer**

Create an entire comic book using your own pictures and save as a PDF. Includes lots of special effects. It's only available for [iOS](#).

### **ZooBurst**

Make your own online pop up books. It's only available for [Web](#).

adding clickable targets that can open notes, links, or videos. It's available for [Web](#), [Android](#), and [iOS](#).

Edit together movies, photo stories, and slideshows. It's available for [Web](#), [Android](#), [Kindle](#), and [iOS](#).

I maintain an infographic called [Show What You Know Using Web and Mobile Apps](#). It has dozens of tools students could use to make their final productions. The apps are organized into the products they create, like collages, comics, slideshows, animations, and screencasts.

The Show What You Know infographic's mobile apps are for iPads. Some of those same apps are available from the Google Play Store for Android. You may want to check out a list I've made of [iPad Apps that are also on Android](#).



It's great that there are so many fantastic apps and websites for creating digital productions. It's important for students to have a choice in how they show their learning. As the teacher, you get to decide if the world is their oyster or if they choose from a menu of options. Either way, having choice is an effective way to motivate students. Harvard Business Review wrote about a study that concludes that "when we chose for ourselves, we are far more committed to the outcome—by a factor of five to one."

Another reason to give choices is that tools disappear.

Companies may be sold, close down, or change business models. This has certainly happened to popular apps and sites like Posterous, Vizify, Ask3, Xtranormal, and Fotopedia. Having a selection of tools means that when one goes missing, you can choose to use a different one.



**Kaysie Hastings**

@hastings\_kaysie



Proud teacher watching my students create amazing [#pbl](#) projects today [@alvin\\_jh!!](#)

6:44 PM - 26 Sep 2013

2 RETWEETS 2 FAVORITES



**Stephen Alexander**

@alexanderedtech



Students working to finish up their newscasts! [#AMCMScatPride](#) [#pbl](#)

11:39 AM - 5 Nov 2014

2 RETWEETS



**Melody Dybas**

@MsDybas



Follow

Real World Experience in math- Ss creating graphs with partners!

[@Woodridge68](#)

[@Meadowview68](#)

[@TeachLearn68](#)

9:55 AM - 20 Nov 2014



**Barbara Wright**

@babs686ca



Follow

6th grade students making stop motion movies for  
[#pbl](#)  
[#wherewouldyoubuildyourdream](#)

1:21 AM - 24 Nov 2014

## Make It Sticky

Have you read [Made to Stick](#) by Chip and Dan Heath? I have, and I think the the Heath brothers' research on what makes a sticky idea can help improve student productions. A sticky idea is one that an audience can understand, remember, and retell. Those sound like traits we want to see in our students'



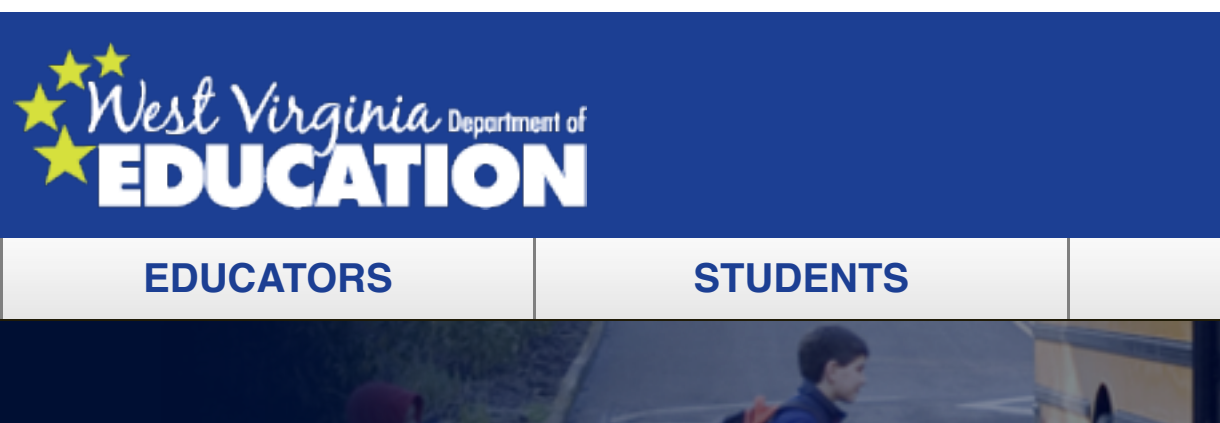


products!

The authors have identified six traits for stickiness. The more traits used in a production, the stickier that communication will be. Chip and Dan Heath's SUCCES model does not successfully spell the word *success*, but it can help students make their project more successful. I explain the SUCCES model in [this infographic](#).



Productions can also be made stickier by having compelling illustrations. I've produced a video for teachers and students about using free images. The video demonstrates three websites for finding images that you can legally use in your media without having to ask permission. [A transcript with web links is available.](#)





## So Refined



There's always a way to make a production even better. With peer, teacher, and maybe even expert input, students can revise their project to make their ideas concise and more meaningful to their audience. Because of time restraints, we often do not build in time for students to iterate on their projects. They turn it in for a grade and the class is on to their next unit of study. However, scheduling time for revision can make productions really shine. Getting the details just right and upping the level of craftsmanship makes for a product that students are very proud to show off and a product that is appreciated by its audience.

Because time is a huge constraint, be proactive by setting students up for success. When my students produced videos, I required them to meet with me before filming began. We'd review their scripts and storyboards to be sure that the content was just right. Also, I could give them tips for producing their videos. If I gave them these tips after filming, they would have to redo a lot of video, which would be a massive time eater. For other projects, it might make sense for students to run their drafts by their peers. Additionally, students may be able to Skype/Hangout/FaceTime with an expert and get their feedback before proceeding with their productions. Charity Allen and John Larmer have [written about using Gallery Walks](#) to improve student work. They quote Ron Berger who says we want feedback to be "kind, specific, and helpful."

Since there is always a way to make a production better, students could spend weeks and weeks revising. There's certainly not time for that. So at some point the project does need to be finished. It may not be absolutely polished, and that's a-ok.

[Kevin Honeycutt](#) and I

recently had a conversation about the time it takes for perfection. "Perfect is the enemy of done," he declared succinctly.

## Assessing It

A project's rubric or checklist is not only a method for determining a grade for a project, but it can be a guide to help refine the project.



I once knew a teacher who had a pile of student projects sitting on her desk. After I saw that the pile had not moved in a couple weeks, I asked her about it. She said her students were bugging her about their grades for the project. I asked what was the hold up in grading. She said she was slow at developing the rubric, which was keeping her from assessing the projects. Yikes! That means her students were blindly doing their projects, not knowing how they were going to be evaluated. They were without clear guidelines on how to refine a project to meet its goals and standards.

You don't have to start from scratch to develop your assessment, but you really should have your assessment ready at the start of the project. You can create rubrics and



**Ashley Cross**

@Ashly2499



Follow

A14: After sharing projects with the class, students KNOW how they did compared to peers. Often will want to refine it themselves

[#BYOTchat](#)

checklists with help from:

- [RubiStar](#)
- [For All Rubrics](#)
- [Project Based Learning Checklists](#)
- [Buck Institute for Education Rubrics](#)
- [PBL Rubrics from the West Virginia Department of Education](#)
- [Guide to Writing Scoring Rubrics](#)
- [Google](#) search for rubrics and checklist for similar projects

Incorporating student input into a project's criteria is a great way to get them involved. And, they might have some really good ideas to add after they have critiqued sample productions.

I hear so often "the process is more important than the product." However, the product is the manifestation of the process. And in the real world, the product matters more than the process. Take my iPad app, [Stick Around](#). People who pay \$2.99 for the product really don't care about the development process we went through and the 1.5 years it took to author it. They care about the product they have installed on their iPads, not about everything we did to get it into the App Store. End products do matter. So I think that a project's assessment should certainly evaluate the end product. Students are also learning and practicing valuable skills (the "process"), so those can also be assessed, too.

And remember, frequent feedback is best. I already mentioned why early feedback can save time and make for better projects. If you are assessing collaboration skills, then you can't wait for the conclusion of the project to assess those. You might have daily self-assessments, make periodic observations, and conduct peer reviews.

Truthfully, my fifth graders' usually earned As on their projects. That's because they knew exactly how I was going to grade the projects before they ever began working on them. I constantly checked in with them to make sure they were on the right track. If their end product wasn't the best it could be, I gave students opportunities to revise before their final assessment.

Watch the [video](#) from Edutopia about embedding assessment through the project.

## Getting the Word Out

Today we have many avenues for sharing student work. There are blogs, websites, eBooks, YouTube, and social media. [Alan November](#) believes, "Teachers need to stop saying 'Hand it in,' and start saying, 'Publish it,' instead."



If you have a class website, that's probably a great place to publish. Or, consider using sites like [KidsBlog](#), [Blogger](#), [Weebly](#), or [Google Sites](#). Keep in mind that the tool that students use might already have its own



method of publishing. For example, [Shadow Puppet Edu](#) can upload right to [get-puppet.co](#). You can paste that URL into another site or use the provided embed code to insert it right into another webpage.

Publishing is just the first step for getting an audience. The intended audience needs to know that the production exists. You might even include the promotion of the end product as part of the project. Some ways to get the word out about the production include:

- Pasting the link to the product into a [QR code](#): Post that QR code around school, and put it on brochures, postcards, and newsletters.
- Posting the link on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#), and/or [Google Plus](#): Figure out what hashtags your intended audience might use and include those. Using hashtags like [#comments4kids](#), [#pbl](#), and [#pblchat](#) can get projects in front of other educators' eyeballs.
- Collating all projects into one page: [ThingLink](#) is handy for doing this in a visual way. [Here's an example](#).
- Scheduling a red carpet premiere of videos: Invite parents and the community to see what students have created. Don't forget the popcorn.
- Having a TED Talk night: Students deliver short, well-rehearsed presentations to an audience.



**Amanda Mann**  
@amann4edu



#mannscience #PBL look at these good looking presenters! So proud of all my students. #amazing

3:13 PM - 17 Apr 2014



**Stephanie Hart**  
@HartScienceRox



MNTHS students and families celebrating students' science videos! Thanks parents! #pbl #class2017

7:57 PM - 30 Sep 2014

2 RETWEETS 4 FAVORITES



Alma

@GetAlma

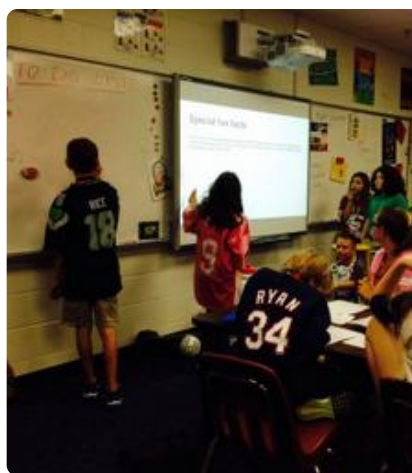


Follow

School holds #ComicCon showcasing student projects: [hubs.ly/y0fhmC0](https://hubs.ly/y0fhmC0)  
@JoplinGlobe #pblchat #pbl

4:51 PM - 29 Oct 2014

1 FAVORITE



I WANT TO INSPIRE

Dale Ramirez



Follow

## Reflect on It

John Dewey knew that reflection is essential to learning. He asserted, "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience."

You might reserve time for students to reflect daily on their progress and collect those reflections in a journal or as an exit ticket. You for sure want to have time for students to reflect at the end of the project. By reviewing their process and their product, they can really consider what went well and what to do better next time.

EduTopia has [a list of 40 reflection questions](#) that look back, inward, and outward. I used many of these questions to make my [random reflection question link](#). Clicking this link will take



you to one of 30 reflection questions I've programmed into the HTML. Students in small groups can call up a question and explain their answers to their peers. For even more fun, [take a look at the dice I made](#) as a way for students to express their response to the reflection questions.

Don't forget that you as the teacher should also reflect on the project. Write down your thoughts and things you want to remember for the next project.

## You Know Better Than Anyone

The productions your students make depend on their abilities and interests and the availability of resources and time. As the teacher, you get to juggle all the variables to guide students toward quality end products that serve as evidence of learning. Yes, it takes a lot of class time to do project based learning. And, you probably can't teach everything through a project. But a project may be an excellent instructional strategy for some of the content and skills your students need to learn.



When I taught fifth grade, my students were often actively involved in projects. So much so that a fourth grade teacher down the hall confronted me in the teachers lounge one day. She looked at me over her glasses, slowly shook her head, and said, "Tony, it seems every time I pass by your classroom, you aren't teaching."



She and I obviously have different definitions of teaching. I believe a teacher is much more than a dispenser of

information—it's a teacher's job to create learning experiences. Chances are those experiences do not involve quiet classrooms with all eyes on the teacher. In project based learning, the teachers does less standing in front of the room and more coaching, modeling, and mentoring with individuals and small groups. Formulating a project and guiding students through inquiry, sharing, and reflecting is a lot of work. Outsiders don't see all that work by just glancing into a classroom.

[Krissy Venosdale](#) observes, "A good chapter in a textbook prepares kids for a test. A great authentic learning experience prepares students for life." Put simply, time and energy for project based learning is well worth it!

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LEARNING THROUGH PROJECTS - THREE PRIMERS





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 Tony Vincent  1 Comment

 Project Based Learning

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## Manel Trenchs i Mola

An hour ago



Hello Tony,

I really agree with you. As an art history teacher I create material but I like sharing what I do... and as well I like learning from other colleagues

My site:

<https://sites.google.com/a/mataro.epiaedu.cat/flipped-classroom/home>

My flipped videos:

<https://vimeo.com/channels/historiadelart>

Keep sharing,

@ManelTrenchs



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