

## PBL vs PBL21 – a comparison

|                            | <b>Traditional PBL</b>   | <b>PBL21</b>  |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Focus of the Project       | Determined by the teacher to fulfill requirements for the content standards.                                       | Students have a voice and choice as they explore topics and issues that are relevant, rigorous and real world.                                      |
| Planning Process           | Begin with the standards, automatically eliminating many excellent possibilities for student learning and inquiry. | Do not begin with the standards, but with an inspiration, idea or theme. Opens the door to many excellent, high level explorations and experiences. |
| The Disciplines            | Frequently not interdisciplinary   | Connect as many disciplines as possible – when they are a good “fit” for the topic.   |
| Level of Challenge         | Learning goals, activities and assessments are frequently at the lower level of Bloom’s                            | Learning goals, activities and assessments are intentionally designed at the highest level of Bloom’s   |
| Literacy                   | Reading, writing and math  | Multiple literacies for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century, i.e., Media Literacy, Ecoliteracy, Financial Literacy, etc.                                   |
| Organization of the school | Departmentalized by discipline.  | Smaller Learning Communities – interdisciplinary team of teachers works with a set group of students every day.                                     |
| The “Classroom”            | Defined by the four walls of the traditional classroom, “cells and bells” structure.                               | Expands beyond the four walls to the campus and the community – from local to national to global.   |

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| School/bell schedule | Usually 45-minutes per class period.  | Flexible schedule created by the members of the Smaller Learning Community. Except for start and end of the school day, lunch and planning periods, schedules are flexed as needed.  |
| Role of the Teacher  | Teacher-centered – teacher delivers knowledge to students, frequent use of lecture as mode of instruction.  | Student-Centered – teacher is facilitator of students’ constructing knowledge on their own. Mini-lessons are utilized when needed to introduce new concepts or skills. These can vary from whole-group to small group to individual lessons. |
| Role of the Student  | Students receive knowledge as they listen, take notes, follow directions and complete assignments. Students work alone, or if in groups, strongly managed by teacher direction. | Students actively construct knowledge as they work in a variety of modes as needed – independent, interdependent, and self-directed.   |
| Resources/Materials  | Textbooks, workbooks and worksheets are the primary resources.<br><br>All materials are selected and assigned by the teacher.   | A wide variety of materials and resources are utilized for student exploration.<br><br>Textbooks, if used as all, serve only as one of many resources.<br><br>Students select materials and resources (approved by the teacher).             |
| Personalization      | All activities are prescribed in advance – no flexibility for personalized learning.  | Truly personalized – supporting students in their individual interests and talents.  |

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|--------------|---|---|
| Lesson Plans | Pre-planned, usually by the day, and often by the minute. No flexibility.   | Based upon the project's overall learning goals, a flexible schedule ensures that daily learning activities support students' learning needs.   |
| Assessment   | Pre-determined products assigned by teachers. All students create the same product. In many cases, the product is a low level activity. | Authentic assessment – very high level product utilizing 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills, applying and incorporating knowledge learned through research.<br><br>Product is created in a medium of choice. |
| Evaluation   | Students submit assigned products to the teacher; the teacher evaluates/grades the product.   | Students present their products publicly. Evaluations include student self-assessment, student peer assessment, and evaluation by outside evaluators.   |
| Grading      | Students' grades are averaged.  | Students' grades reflect and are based upon what was learned, not by "when" it was learned.   |