

## Spotlighting promising practices from the 2021 Making Schools Work Conference

## In this newsletter:

SUBSCRIBE

- P1** CTE Students Go To Work in Simulated Workplace Classrooms
- P3** Resilience Can Be Taught: Ways to Motivate Any Student
- P4** School Cultures That Support Students Where They Are
- P7** Try These Quick Hacks to Power Up Your PBL
- P9** Escape From Old School Thinking at #SREBSummer
- P10** Have You Heard? Esports Are Exploding Worldwide!

## CTE Students Go To Work in Simulated Workplace Classrooms

By Quinton Granville and Jahana Martin, SREB

Students need more than academic skills to succeed. They need to be able to problem-solve, work in teams and get along with others to thrive in a postsecondary or workplace environment.

West Virginia career and technical education centers and high schools are using work-based learning to prepare students for life after graduation. Schools and CTE centers transform traditional classrooms into businesses to create a real-world work environment known as a *Simulated Workplace*. Students graduate credentialed and prepared for what comes next.

**Mingo Central High School** in Delbarton is a West Virginia Department of Education Simulated Workplace model school. “We want to prepare our kids for the future — the world after graduation,” says Brandon Cline, a Project Lead the Way pre-engineering teacher at the school.

“To do that, there’s a big push to give credentials and certifications to our students.” Simulated Workplace is not just for CTE, Cline says. “This concept can be applied in any classroom and can change the culture in any learning environment.”

## 12 Protocols of West Virginia’s Simulated Workplace

Mingo Central High School is creating a student-led culture guided by the WVDOE’s 12 protocols for Simulated Workplace.

**Student-led companies** form the core of this culture: Students and teachers share responsibility for learning, which helps students take pride in what they learn, says Cline. But this instructional shift may be challenging for teachers. “If you’ve been teaching a while, you’re used to having control of the classroom, and it’s hard to let it go to the students. If you let students lead the learning and let them know they have a responsibility, it will totally transform your culture. Students want that leadership role,” he says.



*Appalachian Engineering/Pre-engineering program at Mingo Central High School*

Students submit **job applications** for competitive slots and teachers conduct **job interviews** to select students for their programs. Cline’s award-winning student-led company, Appalachian Engineering, has seen students go on to successful careers in engineering after completing their Simulated Workplace program.

Teachers set high expectations and students learn accountability with a **formal attendance system** that mimics a real workplace. Students use a time clock to clock in and clock out upon arrival and departure. “You want your students to be on time like they would be at work,” says Lauren Copley, graphic design teacher at Mingo Central High School. COVID-friendly apps for students’ phones or laptops make clocking in and out easy so students are not all punching in on one device, she shares.



*Brandon Cline, Project Lead the Way pre-engineering teacher at Mingo Central High School*

**Drug-free work zones** ensure the safety of all students and workers. Students know they must submit to testing and adhere to the school system’s random drug testing policy. “Business and industry are always telling us, ‘If we can get employees that are drug-free and show up to work on time, we would hire them.’ We put a great emphasis on a drug-free work zone,” says Marcella Charles-Casto, acting principal and CTE director at Mingo Central High School.

Mingo uses **6S** lean management principles as a way to organize and manage the workplace. “A lot of business and industry operate under the 6s or 5s philosophy. We want to always align what we are doing here with what will happen in postsecondary or employment,” says Charles-Casto. The six elements of the 6S approach are:

### 6S Elements

- **Sort:** Remove unnecessary items and properly dispose of them; sorting makes work easier by eliminating physical obstacles.
- **Straighten:** Make it easy to find and pick up necessary items, preventing loss and wasted time.
- **Shine** (or “Sweep”): Clean the workspace daily. Cleaning leads to closer inspections of work areas and promotes safety by revealing the deterioration of machinery or equipment.
- **Standardize:** Set a standard for how each workspace is maintained.
- **Sustain:** Keep all equipment in working order.
- **Safety:** Wear uniforms and proper attire and complete safety exams.

Implementing 6S helps ensure students are in **safe work areas**. All students receive quality safety training. “Safety is a huge component of what we do here,” says Charles-Casto.

**Workplace teams** allow students to interview for and serve in various leadership roles in their Simulated Workplace. MCHS uses an organizational chart to list students’ duties.

Students collaborate to solve real-world problems, and instruction is driven by **project-based learning**, which promotes **student engagement**.

Each Simulated Workplace company creates a **company name and handbook** that includes its policies and procedures. “Every class gets to take ownership and create this handbook ... It’s important that each company has its own identity,” says Cline.



*Lauren Copley, graphic design teacher at Mingo Central High School*



*Marcella Charles-Casto, acting principal and CTE director at Mingo Central High School*



*Graphic Design Simulated Workplace company, Smart Design, at Mingo Central High School*

Students collaborate with the school’s graphic design Simulated Workplace, Smart Design, to develop a logo and branding, videos, mock storefronts and more.

**Company meetings** are essential to ensure employees focus on the same weekly, monthly and yearly goals. Meetings are structured to model industry standards. For example, student-led meetings address upcoming events, projects and safety.

Charles-Casto uses **onsite business reviews** to gather data to evaluate the center’s CTE programs. “It guides us on things to improve upon and how we are meeting standards. All the decisions made in our center are data-driven,” she says.

Students also learn **accountability** as they create their employee portfolios. Educators help students by keeping a scorecard to ensure students have all required components of their portfolios, which document their learning, credentials, certifications, letters of reference, resumes and letters of introduction.

“Every student in our CTE program walks away with an OSHA 10 certification card,” says Cline. “We offer certifications that are unique to each program. Students are employable with these certifications, so it's very important to us that we make this a part of our culture.”

**Contacts:** Marcella Charles-Casto, [mcharles@k12.wv.us](mailto:mcharles@k12.wv.us), Brandon Cline, [bjcline@k12.wv.us](mailto:bjcline@k12.wv.us), Lauren Copley, [lauren.copley@k12.wv.us](mailto:lauren.copley@k12.wv.us)

## Resilience Can Be Taught: Ways to Motivate Any Student

By Diane James, SREB



*Christian Moore, founder and author of the Resilience Breakthrough*

During the prolonged pandemic, teachers have encountered students who have experienced a broad array of traumatic experiences — the illness or death of a loved one, family job loss, physical or mental abuse, acts of violence, and even imprisonment.

Such experiences hurt students' learning and behavior, but according to Christian Moore, a licensed clinical social worker and the author of *Resilience Breakthrough*, teachers can inspire and build resilience in students who have experienced trauma. It all begins by teaching valuable social-emotional life skills in ways that students can understand and relate to.

Moore describes *resilience* as the ability to bounce back. The thing that can trigger resilience — the thing all teachers wish they could prevent — is suffering. Suffering gives individuals something to bounce back from, Moore says.

Teachers can help students recognize their suffering and “use pain as a fuel source, as their best friend,” says Moore. When suffering kicks in, people have a lot of emotional energy, he says — some of that energy will be positive, and some will be negative. Moore advocates using visual metaphors as tools to relate to students

and drive home strategies. Teachers can help students tap into all of their emotions, maximizing the negative energy — whether that comes from hurt, anger, fear or depression — to create a positive outcome.

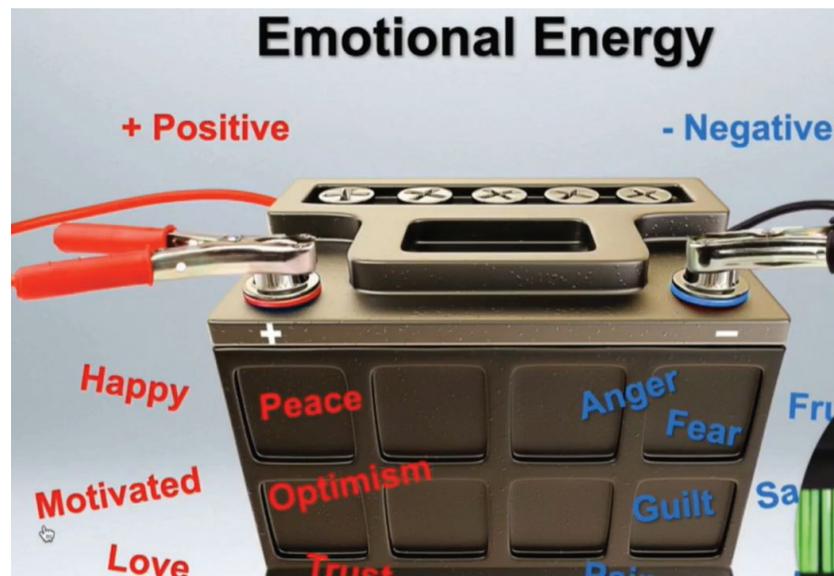
For example, Moore says that as a student, he was diagnosed with ADHD, a conduct disorder and learning disabilities. Told he would never graduate or go to college, Moore was so angered he wanted to prove his naysayers wrong. He not only went to college but graduated with a master's degree. “When I look at people who had high trauma but were highfliers, they all used negative emotions in productive ways, Moore maintains.

### Four Sources of Resilience

Digging deep and turning negative emotions into positive outcomes is easier said than done. Students need motivation. Moore offers four sources of resilience that motivate individuals to channel suffering and negative emotions into positive gains:

- 1. Relational Resilience:** Your greatest motivation to not give up is the knowledge that others need you and you need them. “Human beings are motivated by other human beings,” stresses Moore.
- 2. Street Resilience:** When you have every reason to give up, you take the pain of disrespect, social inequality or other barriers and use them as fuel to propel yourself forward.
- 3. Resource Resilience:** Your resilience can be increased when you tap into the resources available to you — your talents, relationships, physical assets or unique capabilities.
- 4. Rock Bottom Resilience:** When you're at your lowest point, believe in your ability to change your circumstances. Combat hopelessness and fight on! “Losing in the past does *not* mean you will lose in the future,” insists Moore.

Moore is also adamant that “resilience takes place in the striving” and has nothing to do with “success.”



*An example of using visual metaphors when teaching resilience. Courtesy of WhyTry.org.*

## Lessons That Can Help Students Experiencing Trauma to Succeed in School

Like each of us, students have different stressors and triggers that can hijack their ability to focus and learn. But teachers can help students develop healthy coping skills and recognize the obstacles that may be holding them back.

Moore cites three “basics” that help students power through obstacles and succeed in school.

1. Stop crashing: Realize that your decisions have consequences.
2. Tear off the labels or names that people call you, such as failure, dumb, gang member or druggie.
3. Recognize — and control — your personal defense mechanisms: Find constructive ways to respond when disrespected, embarrassed, hit, blamed or pressured.

## Engaging Students With Visual Metaphors, Videos and Music

To engage students in ways they can understand, relate and remember, Moore suggests teachers use metaphors, pictures and music because many students are visual learners, and research indicates listening to music is their number one non-school-related activity. “They love that you’re willing to go into their world. It’s powerful to bring the classroom to life with music,” but he does caution that teachers need to set ground rules on the kind of music and lyrics allowed in class.

**Contact:** Christian Moore, [aly@whytry.org](mailto:aly@whytry.org)

## School Cultures That Support Students Where They Are

By Ivy Alford and Jahana Martin, SREB



*Stacey Orso, assistant superintendent,  
Deer Park City School District*

Students perform better when they attend school and participate in class daily. Although each student faces different obstacles at home and in the community that can lead to disciplinary challenges in the classroom, schools have positive, restorative options that keep students active, engaged and on track in their learning.

**Deer Park Junior/Senior High School**, located in Cincinnati, Ohio, serves students in grades seven to 12, with about 100 students per grade level. The student body is 72.6% white, 8.8% Black, 6.9% Hispanic and 8.1% multiracial; 40.4% are economically disadvantaged and about 15% are students with disabilities.

DPHS has been on a four-year journey to expand its services to include an alternative program for all students. Stacey Orso, assistant superintendent of Deer Park Schools, and Shane Hartley, former principal of Deer Park Junior/Senior High School, wanted to design a program that celebrated their school culture while putting theory into action and meeting students where they are.

When administrators examined school data, they found that many referrals for disruptive behavior could have been prevented through “resets,” which allow students to pause and reflect on their behavior. Administrators also noted that many of the students who received referrals were not only repeat offenders but also had experienced adverse childhood experiences. School leaders realized they needed to collect more consistent data to get a full picture of students’ needs.

### H<sup>3</sup> Culture

School leaders and teachers discussed key beliefs about the school’s culture and worked to establish a common language across the school. This helped the school create what they call an **H<sup>3</sup> culture** at DPHS: **Help Others**, collaborate and share ideas, **Help Your School**, promote a positive school culture, and **Help Yourself**, commit to doing our best professionally and taking care of ourselves personally. A **Culture Playbook** engaged all teachers and staff in sharing beliefs, behaviors and outcomes related to this H<sup>3</sup> culture and developing a common understanding of restorative practices.

“We want to be clear with our staff so when we talk about expanding the continuum of service, we understand we’re not just doing things to make lives easier on students, administrators or teachers. We’re doing this because it’s all based around what we believe in as a culture,” Hartley shares.



*Shane Hartley, former principal, Deer Park  
Junior/Senior High School*

The H<sup>3</sup> Culture represents the school's Tier 1 approach to expanding services to meet all students where they are. DPHS implemented additional Tier 2 and Tier 3 strategies in 2018-19:

- A **full-time therapist in each building** provides therapeutic services at the school for students who need them. This service has expanded to Deer Park Community School District's Amity Elementary School. "They don't have to leave the school building and potentially miss class," Orso explains.
- The **H<sup>3</sup> Academy** brings students back from outplacement by acting as a spinoff of day treatment programs — similar to partial hospitalization programs — that are run by a local agency and provide group sessions on campus, which are available in addition to sessions with the in-school therapist.
- The entire staff received training in **restorative practices** and **trauma-informed care**.
- The **H<sup>3</sup> Mindfulness Room** is a safe, designated space where students can de-escalate and calm themselves before feeling ready to return to class.
- The **High School Hope Squad**, a suicide prevention program, is facilitated by students who are nominated by their peers and trained to do triage, assess and make referrals when needed. Hope Squad students participate in events throughout the year and help staff the H<sup>3</sup> Mindfulness Room.

The school has seen a decrease in the number of referrals since developing its H<sup>3</sup> culture and embedding proactive practices. Last school year, the school had 5.2 disciplinary referrals per day as compared to 1.3 per day in 2021-2022. These practices also resulted in an 80% decrease in out-of-school suspensions, according to Hartley.

### H<sup>3</sup> Mindfulness Room

Imagine a place where students can go to cool off, reset and release any negative energy that leads to upsets and disruptive behaviors. DPHS transformed a storage space at the school into their H<sup>3</sup> Mindfulness Room, where students can get help to self-monitor and identify their triggers so they can de-escalate *before* receiving a referral.

Students have three ways they can access the H<sup>3</sup> room: (1) they can recognize their own triggers and ask to visit the room, (2) a teacher who observes signs of an upset can encourage students to go, or (3) students may be asked to go to the room after a disruptive act, which may result in a disciplinary referral.

"If a student exhibits negative behavior that results in a referral, they can access the H<sup>3</sup> room to process events before the referral infraction is addressed. To support this process, student self-identification or teacher prompting [to use the room] does not result in a referral," Orso says.

"When a student enters the H<sup>3</sup> Mindfulness Room, they are greeted by a Hope Squad member or the Dean of Students," Orso explains. While in the room, students can engage in mindfulness activities and use resources like a trampoline, punching bag, coloring books, yoga mat and more. Hosts check in with students every 10 minutes. Students can ask for an additional 10 minutes. If the student is not ready to leave after 20 minutes, they wait in the office for an administrator.

Staff analyze the data from the H<sup>3</sup> Mindfulness Room quarterly. Upon entry and exit, students provide information like how they accessed the room and why they needed it — for example, because they needed to cool down, talk with an administrator, take a time out, soothe anxiety or upset, get away from bullying or support a friend. Students score how they feel on entry and exit on a scale of 1-10, with one representing that nothing is wrong, and 10 representing that they are feeling explosive or upset. They also record their time in and time out so administrators can see how much time is being spent in the room.

Data shows that approximately 80% of students entered the room at a level 7 out of 10 or higher and 86% left the room at a level 4 or lower. Students spent an average of 20 minutes in the room, with students who self-selected to access the room spending about 18 minutes and students who were sent by a staff member spending 23 minutes. Eighteen percent of students reported that they were sent by a staff member and 79% percent reported that they chose to access the room themselves.

"Ultimately, we want students to recognize their triggers and recognize when they need to access that room because we're trying to teach life skills. Even as adults, we get to the point where we have to take a break and walk away from a situation," says Orso.



*Deer Park Jr./Sr. High School Mindfulness Room*

The H<sup>3</sup> room inspired the creation of a similar Mindpeace Lounge for teachers in 2019-20. In the same year, DPHS implemented Terrace Metrics for 11th and 12th graders as both a suicide screening tool and a way to measure the school's overall behavioral health picture and resiliency factors. In 2020-21, the school expanded Terrace Metrics to grades seven to 12, added a behavior coach once a week, established the Junior High Hope Squad and created the Deer Park Discovery Program, an alternative school setting for students.



*Deer Park Jr./Sr. students and teachers explain how they benefit from the H3 Mindfulness Room.*

### Deer Park Discovery

Deer Park Discovery is an alternative school housed in a separate building from Deer Park Junior/High School. It offers:

- **Career-based interventions** allow students to get credit for working, take units needed for self-growth in job skills and earn career certifications in Ohio.
- With **wraparound services**, a care coordinator works with teachers to address students' needs and refer them to outside resources.
- A **behavior coach** works through students' reoccurring behavior challenges to better support them; this coach supports teachers as well.
- An **intervention specialist** supports student learning.
- An **online, prescriptive curriculum** helps students move through the curriculum, confirming their previous knowledge and addressing new knowledge.
- **Half-day sessions** allow students to take a three-hour morning or afternoon session.
- **Small group** sessions are limited to 10 students each and give teachers the flexibility to adjust their class size to build stronger relationships and support student success.



*Stacea McKeever, teacher, Deer Park Discovery Program*

"This is the place to go for students to get an education when nothing else has worked," says Stacea McKeever, a teacher for the Deer Park Discovery Program. She encourages teachers to "meet students where they are – that could make a difference whether a student graduates."

**Contacts:** Stace Orso, [orso.s@dpcsd.org](mailto:orso.s@dpcsd.org), Stacea McKeever, [mckeever.s@dpcsd.org](mailto:mckeever.s@dpcsd.org), and Shane Hartley, [hartley.s@dpcsd.org](mailto:hartley.s@dpcsd.org)

## Try These Quick Hacks to Power Up Your PBL

*(Hint: It's Easy With National Geographic Resources)*

By Leslie Eaves, SREB

There's no greater feeling than seeing your students come alive and channel their creative energy into bringing their ideas to life. If you center your instruction around project-based learning, you know how this powerful pedagogy transforms classrooms into places of exploration, wonder and excitement.

If you didn't grow up learning this way, or are just starting your PBL journey, the time it takes to "do PBL" well can seem a little daunting. To make it easier, you can start with an existing PBL unit and hack it to meet your students' needs, align with standards and fit your pacing calendar.

### How-To Hints

Effective PBL units are designed around a driving question that challenges students to solve a real-life problem, think critically and master content, concepts and skills over time. Need a roadmap for organizing instruction this way? SREB's [Powerful Project-Based Learning Instructional Practices](#) will help you recognize the essential teacher and student behaviors and learning artifacts found in classrooms that do PBL well.



Because the National Geographic Society's exciting units and projects align perfectly with our Powerful PBL Instructional Practices, they offer an excellent starting point for teachers of English language arts, science or social studies — or any content area. For example, [Plastics: From Pollution to Solutions](#), takes middle grades students on a learning adventure in which they explore the destructive effects of plastic pollution on our oceans and ecosystem, then brainstorm solutions for solving this problem. Along the way, students develop a publishable magazine article that addresses the challenges and issues an urgent call to action.

Here's how this unit incorporates five of our six Powerful PBL Instructional Practices:

- **Authenticity:** Plastic pollution is a real problem faced by real people. Students become science journalists as they seek to understand the science behind the effects of plastic pollution, then explain what they've learned to an outside audience.
- **Sustained Inquiry:** All of National Geographic's lessons employ a [Geo-Inquiry Process](#) that engages students in developing questions, collecting information and evidence, visually organizing and displaying what they learn, creating products that tell stories and sharing those stories beyond the classroom. In this unit, students follow this process as they learn about hydrosphere ecosystems and the effects of plastic pollution on marine life.
- **Collaborative Problem-Solving Process:** Students work together in publishing teams to create their National Geographic-style magazine articles.

- **Student Ownership:** You'll have National Geographic's expert educators right by your side with [pedagogical and content guides](#) packed with ideas for supporting student ownership of the learning process. For example, in this unit, you can jigsaw reading and information gathering so students become responsible not only for their own learning, but also for sharing and teaching what they learn to their teammates as well.

**Feedback, Reflection and Revision:** A series of magazine design workshops teach student teams how to offer peer feedback. Strategies like a Gallery Walk help students continuously refine their thinking and writing.



## Powerful Project-Based Learning Instructional Practices



Teacher Behaviors	Student Behaviors	Artifacts
<b>1. Plan Authentic, Intellectually Demanding Project-Based Learning Units Where Students Master Significant Content and Skills</b>		
<p><b>The teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs an intellectually demanding PBL unit around a driving question that challenges students to solve a complex problem, think critically and master course content, concepts and skills over an extended time period</li> <li>• Develops a challenging problem that "reflects what happens in the world outside of school"</li> <li>• Ensures students' interests are reflected in the PBL design</li> <li>• Embeds literacy, math and science where appropriate</li> </ul>	<p><b>The students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate challenging problems, questions and issues over an extended time period</li> <li>• Help develop the focus of the project</li> <li>• Develop and plan questions about the project and project management plan and determine role responsibilities based on the project launch</li> <li>• Engage in productive struggle and express an eagerness to solve the challenge or answer the driving question</li> <li>• Connect course content to real-world issues and concepts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Artifacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course content standards, concepts and skills like 21st-century skills or college- and career-readiness skills</li> <li>• Map of Learning including daily learning activities, scaffolding strategies and assessments of and for learning</li> <li>• Student research required to solve the project</li> <li>• Student written products including professional notebooks, management plans and written proposals that demonstrate students' mastery of the standards</li> </ul>
<b>2. Utilize Sustained, In-Depth Inquiry</b>		
<p><b>The teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignites student curiosity through the launch of the PBL unit</li> <li>• Uses intellectually demanding questioning techniques to promote and deepen student thinking</li> <li>• Creates a classroom culture that develops students' questioning skills and ability to use questions to drive research</li> <li>• Provides just-in-time direct instruction for students when needed to advance the project</li> </ul>	<p><b>The students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in a cycle of inquiry that includes questioning, research and further questioning</li> <li>• Conduct research and engage in intellectually demanding assignments that help them learn content, develop skills and satisfy the goals of the PBL unit</li> </ul>	<p><b>Artifacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map of Learning including strategies for sustained inquiry and questioning</li> <li>• Student professional notebooks and other work documenting the use of a cycle of inquiry</li> </ul>
<b>3. Engage Students in a Collaborative Problem-Solving/Design Process</b>		
<p><b>The teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates student learning to understand the whys and hows of the problem-solving/design process</li> <li>• Scaffolds opportunities for students to work in collaborative teams using various project management tools</li> <li>• Monitors and checks for understanding of the process and effectiveness of teams' work</li> </ul>	<p><b>The students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect the problem-solving/design process to the purpose of the PBL unit</li> <li>• Apply the problem-solving/design process to accomplish the goals of the PBL unit</li> <li>• Collaborate with each other like professionals do in a high-functioning authentic workplace</li> <li>• Use project management tools similar to those used in the workplace, like group contracts, scrum boards or group roles</li> </ul>	<p><b>Artifacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map of Learning using a problem-solving/design process to guide learning</li> <li>• Student professional notebooks, team notes and other artifacts documenting the application of the problem-solving/design process</li> <li>• Project management tools documentation</li> <li>• Final product(s) reflecting the contribution of "individual voices, talents and skills... to a shared piece of work"</li> </ul>

\* Framework for High Quality Project Based Learning — <https://hqpbl.org/>



Copyright © 2020 Southern Regional Education Board. All rights reserved.

### Hit the Standards

The first step in *any* PBL planning process is to be very clear about what students need to know, understand and do by the end of a unit. If you've attended one of SREB's workshops, you know we love to share a [simple t-chart](#) that lists state standards on one side and student-friendly learning targets on the other. By breaking down standards into "bite-sized chunks" of learning, you can better visualize the learning progression and consider what learning needs to look like so students master the standard. After doing this, go back to the unit and ask:

- What lesson and activities within the unit can I use to teach these standards?
- What might I need to change to better fit the standards or my students' learning needs?
- What standards are *not* embedded in the unit? How and where will I incorporate them?
- What lessons or activities will I need to shorten or skip to better fit my calendar?

### Strategize Your Assessments

We all know it: Time is the enemy of classroom teachers. There's never quite enough time to do everything we want or need to do. With PBL, students need more time to explore ideas, grapple with problems and apply and test what they know. Here's where a solid assessment strategy can help.

As teachers, we often use tests and quizzes to assess what students know. Although you can still use these traditional tools, PBL offers much more engaging ways to quickly assess students' knowledge, understanding and skills.

One easy technique is to use an [assessment map](#). I'm linking here to [examples of assessment maps](#) we've gathered from the teachers we work with to spark your imagination.

Start with the final product: In the Plastics unit, this is the magazine article. From there, you'll expand on the chunks of learning students will need to create their articles. For each chunk, consider what activities students are doing that could be used to assess that knowledge while *also* making progress on their PBL.

As you plan your learning activities — both those that are suggested in the unit as well as those you will add — consider:

- What information can I use in each activity to determine how my students are mastering the standards?
- When is the best time to use quizzes or tests in the PBL plan?
- What just-in-time lessons or learning “quick bites” might I need to have ready in case my students aren't learning what they need to learn?

## Connect to Your Community

The icing on the cake in any PBL unit is providing opportunities for students to interact with professionals or community leaders as they learn. While not *necessary* for every PBL unit, engagement with community partners encourages students to invest more effort and brings authenticity to their projects. Take it from me: It's *amazing* to see students, teachers and partners coming together to tackle real issues in their communities.

For the Plastics unit, a teacher might collaborate with local journalists, magazine publishers, marine biologists or environmental scientists or engineers. Consider:

- Are there people in my community who are already working to solve a similar problem?
- What careers or jobs do my students' parents have?

I've seen community partners share their unique knowledge and expertise with students through classroom presentations, visits to their worksites and feedback on in-process or final projects. These partners also make informed, enthusiastic audiences for students' final presentations.

## Putting It All Together

Simply put, project-based learning makes learning *meaningful*. When challenged with a problem with real relevance to their worlds, students can envision the future, connect the classroom and the real world, and recognize that what they do *matters*. I hope I've inspired you to take the National Geographic Society's well-planned, standards-based PBL units and use them to spark a lifelong love of learning and exploration for your students.

**Contact:** Leslie Eaves, [leslie.eaves@sreb.org](mailto:leslie.eaves@sreb.org)

## Escape From Old School Thinking at #SREBSummer

### Everyone loves our escape rooms!

**Joining us in Grapevine?** Assemble a team and bring your A-game to SREB's third annual escape room experience, *Escape from Old School Thinking*. You and your team of six people will have one hour to complete your mission and “escape” the room. A successful escape will require you to find hidden clues and solve challenging puzzles. Everywhere you look is a potential clue or riddle to be solved. The clock starts ticking the moment you enter! To win requires teamwork, speed, creativity and patience.

**Great news:** This year we'll have TWO rooms running at once! Check our conference program and app to sign up each morning beginning at 7 a.m. to reserve a spot for your team.

**Register for #SREBSummer now!**





## Have You Heard? Esports Are Exploding Worldwide!

Join us at the [2022 Making Schools Work Conference](#) and explore our **Esports Arena**, where exciting student demos and informational sessions will show you how to tap into students' passion for gaming to promote classroom engagement, academic achievement and readiness for college and careers.

### Did you know? Esports:

- Increase **achievement**, especially in STEM, and boost GPAs by keeping students engaged, motivated and in school
- Provide many of the **same benefits as traditional athletics**, such as teamwork, coordination, problem-solving and communication skills
- Build students' **self-confidence, positive mental health** and **social skills**
- Foster **inclusion, diversity** and **accessibility** by appealing to students of all backgrounds and levels of ability
- Introduce students to **lucrative careers** and lead to **postsecondary studies** and **scholarships**

### Meet Our Esports Experts

Our #SREBSummer featured speakers will give you the tools and resources you need to add esports to your curriculum or launch a league or club at your school!



As a high school teacher and gamer, **Mike Russell** knew esports were a way to take something students love and turn it into engaging learning for students of all abilities. He and Kristy Custer created the nation's first free, for-credit gaming curriculum, *Gaming Concepts*.



Tuned in to esports by colleague Mike Russell, veteran educator and leader **Kristy Custer** saw how esports helped students at her alternative high school gain the STEM, leadership, college and career readiness, and life skills they needed for success.



**Nai Wang** struggled with ADHD until he fell in love with video games. After studying psychology and computing, he founded KP Education Systems to combine the logic of programming with brain science to make learning fun and addictive.

# SREB

School Improvement

# Making Schools Work Conference

Grapevine, Texas | July 19-22, 2022

Be the difference.  
Impact your  
students, school  
and community.

**#SREBSummer**



# SREB

School  
Improvement

22V05w  
MARCH 2022