



LAUSD

UNIFIED



Curriculum and Instruction Committee

Project Based Learning

March 20, 2025

Agenda

Project Based Learning in LAUSD	Dr. John Vladovic Executive Director Secondary Instructional Programs
Project -Based Learning: A Signature Practice in Community Schools	Cora Watkins <i>Director</i> <i>Community Schools Initiative</i>
Center for Powerful Public Schools Helping Community Schools to Actualize PBL	Javier Guzman <i>CEO</i> <i>Center for Powerful Public Schools</i>
Project- Based Learning within the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program "IB" in Action • 32nd Street • Farmdale ES	Adriana Trejo Director High School Instruction
Closing Comments	Dr. John Vladovic
Questions and Discussion	

Project Based Learning



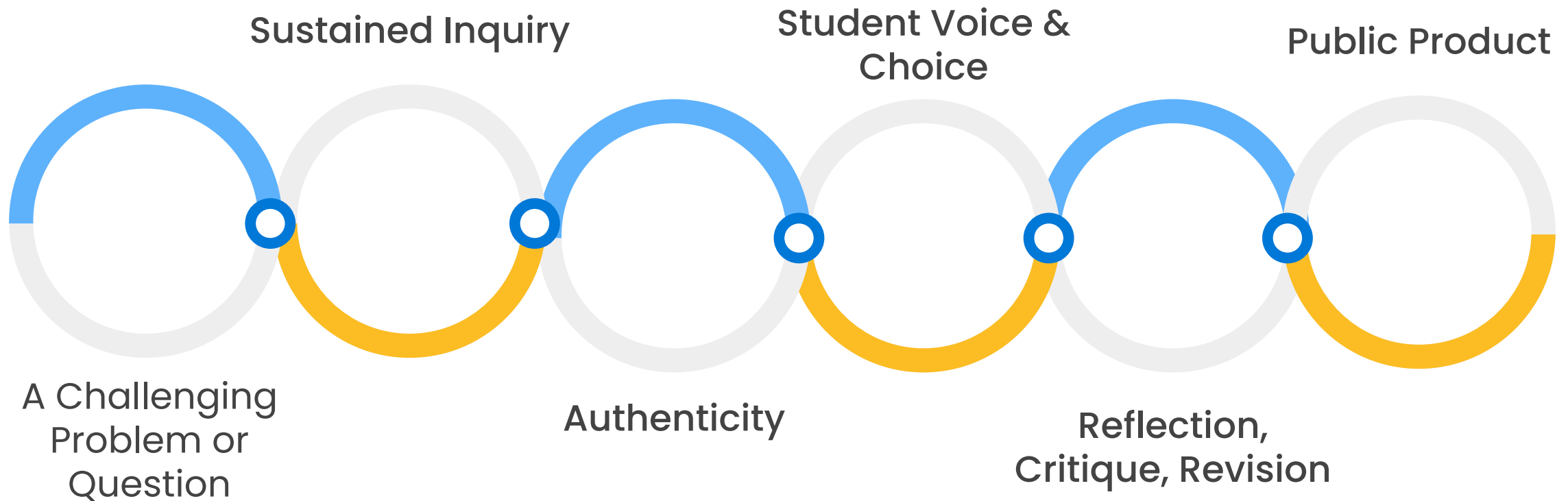
Student-centered approach where learning is driven by engaging, real-world, ill-defined problems.

Students collaborate to research, develop solutions, and apply their knowledge



Project Based Learning

Elements



Learning Design Elements

Project Based Learning

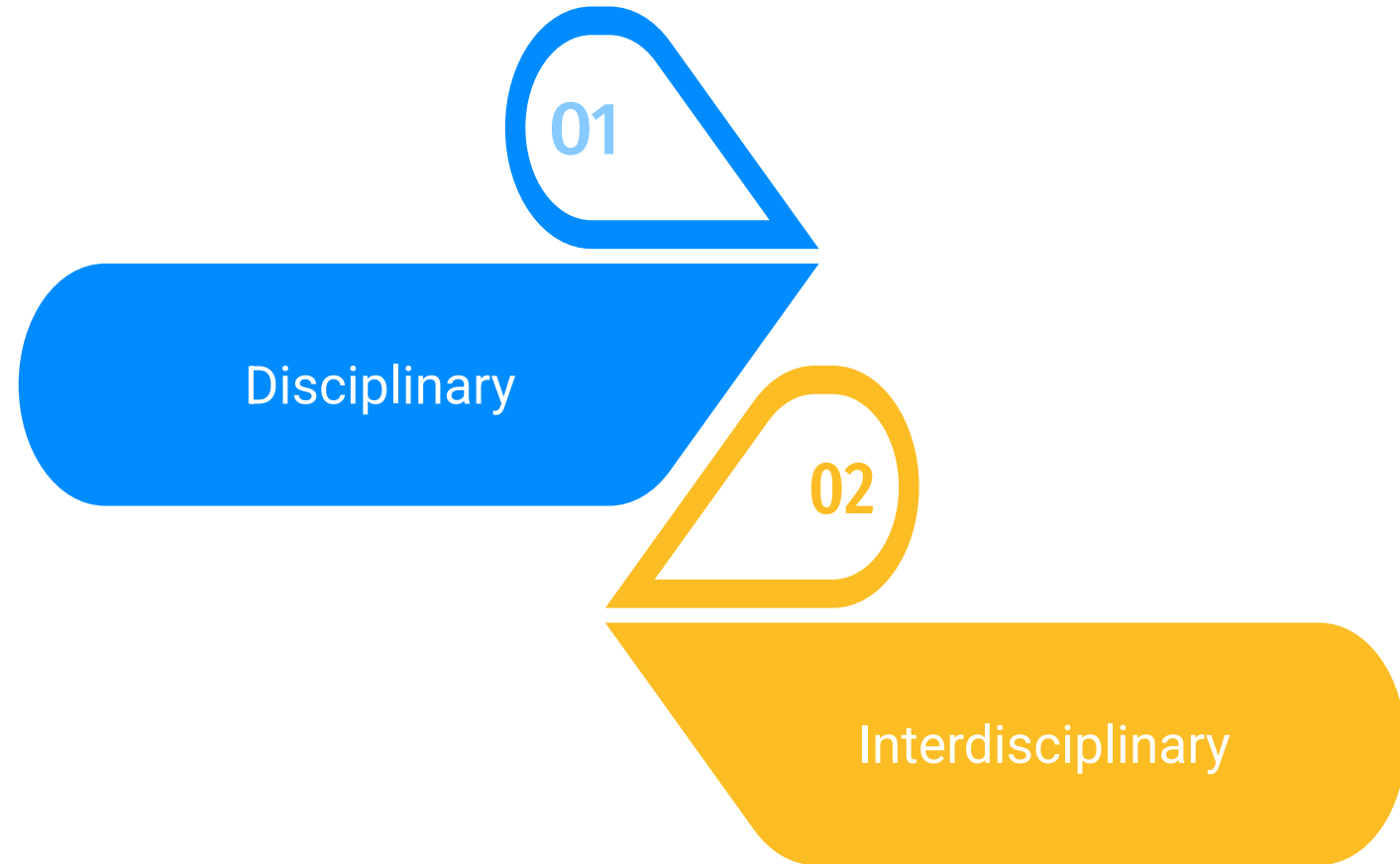
Comparison

Projects	Project Based Learning
Can be done alone	Requires collaboration and teacher guidance
About the product	About the process
Teacher-directed	Student-directed
All projects have the same goal	Students make choices that determine the outcome
Products are submitted to the teacher	Products are presented to an authentic audience
Lack real-world relevance	Based in real-world experiences or problems
Occur after the “real” learning	Real learning occurs through the project

Project Based Learning

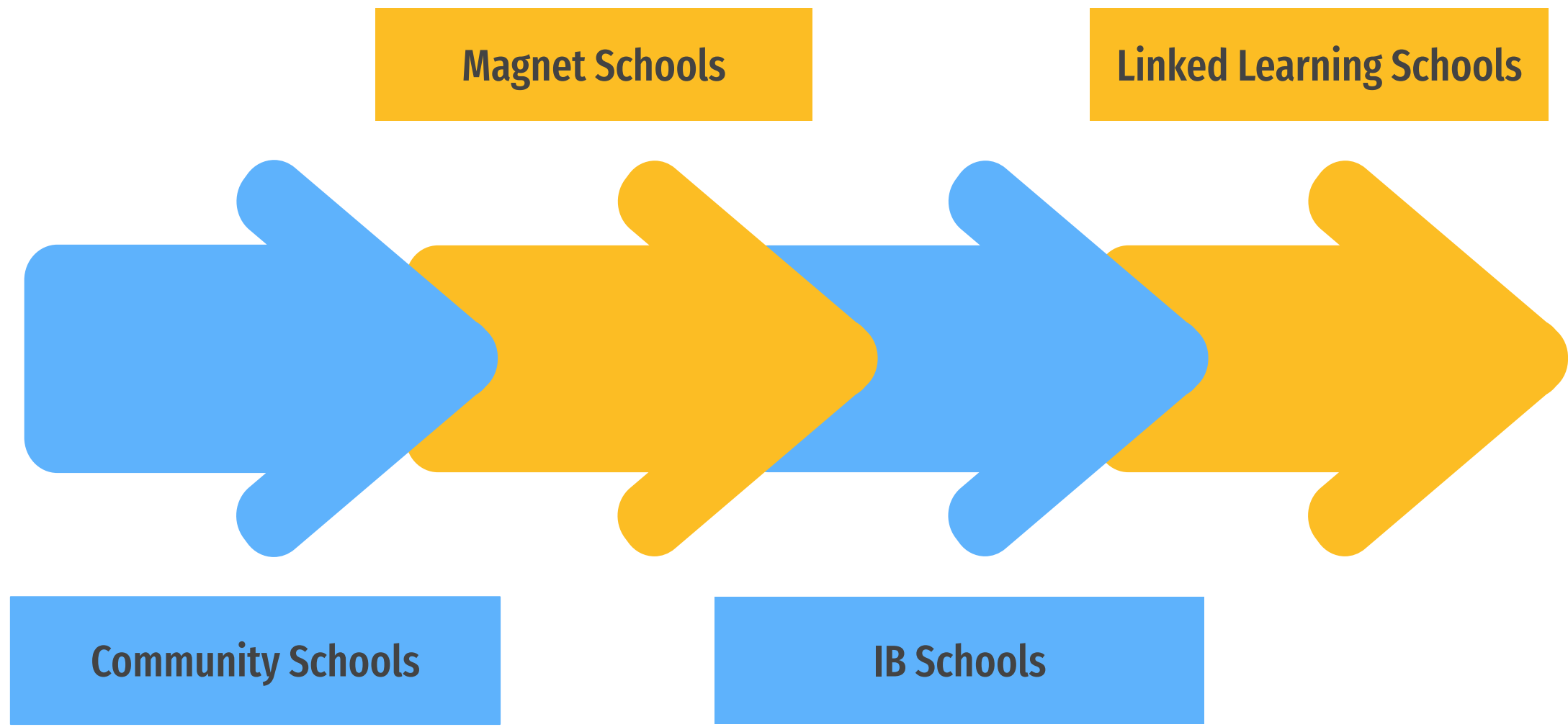
Approaches

- **Disciplinary PBL** focuses on deepening students' understanding of concepts within a single subject.
- **Interdisciplinary PBL** integrates multiple subjects, helping students apply knowledge across disciplines and see their connections in real-world problem-solving.



Project Based Learning

Where Does It Exist?



Project Based Learning

When Does Planning Happen?

1

Banked Time Tuesday

**Release Time &
Beyond the School Day**

2

3

**Planning & Common
Conference Periods**

Project Based Learning

Professional Development Opportunities

Linked Learning Schools

- Interdisciplinary team professional development across departments

ELA

- Story Lab & English 12 Media Literacy

Math

- Financial Algebra, Geometry, Transition to College Mathematics & Statistics

Science

- Phenomena Based Instruction

Social Science

- Seal of Civic Engagement

Polytechnic Senior High

PBL Example



**Voter
Registration
Drive**

Academic Programs

Achieve Excellence for All



“Providing a world class academic experience for our students is the most important component of ensuring they are ready for the world.”

2022–2026 LAUSD Strategic Plan





Signature Practice in Community Schools: Linking Instruction to the Broader Community

CA Community School's Overarching Values

Value 1:

Racially-Just, relationship-centered spaces



Community schools aim to build trust by bringing people together and authentically valuing diverse cultures, perspectives and strengths in schools and communities. A focus on relationships builds a positive school climate and culture that is racially-just, caring, identity safe and nurtures a sense of belonging. Racially-just, relationship-centered spaces build collaborative, supportive and sustainable spaces where everyone learns and grows together.

Value 2:

Shared Power



Recognizing and building towards shared ownership and deep engagement, through shared decision-making and collaborative strategies, is vital to building a democratic, inclusive and empowering environment. Through these strategies, all interest-holders feel that their expertise and commitment to the community is recognized and valued.

Value 3:

Classroom-community connections



Community schools are continuously linking classroom instruction to the broader community. Instruction is engaging, providing real-world and project-based learning opportunities. It is interdisciplinary in nature and rooted in the assets of students, families, educators, and local community members. Curriculum is responsive to local history, knowledge, values, languages, literature, institutions, cultures, and environments. Community schools ground student learning in civic engagement and address real-world issues.

Value 4:

A focus on continuous improvement



Working together, community schools participate in an ongoing cycle of reflection, analysis, shared learning, and revision with a focus on student learning conditions, well-being and outcomes. Community schools also ensure students, families, school staff and the community are valued, engaged and empowered. Community schools go beyond traditional metrics of educational success to reinvent systems of measurement rooted in asset-based, community-driven, and actionable data. Data becomes a tool for improvement that students, staff, families and community members can access, an instrument for reflection and mutual accountability – a flashlight, not a hammer.

Community School Classrooms Are Centered Around The Four Key Conditions for Learning



Designing instruction using **evidence-based strategies**, including innovative **instructional technology** applications that support motivation, competence and self-directed learning.

Teaching is **differentiated** and takes students' prior knowledge and experiences into account, providing the right amount of challenge and support.



Ensuring students are *Ready for the World* through **opportunity, access and real-world application**:

- **Career Exploration labs (Paxton Patterson),**
- **Linked Learning, Career and Technical Education,** and
- **Dual Enrollment** pathways to create lessons that connect current learning to their students' future selves.



SEL guides the way by integrating **SEL practices**, nurturing essential skills such as **social awareness, self-management, and self-efficacy**.

Fostering these competencies enables **academic progress** and **productive student behavior**.

Promoting **interpersonal skills** and **cultivating a positive growth mindset** supports **student resilience** and **productive action**.



Cultivating supportive ecosystems using **anti-racist** and **anti-bias** strategies that

- **foster strong relationships** and **community,**
- **emotional and identity safety,** and
- **a sense of belonging and purpose.**

Using **culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy** and **restorative practices** ensures all students are supported and valued in every classroom.



Refocusing classrooms on **Equitable Grading and Instruction (EGI)** using clear **learning targets**.

A **growth-mindset** approach is used for K-12 teaching and learning based on the understanding that all students can learn when provided with the **right conditions** and **support**, providing more students **academic success** and ultimately taking charge of their own learning.



Creating bridges to learning beyond the classroom by **connecting learning** to larger **social and economic issues** impacting the school community.

Instruction is **interdisciplinary** and **focuses on real world connections** to learning through **Project Based Learning (PBL)** and **Community Based Learning (CBL)**.

Digging into “College and Career Ready”



Ensuring students are *Ready for the World* through **opportunity, access and real-world application:**

- **Career Exploration labs (Paxton Patterson),**
- **Linked Learning, Career and Technical Education,** and
- **Dual Enrollment** pathways to create lessons that connect current learning to their students' future selves.

Opportunity, Access, and Real World Experience



Digging into “Community Connected Curriculum”



Creating bridges to learning beyond the classroom by **connecting learning** to larger **social and economic issues** impacting the school community.

Instruction is **interdisciplinary and focuses on real world connections** to learning through

- **Project Based Learning (PBL)** and
- **Community Based Learning (CBL).**

Connecting Learning to Community Issues



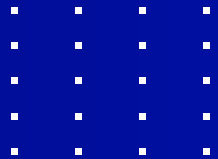
What type of herbs and vegetables would be most useful for community members in our garden?



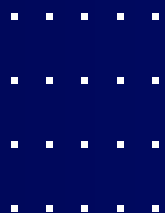
How can we promote the beauty of gardens in the community by creating a Room 32 garden?



How can we encourage the community to form their own vegetable and flower gardens based on our example?



Supporting Interdisciplinary, Project –Based Learning



Schools Select the “Right” Support for Their School



Defined

DEFINED LEARNING | CAREER CONNECTED PBL

A robust library that provides teachers with K-12 standards-aligned Project-Based Learning (PBL) units which are presented to students through the lens of modern-day STEM careers.

- engages students in authentic, real-world scenarios
- establishes connections to career pathways

Spring 2024

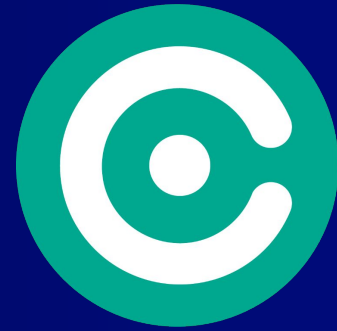
- 16 Community Schools received the materials and professional development around interdisciplinary instruction

Fall 2024

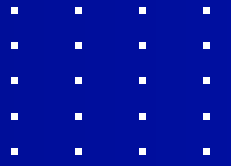
- Began Defined Learning at 16 sites

Spring 2025

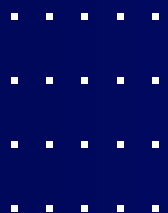
- Add additional Community Schools to the training
- The 16 initial sites engage students in one PBL



Center for
**POWERFUL
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**



Center for Powerful Public Schools
Helping Community Schools to Actualize PBL



We envision a system where **empowered** communities, schools, and educators create **equitable**, student-centered learning **environments** where every young person thrives.

Center for Powerful Public Schools

We Believe In:

CENTERING STUDENTS

We believe, first and foremost, in the power and potential of our underserved students. We work in solidarity with communities, schools, and systems to transform their beliefs, practices, and systems so that every young person is able to grow, learn, and thrive.

ACHIEVING EQUITY

We believe in the urgency of our collective work to radically change our system, which was not constructed nor currently serves our underserved communities. We work shoulder to shoulder with educators who are ready to grow and learn to make significant and measurable change in our educational practices, systems, and outcomes.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

We believe in the brilliance and capacity of the students, families, and educators we work with and know that they hold the answers to any challenges they face. We partner with systems and schools to ensure that they empower their stakeholders as decision makers.

Center for Powerful Public Schools

We Believe In:

IMPACTING GROWTH

We take an inquiry stance both in our own growth as an organization and in our partnerships with communities and educators. We are committed to building effective learning organizations that use data to drive honest dialogue, design high leverage change actions, and learn from their work. We are relentless in transforming systems and practices in service of achieving significant, measurable outcomes for underserved communities.

LEADING WITH LOVE

We believe caring relationships and a sense of belonging are foundational in building the schools and communities our young people deserve. We understand that love is action and demands courageous conversations that lead to equitable and liberating learning environments for our underserved communities. We practice this deep ethic of care and justice both within our organization and with our partners

Center for Powerful Public Schools

Project Background & Description

The Los Angeles Unified School District Community Schools (CS) Initiative is an effort to transform schools that goes beyond a traditional focus on academics. The California Community Schools Framework lists one of the Four Cornerstone Commitments as “A Commitment to Powerful, Culturally Proficient and Relevant Instruction.” Through this commitment, schools agree to engage in teaching and learning “that are relevant to, inclusive of, and centered in the wisdom, history, culture, and experience” of all stakeholders and is inquiry-oriented, project-based, collaborative and interactive.

To support 10 of its schools in their journey to understand and develop high quality, culturally relevant, project-based learning cultures, expertise, and curriculum, the LAUSD Community Schools Initiative is seeking a professional learning partner who can design adult learning experiences and support teams from each school in a community of practice.

Center for Powerful Public Schools

Project Goals

Through a combination of workshops, planning sessions, consultancies, and individualized coaching, this learning series will enable school teams consisting of 2-5 community school teachers and 1 leader to:

- Understand the theories, key frameworks, and best practices of both project-based learning and culturally responsive and sustaining educational practices
- Plan, implement, and document a PBL learning experience or unit
- Understand and begin to create supportive conditions that enable high quality, culturally responsive PBL to flourish across a school community

Center for Powerful Public Schools

Project Goals

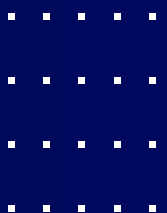
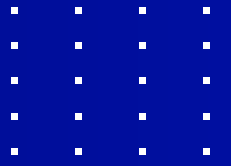
Through this 10 session module community of practice, each team will participate in/receive:

- Training and research-based frameworks related to high quality project-based learning and culturally responsive teaching practices
- Hand-on design/prototyping sessions and support focused on building and documenting high quality, culturally responsive PBL units
- Up to 8 individualized coaching sessions
- A community of like-minded equity and PBL champions to learn and build with
- Training and coaching sessions focused on building a school-wide culture and plan that provides teachers with the conditions and supports to grow and sustain PBL and culturally responsive teaching practices across the school site

Scope of Work

Time/Phase of Work	Objectives/Activities	Deliverables
Sessions	Objectives	Sample Activities
1-3	•Building a learning community within and across teams •Understanding and developing student centered/deeper learning/PBL and CR mindsets •Understanding, exploring, and experiencing high quality PBL •Understanding, exploring, and experiencing the connection between culturally relevant practices and Project-Based Learning Strategies •Understanding, exploring, and experiencing supportive conditions that enable high quality PBL to flourish	•Team building through the lens of a PBL mini-unit/slice •PBL and Culturally relevant frameworks and learning •PBL speakers/school visits •PBL curriculum exploration
4-6	•Prototyping a PBL experience or unit	•Planning tools exploration •Workshop time •Unit consultancies •Individual feedback
7-8	•Implementation of PBL experience or unit	•Peer visits •Individualized coaching •Consultancies
9-10	•Sharing our students' work/projects •Reflecting on lessons learned •Envisioning what's next •Strategy sessions focused on growing PBL and CR practices across the school site and community	•Simulated learning showcase/featured projects sharing •Peaks and valleys of PBL •Planning for the future

International Baccalaureate



International Baccalaureate (IB)

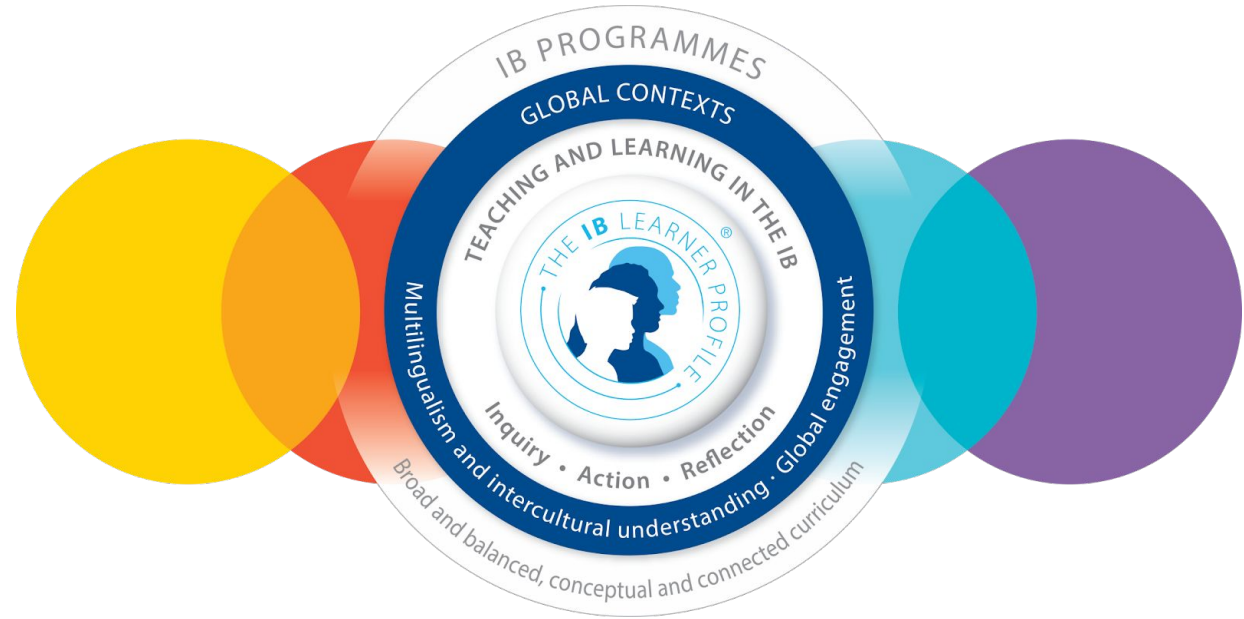
- Centered around an **inquiry-based learning approach**.
- Inquiry encourages students to be **curious, critical thinkers, and active learners**.
- The IB framework promotes **global-mindedness** and a **concept-driven** curriculum.
- 12 schools, 15 fully authorized programmes in LAUSD
 - 4 Primary Years Programmes (PYP)
 - 7 Middle Year Programmes (MYP)
 - 4 Diploma Programmes (DP)



IB Learner Profile

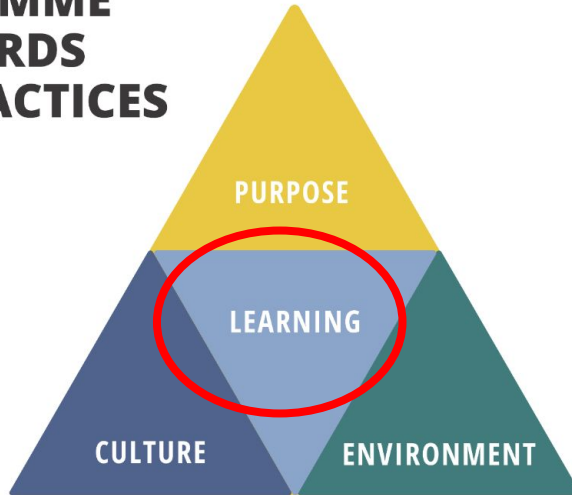
Inquiry-Based Learning in IB

- Students construct knowledge through **questioning, exploring, and problem-solving.**
- Focuses on **transdisciplinary themes** and real-world applications.
- Encourages **student agency, collaboration, and reflection.**



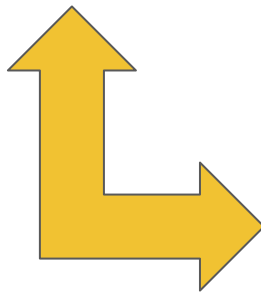
Program Standards and Practices

PROGRAMME STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

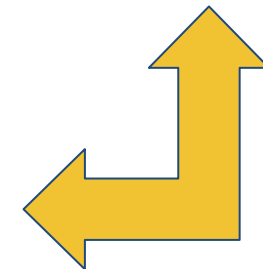


LEARNING

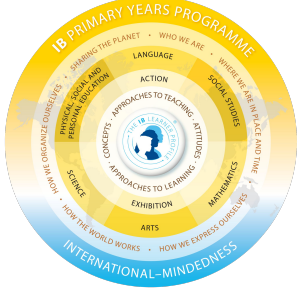
COHERENT CURRICULUM	STUDENTS AS LIFELONG LEARNERS	APPROACHES TO TEACHING	APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING	STUDENTS DEVELOP ATL SKILLS	DEVELOPING CURIOSITY IN STUDENTS	USE FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE
COLLABORATION TO DESIGN, PLAN & DELIVER	STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE LP ATTRIBUTES	DEVELOPING CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING	VARIED ASSESSMENT METHODS
DEVELOP, SHARE & REVIEW	STUDENT COLLABORATION	GLOBAL CONTEXTS TO ESTABLISH RELEVANCE	TRANSPARENT ASSESSMENT
	STUDENT INTEGRITY	POSITIVE & DYNAMIC LEARNING COMMUNITY	CONSOLIDATION OF LEARNING
	STUDENT ACTION	DIFFERENTIATION	
	STUDENT GOAL SETTING		
	STUDENT PERSONAL & CULTURAL IDENTITY		



	Who We Are	Where We Are in Place and Time	How the World Works	How We Organize Ourselves	How We Express Ourselves	Sharing the Planet
	An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values ; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human .	An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives.	An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment .	An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment .	An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic .	An inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution .
5th	Central Idea: Narratives can be used as a means to share personal identities, past and present. An inquiry into: - How humans organize (form) - The relationship between colonists and Indigenous Americans	Central Idea: Observable patterns from Earth and sky help us understand our position in the Universe. An inquiry into: - The history of recorded time and place (change) - Astronomy and its relationship with	Central Idea: Visible and invisible changes are happening all around us. An inquiry into: - How the structure and properties of matter affect form (form) - How new substances are	Central Idea: Humans' use of water affects its distribution and availability. An inquiry into: - Water cycle/earth's systems (function) - Water availability (connection) - Disruptions of	Central Idea: Revolution leads to change. An inquiry into: - Why people revolt (perspective) - The founding of America (responsibility) - Power of persuasion	Central Idea: People can make choices to support sustainability of the Earth's resources. An inquiry into: - How inequities around resources impact quality of life (causation) - How the world's resources are



Culminating Projects

Programme		Inquiry Focus	Required Project
Primary Years Programme (PYP) Ages: 3–12 Grades: PK–5		Student-led, concept-driven, transdisciplinary themes	<u>PYP Exhibition</u> – Grade 5 project exploring a real-world issue with research, presentation, and action within the school community.
Middle Years Programme (MYP) Ages: 11–16 Grades: 6–10		Subject-specific inquiry with ATL (Approaches to Learning) skills	<u>MYP Personal Project</u> – Year 5 (Grade 10) individual research on a topic of passion, developing creativity and critical thinking.
Diploma Programme (DP) Ages: 16–19 Grades: 11–12		Academic rigor and independent inquiry	Extended Essay (EE): 4,000-word independent research paper. Theory of Knowledge (TOK): Exhibition & Essay on knowledge inquiry. Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS): Experiential learning through service and creative projects.

The Impact of Inquiry-Based Learning

- Develops **lifelong learners** with strong **research, collaboration, and critical thinking skills**.
- Prepares students for **higher education and real-world challenges**.
- Encourages students to be **problem solvers and global citizens**.

Academic Programs

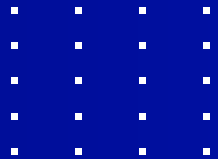
Achieve Excellence for All



*“Every child deserves to
have an education that
helps them to achieve
their dreams”*

2022-2026 LAUSD Strategic Plan





Questions

