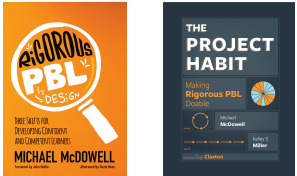# Comparing PBL Professional Learning Approaches

TRADITIONAL PBL APPROACH	RIGOROUS PBL APPROACH
Purpose: Increasing students ability to engage in problem solving and learning 21st Century skills through projects	**Purpose:** ● Ensuring students develop, relate and apply core academic content to multiple contexts and problems ● Increases students metacognitive and self-regulatory skills and dispositions to become assessment-capable ● Ensuring students develop knowledge and skills to be aware and manage social situations
Learning Focuses on... Project design	**Learning Focuses on...** Student and teacher learning of surface, deep and transfer learning, student assessment capabilities, clarity, feedback, and seeking help from peers
Creating single units that prescribe specific contexts and problems to students	Creating multiple draft units that involve several contexts and student generated problems
Structural elements of PBL implementation including group processes, entry event construction, and project presentations	Specific high impact instructional practices that align to the Visible Learning research

TRADITIONAL PBL APPROACH	RIGOROUS PBL APPROACH
Protocols that inspect project design	Learning protocols enable students to evaluate their growth in learning and generate solutions
Group learning as the primary driver of student engagement	Situational strategies that meet student needs at various levels of learning
Developing a culture of design and innovation	Developing a culture of progress and growth in learning
Improvement processes in unit design	Improvement processes related to student learning across levels of complexity, collaboration, and student assessment capabilities
Providing coaching services on unit design and development	Provides coaching services to enhance and modify teacher practices using 15 research based habits
Providing leadership coaching services on supporting teachers in designing and implementing projects and evaluating design and implementation	Providing leadership coaching on supporting teachers in evaluating their impact on student learning, leaders modeling high impact practices, and differentiating support for teachers
Common practices of design and implementation	Differentiating professional learning based on need and offering new approaches to PBL based on research and practices in the field

Gold Standard PBL Requirements vs. Rigorous PBL Design

Components	Gold Star PBL*	RIGOROUS PBL APPROACH
Challenging Problem or Question	Students are presented with "an engaging problem or question that makes learning more meaningful for students. They are not gaining knowledge to remember it; they are learning because they have a real need to know something, so they can use this knowledge to solve a problem or answer a question that matters to them."	Engagement in learning is based on students recognizing the difference in their current thinking to that which is required in the project. Knowledge is gained to remember content as that knowledge builds to enable students to apply it to the current problem or project and to transfer that understanding to other situations.
Sustain Inquiry	"In PBL, inquiry is iterative; when confronted with a challenging problem or questions, students ask questions, find resources to help answer them, then ask deeper questions- and the process repeats until a satisfactory solution or answer is developed."	Teachers play a key role in the inquiry process and ensure learners are using inquiry to move forward in their learning. Teachers provide instruction to enable learners to enhance their learning. Teachers are constantly assessing learners and working with learners to identify the best means to support their own learning. Questions such as *"Where are you going in your learning?" "Where are you?"* and *"What's next?"* are common in the classroom.
Authenticity	Relates to the "real world" aspects of the project including the context of the problem, engaging in real tasks, processes and tools, ensuring the project will have an impact on others, and relates to learners' own interests.	Focusing on learners' genuine discussion of their learning and how that learning relates to authentic aspects of a project, including the perspectives of others within various contexts.

Components	Gold Star PBL*	RIGOROUS PBL APPROACH
Student Voice & Choice	"Students have input...over many aspects of a project... including how they want to investigate it, demonstrate what they have learned, and how they will share their work."	Student voice and choice is focused more squarely on their learning as opposed to the project. Learners determine how they want to investigate their progress and proficiency, how they will demonstrate what they have learned, and how they will share their work.
Reflection	"Reflections on the content knowledge and understanding gained help students solidify what they have learned and think about how it might apply elsewhere, beyond the project."	Learners focus on the changes in their learning and what strategies they utilized to improve their rate of progress and level of proficiency.
Critique and Revision	"Students should be taught how to give and receive constructive peer feedback that will improve project processes and products."	Learners are taught how to give and receive constructive peer feedback that will improve their rate of progress and level of proficiency.
Public Products	Are used to ensure preparedness of the student, are vehicles to discuss the learning that has taken place, and are tangible evidence of the solution to a problem or answer to a driving question	Improvement processes related to student learning across levels of complexity, collaboration, and student assessment capabilities.

*from Buck Institute for Education: PBLWorks