

# Project Based Learning and CHARACTER COUNTS!

Using project based learning is a highly effective way to reach academic standards while teaching the importance of good character. This guide will help your students get started on a project that incorporates essential academic and character education elements.

CHARACTER COUNTS! Week, 2012 will be October 21-27, and what better way to get the ball rolling than to involve your students in planning for the event. We've outlined the major components of project based learning, as identified by the Buck Institute for Education, and align these with character content. We will make planning worksheets and rubrics available in the first installment of free resources for CHARACTER COUNTS! Week, 2012 on April 19th.

In the meantime, you can familiarize yourself with the main concepts of project based learning, how they tie with character values, and visit our website to learn more about CHARACTER COUNTS! Week, 2012.

**Driving Question:** this hypothesis guides the project. This is what we want to know. Our suggestion is to ask students to find out what other students did to organize CHARACTER COUNTS! Week in their schools in previous years.

**Need to Know:** this is the piece that engages students and convinces them that they do need, and want, to know the answers as it will directly benefit them. Presenting this first can be a novel way of conducting the project. This should begin with some event that drives curiosity. We recommend looking at some videos made by students to promote CHARACTER COUNTS! Week. If your class doesn't have access to technology, you can adapt the project at the Public Audience stage. For starters, we recommend the following videos:

[http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video\\_id=120685&title=Character\\_Counts](http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=120685&title=Character_Counts)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu\\_BhKQRsxY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu_BhKQRsxY&feature=related)

For more inspiration, type *CHARACTER COUNTS! Week* into the YouTube search box. There are many videos made by students of all ages on each of the Pillars.

## Project Based Learning and CHARACTER COUNTS! - cont.

**Voice and Choice:** Allowing your students to make decisions about the final product, how the project will be completed, and how they will work to achieve their goals. **Decision-making skills** are the natural focus of this section, but **Responsibility** also plays a role. Holding the students accountable for their choices, taking being accountable for completing their assigned tasks, being self-reliant, and hardworking all help develop responsibility.

**Revision and Reflection:** Use our rubrics to guide student learning about **making good decisions** as the project unfolds. Are they making decisions that they can follow through on? Are they working within their capabilities? Setting realistic expectations is a learnable skill, the rubrics that we will share in our first installment of free resources (available on April 19th) will guide this process and develop **responsibility**.

**Public Audience:** How will the project be celebrated and who will be the audience? Encourage students to take the project beyond their classmates and teacher. This can be a video that's uploaded to youtube, or a performance for the local community, or a school-to-school partnership event. The possibilities are limitless! By bringing their work to the larger community, students learn something about being an active **citizen**, as well as developing professional skills that enhance their understanding of **respect**: respect for themselves, for their work, and for those they present to.

**In-Depth Inquiry:** Make sure the project develops and expands student knowledge of the chosen subject area. Focus on the integrity of the project as the students move through each component. **Trusting** the students to maintain this focus, and developing trust among the students themselves, is part of this process.

Learn more about PBL here.

