



THE MET



Intellectual
Challenge and
Accomplishment



Authenticity



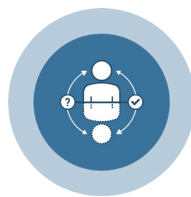
Public
Product



Collaboration



Project
Management



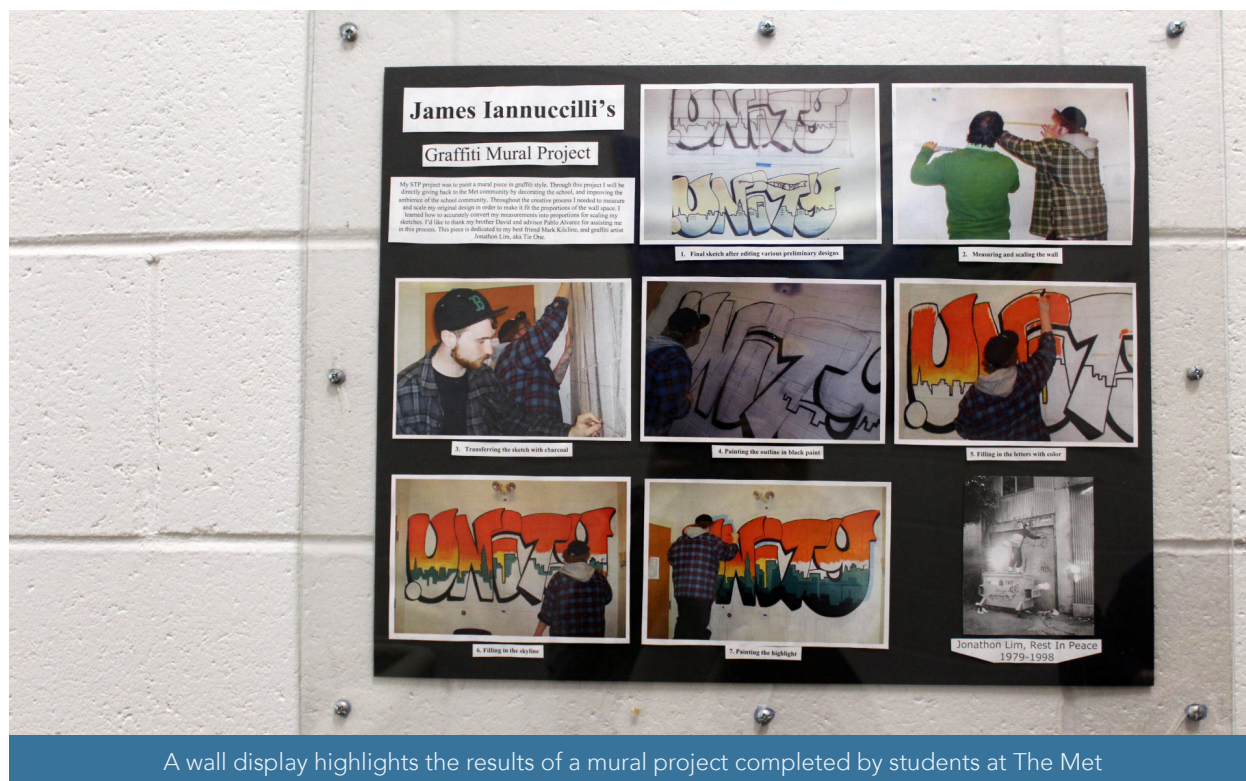
Reflection

The [Framework for High Quality Project Based Learning \(HQPBL\)](#) describes PBL in terms of the student experience. It describes six criteria, each of which must be at least minimally present in a project in order for it to be judged “high quality.” The six criteria were chosen as a necessary starting point for providing students access to HQPBL because they are an essential baseline, but they are not all-encompassing.

Projects that are the most memorable, and that have the greatest impact on student learning and development, will be those with the highest quality implementation of each criterion. The case study that follows highlights the six criteria and is intended to provide readers with a real-world example of HQPBL.

For more information and resources, visit the HQPBL [The Met](#) page:





"Working on high quality projects is at the core of the school...actually I'd like to rephrase that and say doing real-world, meaningful work is at the core," shared Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center High School (The Met) Co-Founder Dennis Littky. "Projects are the vehicle for how students at The Met get that done," Littky continued.

Dennis, along with the team at The Met, believe that meaningful work inspires students. Located in the heart of Providence, Rhode Island, The Met is part of the [Big Picture Learning](#) network and was designed based on the idea that students thrive when they are engaged in real-world work and are able to integrate internships tied to their passions into in-depth, integrated projects.

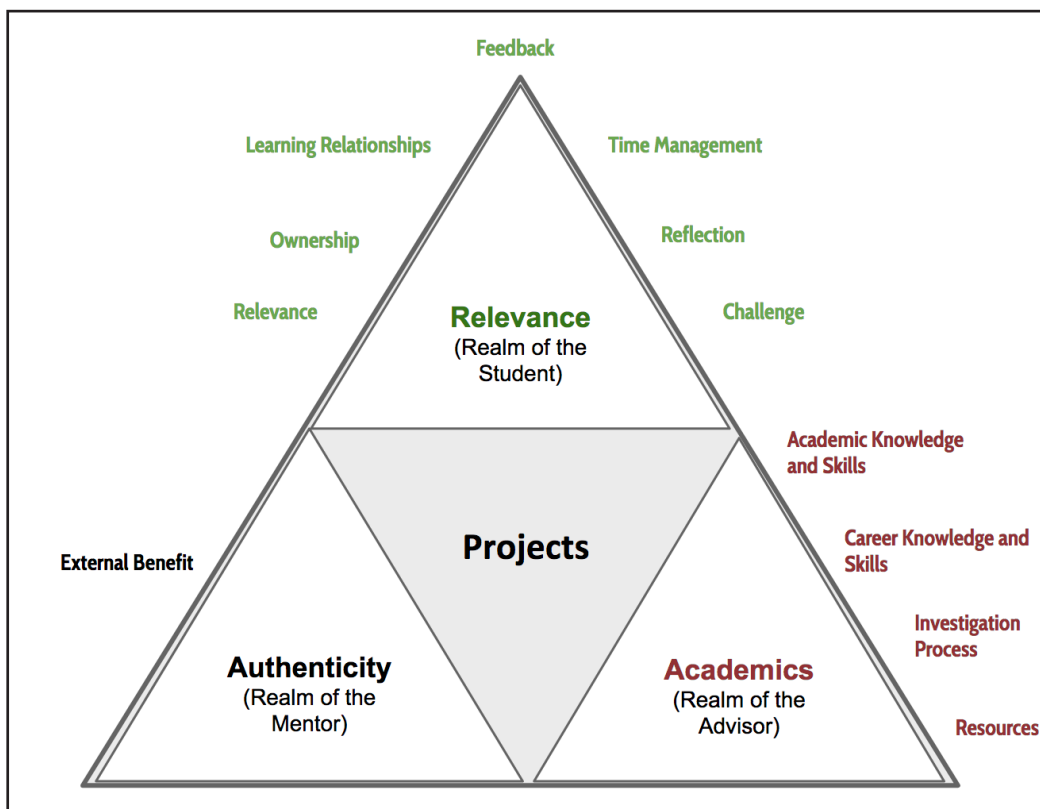
The high quality Project Based Learning (HQPBL) team wanted to hear directly from The Met students and staff, so we packed our bags and headed to Rhode Island. The stories we heard during our visit truly validated just how powerful HQPBL can be for students.

Each student we spoke with revealed how HQPBL at The Met has awakened their interests and passions, challenged them to extend themselves and improve their work, required they reflect on their products, and connected them and engaged them in their community.

Projects at The Met

How does it work, exactly? Students are grouped in small cohorts (or essentially small communities), each with a bonding name like Unity or Liberty. Cohorts collaborate to tackle problems, support each other, and collaborate on projects. "One student at a Time" is the mission. Learning through internships or learning through interest is how it is done at The Met.

Examples of The Met project rubrics and planning templates



Met Real World Learning RAA Project Rubric Review

Student: _____

Advisor: _____

Project Reviewed: _____

Date: _____

RELEVANT

Relevance: The project is **relevant** to the student's interests and passions and/or Post Met Plan.

Ownership: Student demonstrates **ownership** over the project - process and product.

Learning Relationships: The student describes and provides evidence that he/she has developed strong **learning relationships** with a real world mentor, ally, or community through this project.

Feedback: The student demonstrates that **they sought, received** and **intentionally incorporated feedback** to improve their project.

Time Management: Student demonstrates **timely** completion at project benchmarks.

Reflection: Student is able to **reflect** on their growth and learning through the project.

Challenge: Student can describe how they were **challenged** through the course of this project and in multiple aspects.

Authentic

External Benefit: The project has clear **benefits** to the LTI site, school or community.

Academic and Rigorous:

Academic Knowledge and Skills: The student provides evidence that he/she is developing & applying **knowledge & skills** in CO, ER, SR, and/or QR through their project work

Investigation Process: Student demonstrates that they have completed an in-depth **investigation**.

Resources: Student utilized a diverse range of **resources**.

Career Knowledge and Skills: The student provides evidence that he/she is developing & applying **career knowledge and skills** through their project work

"We work together in our cohorts to address goals [on individual learning plans], but often our project teams include many people outside of The Met—like experts in the field we are exploring or, say, a university professor. We spend a lot of time out in the field," shared Querida, a junior. They also have mentors and advisors, both at The Met and in the field at their respective project sites.

Advisors and mentors are rooted in the PBL process at The Met. They support and guide students through initiating and defining a project idea and then through [project management](#), determining how to use proposals, planners, and timelines to work on deliverables. They also work with students throughout the year, having regular check-in meetings and asking students how they are assessing their own progress, time, and work outcomes.

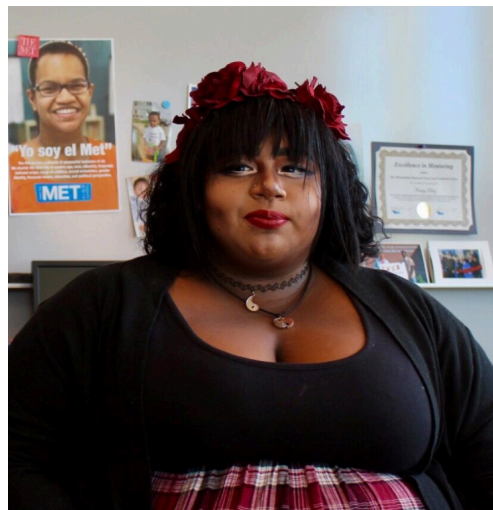
"You have to really manage your own time—I just started using Google Calendar the other day, and it is amazing," Taliq, a senior, shared. "You have to be disciplined and strategic. Think about your end goal, how you get there, you have to be intentional. Then it is even more rewarding and not just intellectually, but also emotionally. You really have to manage this whole project." Students express that their projects sometimes last a year or longer.

Authenticity Drives Students to Invest

Take Taliq's culminating thesis project as an example of authenticity investment and project management. He serves as dramaturge (a literary editor on the staff of a theater who consults with authors and edits texts) for a play about diversity issues. Taliq describes how he's been able to go [deeper](#) into his [passions](#) in his work over the last couple of years.

"I have so much more agency over my learning. My advisors have really challenged me to challenge myself with each project I take on and reflect on the last. Each project grows in complexity and challenge. When you work on a project, though, you have to think about what you are doing it for and why you are doing it; at The Met, our projects have to be connected to community. The play I am working on is performed to over 2,000 people a night, so it has to be quality to get people to show up."

This agency and authenticity is because projects at The Met are connected to individual student goals, and each project includes specific skills students need to address. Querida admitted that in middle school she felt bored and anxious in front of her peers and adults, lacking the confidence that she was learning much of anything. Now she can be found leading her own ESL classes, speaking Mandarin, Spanish, or English and touring the world to learn about language learning—all personal interests and passions. Querida feels the The Met has helped her come into her own and find her purpose through high quality Project Based Learning. "After being at The Met, I see there is so much opportunity, and learning can be really different."



Querida works on second language development with youth and adult learners in Providence



Taliq shares how projects helped him identify his passions

Many of the The Met students we talked with expressed that school previously wasn't engaging, and that they were not challenged enough. "I found myself in middle school really just not wanting to be in school. I didn't feel like I had a purpose. I don't feel that way now; I am so into my projects," Jodiana, a senior, told us.

Collaborating and Connecting with the Community

As a result of collaborating with people in the real world and presenting to large groups, through HQPBL The Met students also experience trials that force them to become effective leaders and know how to be professional in the field. Taliq shared that he had to have a conversation with someone after a play who wasn't pleased with the discussion about white privilege. "I had to navigate that conversation," he said. "It made me realize there is even more work to do. Projects like the dramaturg helped me to recognize who I am and to see how systems that exist affect me in a real way; it reinforced who I am as a male of color, and I want to do what I can to affect those systems in all of the work that I do." As a result, Taliq has started his own nonprofit, [Diversity Talks](#), focused on creating innovations in the education system. He regularly writes about his work and presents his ideas [all over the country](#).



Mackendry shares that she appreciates that at The Met she is able to work on authentic projects

Mackendry, a sophomore at The Met, shared that extended inquiry and "going deep" on a topic that she cares about made her realize she has choice and voice in what she gets to work on and what she wants to share as her public product.

"I'm always looking for more ways to show and be an activist for the LGBTQ community," she said. "I wanted to connect my two passions together, so this year I am working at a women's shelter. I've had to do a lot of research and investigation. I had to calculate statistics about domestic abuse and even look into the science behind cases. I had to figure out what goes into a lab report, create my own lab report, and use the appropriate language—and for me that was challenging." Mackendry said the challenge doesn't get to her because she deeply cares about the issues she is tackling in her projects.

Authenticity permeates every part of the learning, seeing that projects not only must be tied to the community and student interests like Mackendry described, but that they also engage students in an actual place of work and require them to contribute to desired deliverables. Students at The Met use tools, techniques, and assessments that are used in a real-world context and often which are used outside of the school in businesses and organizations.

Feedback Fuels Project Reflections

PBL at The Met also includes collaboration and opportunity for peer-to-peer feedback and critique. Students frequently receive feedback from mentors, experts, and university professors.

"I have a procedure for where I go for my feedback," Jodiana, a student who is working on bringing awareness to the refugee issues in her community, shared with us. "I start with Omar [my mentor] and then send all of the research to friends and people I have worked with in the State Department, professors I have worked with at Brown [University]. I go through my principal at Liberty and advisors and have asked my classmates what topics they want to learn about. I want to have as many opportunities to collaborate with as many people as possible."

MEET JODIANA

See more about Jodiana's work in *"What a Rhode Island Teen Wants You to Know About Her Year in the Middle East: 'Every Culture Has Beauty'."* Her 2017-2018 project is focused on creating conversations amongst the growing refugee population in Providence with the local community and identifying action steps to better work together.



Leeanna, aspiring lawyer, described her project in a law office where she, too, gets a lot of feedback and critique. She wrote a memorandum for an actual court case. "Mainly working on the memorandum, I had to use a lot of legal terms, and having to write that way—you can't just write any old type of way," she explained. "It took a lot of rewriting and drafts. This is a real document that they used in court; in fact, they wrote a counter to it."

Nancy Diaz Bain, current Co-Director of the The Met School, beamed when she revealed that the lawyer working with Leeanna thought she was a college student when he first met her, based on the caliber and quality of her work, and wanted her as an intern after seeing how diligent and dedicated she was to the work. Leeanna shared that this made her feel accomplished and proud of her work—more so than any other school assignment she has done before.



Leeanna received feedback on her memorandum directly from practicing lawyers and law experts



Alan shared that he felt intellectually challenged and accomplished during his most recent project

High Quality PBL Leads to a Real Sense of Accomplishment

Freshman student Alan finds himself feeling a similar sense of accomplishment as a result of HQPBL experiences at The Met. Because students have to continue to iterate and revise their work until it is of a high standard, there is a great sense of pride that comes with finishing a project. “I feel like I accomplished a lot, because I found out that if I put my mind to something it can be one of the best things I’ve done throughout my middle school and high school career. This isn’t something I can just do the night before and try to get an A.”

Alan admits that interdisciplinary projects push him to address challenging content and concepts that he typically wouldn’t be interested in. He has been working hard on learning about mechanical engineering as well as Spanish in order to create a guide for bilingual mechanics about how to operate brake systems.

“The hard part of the project wasn’t the physics, even though understanding the brakes, fluid, brake pads and how things work is a part of it—it was the history of it—I’ve never liked history at all,” Alan admitted. “Actually putting time in and finding out the history I ended up enjoying it.”

A lasting remark from Alan puts the power of HQPBL at The Met into perspective: “Doing this project makes me want to go onto the next level and do something even better next year.”

Founder Littky and current director Nancy Diaz Bain share that they see this level of commitment from all students at The Met; they become consumed with making sure students experiences and work are high quality and won’t settle for anything less.

Connected, networked, confident, and bold: Met School students explore their own passions through high quality, meaningful projects.

“I believe in traditional education models there isn’t the same chance to leave an impact. Coming to The Met, I’ve been able to make sure all the project work I have done has made a mark—a positive mark. The work has all made a positive impact on people and the community. Bringing people together and creating dialogue are things that are going to last for a while, not only people that attend my events, but also those who hear about it and other students who see the quality project and get inspired.”

— Jodiana, student at The Met



This case study was produced by [Getting Smart](#) as part of the High Quality Project Based Learning campaign. The goal of the campaign is to identify what high quality PBL student experiences look like and work to ensure all students have access to this type of learning. The campaign is supported by Project Management Institute Educational Foundation (PMIEF) and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and sponsored by the Buck Institute for Education.