

Carnell Elementary Project-Based Learning FAQ

“hands-on learning”, “discovering the answers to their own questions”

I heard about Carnell’s “redesign.” Does this mean that they will be a charter next year?

No. Carnell will remain a district neighborhood school. The same children eligible to attend Carnell this year will be able to attend next year. Carnell remains the district neighborhood school for this neighborhood. Carnell is one of four district schools that has been chosen to redesign this year. What this means is that the way we teach and do school next year will look very different. Carnell plans to become a Project Based Learning school in September 2015.

What is Project Based Learning (PBL)?

The act of learning through identifying a real-world problem and developing its solution. Kids show what they learn as they journey through the unit, not just at the end. In PBL, kids learn about many different subjects at the same time – all while researching a real-world problem that they identified.

Why PBL?

Students gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and standards at the heart of a project. Projects also build vital workplace skills and lifelong habits of learning. Projects can allow students to address community issues, explore careers, interact with adult mentors, use technology, and present their work to audiences beyond the classroom. PBL can motivate students who might otherwise find school boring or meaningless.

Will my child learn everything they need to know through PBL?

Yes. The learning of specified subject-matter concepts and standards (TEKS) is at the heart of PBL. Projects begin with curriculum standards and use aligned assessments to determine what students have learned. Projects are then designed around a Driving Question that knits together intended outcomes and project activities.

How will my student be graded?

Rubrics will be used to grade participation in group work, quality of product(s), and individual presentations. Individual weekly work ethic grades will also be given. Students will also receive individual grades through traditional assessments including; tests, quizzes, worksheets, and benchmarks.

How will teachers be prepared to teach in this new model?

For the past few months, Carnell has been conducting professional development workshops for teachers that are based on PBL and learning how to teach through projects. We are planning some more intense full-day institutes that will focus on this as well. During the summer, teachers will continue their training so that when school opens in September, we will have teachers who have learned how to fully implement this model. Additionally, because Carnell is making such a big change, we need to ensure that all teachers are on-board with PBL. To that end, each teacher who wants to teach at Carnell will be asked to re-interview to ensure a good fit. We will also be working with a curriculum partner organization who has experience in helping schools transition from traditional models to PBL models. They will provide professional development for our staff and teacher coaching.

How will my child know if they are understanding the material (assessment)?

Instead of one test at the end of a unit, PBL involves many points of assessment (continuous assessment). Some of these assessments may be in the form of a traditional test, but more

often, students will evaluate each other based on rubrics designed to measure collaboration skills, work ethic, and content mastery. This allows students to understand their strengths and weaknesses and make necessary changes to acquire the skills needed. Additionally, parents will be called in for goal-setting conferences on a regular basis. These conferences will be student-led – which helps students take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. This is all overseen and guided by the classroom teachers.

My child has an IEP. Will they still receive services?

Yes. If your child receives special education services, they will still receive these services. Our special education staff will work with your child's teacher to ensure that their work on a project is furthering their learning goals. If needed, your child may be pulled out of the classroom to provide additional instruction in certain subjects, or a special education teacher may "push-in" to your child's classroom and co-teach in a way that helps achieve your child's educational goals.

My child gets ELL services. Will this continue?

Yes. Similarly to our special education program, our ELL staff will both pull students out and push in to classrooms to ensure that all of our students are on track with their learning goals and making progress.

Who do I contact if my student is having difficulty on a project?

If a student is having a difficult time on a project, the student should speak with the teacher. If further intervention is needed, the parents should contact the teacher.

What are the components of PBL?

- Driving Question
- Entry Document
- Groups/Social Contracts
- Problem Statements
- Displayed "Already Know" & "Need to Know" Lists
- Scaffolding/Workshops
- Project
- Presentations
- Reflection

I'm really excited about this change! Are there ways parents can be involved?

Glad you asked! PBL uniquely involves parents in ways that other models do not. We need parents to be involved as classroom assistants, audiences and judges for student presentations, classroom project experts, Advisory Council members, and of course, as your child's biggest cheerleader and supporter at home. If you are excited about one or more of these options, but don't have much experience, never fear! Our Family Resource Center will provide you with any training you need to assist our scholars!

Ok, now I'm curious. Where can I find more information about PBL?

The following two websites are excellent sources of information about PBL:

<http://www.bie.org/>

<http://www.newtechnetwork.org/>