

# HOUSTON A<sup>+</sup> CHALLENGE

## The Joe Foster Award for Project-based Learning

Joe Foster believed in the future, and he knew the future depended on smart and energetic young people. An entrepreneur himself, Joe understood the importance of developing new ideas and practices inside schools. He believed in the potential of young people. As a long time member of the Houston A+ Challenge Board of Trustees, Joe served in many capacities, including Chairman of the A+ Board. Joe passed away in 2020. To honor Joe, Houston A+ Challenge has launched a project-based learning grant for adult learning leaders.

### Grant specifics:

#### Award and who is eligible?

An award of \$1,000 will be given to adult learning leaders committed to fulfilling a project-based learning plan over the span of the second semester (January-May, 2022). These learning leaders can be public school teachers or leaders (parents, facilitators, coaches) of independent learning pods or micro schools.

#### What is project-based learning?

Project-based learning begins with an essential question or a group of essential questions. An example of an essential question would be “What is the meaning of life?” Ok, that one might be too tough as an essential question. Maybe this one would be a better place to start: “What will be the long-term impact of COVID 19 on your community?”

Beyond the essential question, there is a rather simple answer to “what is project-based learning?”

Project-based learning is 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. To go deeper into the meaning of project-based learning, PBL is the ongoing act of learning about different subjects simultaneously. This is achieved by guiding students to identify, through research, a real-world problem (local to global) developing its solution using evidence to support the claim, and presenting the solution through a multimedia approach based in a set of 21st-century tools.

Kids show what they learn as they journey through the unit, interact with its lessons, collaborate with each other, and assess themselves and each other. They don't just take a test or produce a product at the end to show their learning.

Project-based learning typically is grounded in the following elements:

- Role-playing
- Real-world scenarios
- Blended writing genres
- Multiple reading genres
- Authentic assessments
- Authentic audiences
- Real-world expertise brought into the classroom
- Units that assess multiple skills
- Units that require research and comprehension of multiple subjects
- Student choice
- Collaboration
- Multiple methods of communication (writing, oral speaking, visual presentations, publishing, etc.)

#### Still Interested? Follow these steps to qualify for PBL consideration:

1. Identify your team
2. Identify your essential question
3. Design your learning plan
4. And finally, the golden question: “How will this learning benefit your

Submit the information related to #1-4 above by December 1, 2021 to Houston A+ Challenge at [tmomaghan@houstonaplus.org](mailto:tmomaghan@houstonaplus.org).

Houston A+ Challenge will assemble a review panel to decide what teams move forward with their project-based learning idea.

#### Timeline for Projects:

- Teams selected/notified of eligibility to participate by December 15, 2021
- PBL begins in January, 2022
- Check-in about progress in March, 2022
- Submit Project and results by May 15, 2022
- Houston A+ Challenge Panel reviews Projects and announces \$1,000.00 Award(s) by May 30, 2022