



# Professional Practices

For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leader

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## Making PSEL Come Alive! Rigorous and Innovative Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

### About the Author



Marcia Baldanza, the author of *Professional Practices* and a Just ASK Senior Consultant, lives in Arlington, Virginia. Until recently she worked for the School District of Palm Beach County, Florida, where she was an Area Director for School Reform and Accountability; prior to that she was Director of Federal and State Programs.

To be an exemplary instructional leader, one must develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote each student’s academic success and well-being as described in the **Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**. Taking a really hard look at what is being taught, how it is being taught, and how we know if students understand is critical to the successful implementation of this standard.

In this issue of *Professional Practices* you will find

- Tools to use in developing a common understanding of rigor as well as tools that ensure rigorous levels of teaching and learning:
  - Rigor and Relevance Framework
  - Habits of Mind
  - Webb’s Degrees of Knowledge
  - Question and Stem Guide
  - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking Skills
- A self-assessment/goal setting tool for examining your journey as a leader in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- An exploration of what is meant by the terms innovative and innovation in relationship to what and how we teach and assess with an emphasis on project-based learning

### Resources for Rigorous Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

One of my greatest challenges, and probably yours also, is helping educators come to a common understanding of what is meant by rigor. To that end, last year I introduced a lesson plan for building a shared definition of rigor. That plan includes the use of a podcast from **Eduleadership** (not be confused with **ASCD’s Ed Leadership**) in which **Barbara Blackburn** discusses rigor ([www.eduleadership.org/elr15-barbara-blackburn-phd-on-rigor/](http://www.eduleadership.org/elr15-barbara-blackburn-phd-on-rigor/)), staff-generated **Graffiti** charts, and a light-hearted animated YouTube clip titled **Rigor in the Classroom** you can access at <https://youtu.be/Fs3EL9CWTHI>. You can access that entire lesson plan at [www.justaskpublications.com/justask-resource-center/e-newsletters/professionalpractices/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment](http://www.justaskpublications.com/justask-resource-center/e-newsletters/professionalpractices/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment).

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Two other tools you could use when working with staff around rigor are:

- An article by Dr. Blackburn and Dr. Ronald Williamson titled “The Characteristics of a Rigorous Classroom” at [http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/M4-slide\\_11\\_Characteristics\\_of\\_a\\_Rigorous\\_Classroom.pdf](http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/M4-slide_11_Characteristics_of_a_Rigorous_Classroom.pdf).
- A PDF of a PowerPoint presentation at [www.serve.org/uploads/files/Defining%20Rigor.pdf](http://www.serve.org/uploads/files/Defining%20Rigor.pdf)

Paula Rutherford writes about the **Rigor/Relevance Framework** and Costa and Kallick’s **Habits of Mind** in her book *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners*. Some of that information is excerpted here.

“The International Center for Leadership in Education created the **Rigor/Relevance Framework** for use in designing tasks, projects, and assessments that go far beyond what we usually ask of our students. In this framework, **Willard Daggett** and his colleagues at the **Center** have combined **Bloom’s Taxonomy** with an **Application Model**. The **Application Model** moves from knowledge in one discipline, to application of knowledge in one discipline, to application of knowledge across disciplines, to application of knowledge in real-world predictable situations, and ultimately to application of knowledge in real-world unpredictable situations. When we design tasks that ask students to apply knowledge to real-world, unpredictable situations as required in Quadrant D, we are providing them the opportunity to develop the skills that the **Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills** has identified as essential for the future. For more information:

- Access a white paper on the Rigor/Relevance Framework at [www.leadered.com/pdf/Rigor%20Relevance%20Framework%20White%20Paper%202016.pdf](http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Rigor%20Relevance%20Framework%20White%20Paper%202016.pdf).
- Learn about the skills identified by the **Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills** at [www.p21.org/storage/documents/docs/P21\\_framework\\_0816.pdf](http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/docs/P21_framework_0816.pdf) and [www.p21.org/storage/documents/docs/P21\\_Framework\\_Definitions\\_New\\_Logo\\_2015.pdf](http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/docs/P21_Framework_Definitions_New_Logo_2015.pdf).”

“According to **Art Costa and Bena Kallick**, ‘A **Habit of Mind** is knowing how to behave intelligently when you don’t know the answer. A **Habit of Mind** means having a disposition toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known: dichotomies, dilemmas, enigmas, and uncertainties.’ They go on to say that the ‘focus

is on performance under challenging conditions that demand strategic reasoning, insightfulness, perseverance, creativity, and craftsmanship. The critical attribute of intelligent human beings is not only having information, but also knowing how to act on it. Employing **Habits of Mind** requires drawing forth patterns of rigorous intellectual behavior that produce powerful results. They are a composite of many skills, attitudes, and proclivities.’

The 16 **Habits of Mind** identified by Costa and Kallick are:

- Persisting
- Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- Managing impulsivity
- Gathering data through all senses
- Listening with understanding and empathy
- Creating, imagining, innovating
- Thinking flexibly
- Responding with wonderment and awe
- Thinking about thinking (metacognition)
- Taking responsible risks
- Striving for accuracy
- Finding humor
- Questioning and posing problems
- Thinking interdependently
- Applying past knowledge to new situations
- Remaining open to continuous learning

To help staff or students develop an understanding of what these habits look and sound like you, might have them create **Graffiti** charts or poster-size **T-Charts** for selected habits. The task would be to have them represent what one would be doing or would see and hear if a given habit was well-developed. These charts could then be used later as rubric-like tools for peer and self-assessment. Learn more about **Habits of Mind** at [www.edutopia.org/blog/habits-of-mind-terrell-heick](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/habits-of-mind-terrell-heick).”

**Norman Webb** and his colleagues at the **Wisconsin Center of Educational Research**, University of Wisconsin-Madison, generated a different way to plan for rigorous curriculum, instruction, and assessment. That construct which has four levels, is called **Degrees of Knowledge (DOK)**.

Level 4 is called **Extended Thinking** and requires an investigation, time to think and process multiple conditions of the problem. These higher-level activities require students to appraise, connect, create, critique,



design, judge, justify, prove, report, or synthesize.  
Possible Level 4 exercises might require students to:

- Design and conduct an experiment that requires specifying a problem; report results/solutions
- Synthesize ideas into new concepts
- Critique experimental designs
- Design a mathematical model to inform and solve a practical or abstract situation.
- Connect common themes across texts from different cultures
- Synthesize information from multiple sources

You can access **Questions and Stem Guide for Teachers and Students** at [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/mentoring-resources](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/mentoring-resources). Based on the work of **Heather Clayton**, this guide provides rigorous, yet easily accessible, stems to use in the design of lessons and questions, and sentence starters that can guide peer-to-peer conversations. These tools definitely promote reflection, **DOK** Level Four thinking, development of **Habits of Mind**, and the use of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

### Excerpts from Yesterday & Today... Moving to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking Skills

Emphasis was on memorization of facts. Teacher was primary source of information. Any source of written information was considered valid.	Emphasis is on evidence-based responses. Students use a wide variety of sources. Students are expected to evaluate the reliability of sources.
Emphasis was on finding, remembering, listing, describing, explaining, and naming. Students were expected to supply the right answer. Teacher questions focused on what and when. Primary classroom tools were textbooks, chalkboards, and paper and pencils. Teachers often planned their lessons, based on teacher's manuals and program guides. Homework was often preparation (read a chapter) and practice (complete a worksheet). The primary audience for student work was the teacher's inbox.	Students are challenged to invent, create, justify, critique, deconstruct, interrogate, assess, and convince. Students explain the thinking behind their answers. Questions require students to respond to why and how. Tools include paper and pencils plus digital devices, robotics, interactive technology, and human resources. Standards, formative assessment, and authentic performance-based tasks drive instructional planning. Homework is often extension or creative and requires application of new learning. Students design products for a variety of audiences, including classmates.
Students often focused on four C's: <b>Capture</b> the lecture, <b>Color code</b> the notes, <b>Cram</b> for the test, and <b>Cross</b> your fingers that you can remember the facts. Assessment of learning was completed primarily by the teacher. Students received a grade on assessment and the next learning segment was introduced no matter the level of mastery.	Students are assessed on the five C's of the 21st Century Skills: <b>Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity</b> and <b>Innovation</b> , and <b>Cultural Responsiveness</b> . Students are asked to self-assess to determine and set learning goals. Students are provided growth-producing feedback and are expected to react to that feedback in ways that promote further learning.

Source: Oliver, Bruce. "It's the Thought that Counts." *Just for the ASKing!* Just ASK Publications, September 2014. Access at [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/its-the-thought-that-counts/](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/its-the-thought-that-counts/).



# Self-Assessment

## 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

### Standard 4: Self-Assessment: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

Competent	Partially Competent	Not Yet Competent
Implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and core values, embody high expectations for student learning, align to standards, and are culturally responsive.	Classrooms are standards-referenced, not standards-based. Teachers can locate their standards and can align them to their unit, but do not routinely do so.	Standards are not present in classroom planning or teaching. Teachers teach favorite units in isolation from grade level or department
5 ----- 4	3 ----- 2	1

Goal:

Promote instructional practice that is consistent with knowledge of child development, effective pedagogy, and the needs of each student.	Textbooks dominate planning and instruction. Whole group instruction is based on rote learning and skill demonstration.	Lecture style and “who can tell me” questions are abundant.
5 ----- 4	3 ----- 2	1

Goal:

Ensure instructional practice that is intellectually challenging, authentic to experiences, recognizes student strengths, and is differentiated.	Personalization and differentiation is provided, but lowers the expectations for learners.	Instruction is textbook driven and covered in sequence from front to back.
5 ----- 4	3 ----- 2	1

Goal:

Promote the effective use of technology in the support and service of teaching and learning.	Technology is an add-on the existing curriculum and is an afterthought center-type learning station with drill and practice activities.	Technology is not used.
5 ----- 4	3 ----- 2	1

Goal:

Use assessment data appropriately to monitor student progress and improve instruction.	End of unit tests are discussed in teams and with principal with no expectation of change in practice. “I taught it; they didn’t learn it” permeates.	End of unit tests are taken from textbooks, administered, and recorded in grade books.
5 ----- 4	3 ----- 2	1

Goal:



## Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)

- Mission, Vision, and Core Values
- Ethics and Professional Norms
- Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Community of Care and Support for Students
- Professional Capacity of School Personnel
- Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
- Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
- Operations and Management
- School Improvement

## Are We Really Using Innovative Innovations?

I am struck by the number of times I hear phrases that claim some product or practice is innovative. In my experience, there are not many truly innovative products and practices. In education, are we truly innovative in our quests to tweak existing curriculum materials, seek to improve our instructional practices, or revise our assessments? I am not so sure!

**Innovate:** (verb) introduce new methods, ideas, or products; make changes in anything established; revolutionize

**Innovation:** (noun) a new method, idea, or product

**Innovative:** (adjective) featuring new methods; advanced and original; introducing new ideas; original and creative in thinking

**Synonyms:** original, new, novel, fresh, unusual, unprecedented, avant-garde, experimental, inventive, ingenious, creative; advanced, modern, state-of-the-art, pioneering, groundbreaking, revolutionary, radical, newfangled

I had the pleasure of meeting a real innovator named Aana, a junior at Princeton University. She is a member of The Princeton Entrepreneurship Club, aka the E-Club. She designed an app that has potential to change the way health care is delivered around the world. By looking into your computer, iPad or smart phone camera for 15 seconds, it calculates your heart rate by measuring the color change in your cheeks which is correlated to blood flow. The rate of change is put into an algorithm and estimates heart rate. Now, that's innovative! Her motto, which is posted on a wall in the Incubator (a lab-like setting for the E-Club) is, "When it comes to ideas, quantity > quality."

Questions I ask myself about being an innovative educator include:

- How can we become educational innovators ourselves who help students innovate?
- How are learning experiences and assessments best designed to support deeper learning and effectively develop and evaluate students' knowledge and skills so that teachers can address their needs with fresh, creative, and original thinking?
- Do our facilities support innovation?
- Do our teacher evaluation systems promote innovative practice?
- Do our school schedules and budgets advance innovation?
- How do we develop more Aanas of the world?
- Do we have what it takes?

## Innovative Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Resources

**Learning Policy Institute's** website, which I recommend you visit at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/topic/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment>, presents this statement: "Educators seeking to prepare their students for 21st-century expectations are designing curriculum and instruction to support deeper understanding of content by focusing on inquiry and complex problem solving. Learning opportunities in the community and local workplaces link classroom-based instruction to the real world in real ways. Students in these environments:

- Engage in critical and creative thinking as they investigate scientific, social/historical, literary, artistic, and mathematical questions and develop grounded arguments, solutions, and products.
- Hone verbal, written, and graphic communication skills through written assignments and presentations.
- Develop social-emotional competencies that support self-management, perseverance, resilience, collaboration, and a growth mind-set.
- Use new digital tools and technologies to seek and display knowledge and connect to resources, experts, and peers across the country and around the world.
- Demonstrate their knowledge through performance assessments allowing them to exhibit what they know and can do in authentic ways."

Wow! Who wouldn't want to teach, learn, and lead in this environment? Notice that there is no mention of passing state tests or meeting "minutes of instruction" compliance. While accountability for standards is important as is ensuring adequate time to teach and learn, what would really make students ready for college and careers is a focus on the skills listed above.

**TED-Ed Innovative Educator** is a year-long professional development program (<http://blog.ed.ted.com/2015/09/01/this-is-the-ted-ed-innovative-educator>). Questions addressed include:

- What does innovation in education look like around the world?
- What is a great idea in education that hasn't yet been tried?
- What amount of collaboration and support could help that idea come to life?
- How might we help educators share ideas beyond school walls?

### Quotes from Ted-Ed Innovative Educator

- "Innovation in education involves constant collaboration with colleagues - a total last-minute redo of a teacher's lesson plan because there was something else out there that he or she just had to try, a change in the direction of a class because the students are driving the instruction."
- "Innovation in education happens when educators ask, 'How can I make this real, relevant, interesting, student-centric and personalized?'"
- "Innovation in education is about more than just technology. It's about how you can use technology to empower students to become lifelong learners who are agents of change."

**Terry Heick**, founder and director of **TeachThought**, recommends starting small, with manageable ideas like adapting to the learners, rethinking learning spaces, and leveraging the role of play.

- **Adapt to the Learners**
  - More often than not, educators select the technology platforms and tool of learning, and force the students to use them rather than understanding the needs of learners first, and then finding the appropriate digital tools to support those needs.
  - Traditionally, formal education has required learners to come to the content via well-sequenced instruction, charismatic teachers or dogged determinism on the part of the learner. As learners have access to more diverse forms of informal collaboration through social media platforms, as well as access to mother lodes of



information, this pattern must change in form and tone.

- Classroom Strategies
  - Use powerful, relevant media forms -- music and video, for example.
  - Allow students to self-select their group members, create their own rubrics, source their learning materials, or even plan lessons.
  - Use feedback systems, grading, assessment forms and other aspects of instructional design toward which your students seem to gravitate. Often students resist not the content, but the form.
- **Rethink Learning Spaces**
  - Reimagining a building's physical space as simply a physical meeting point can improve global awareness. This in and of itself -- if you can truly manage it in daily practice -- will enable countless other less visible but crucial adjustments to the learning process. In this way, through the application of technology, digital media and social media, the walls of all buildings become transparent.
  - Consider how you'd plan a learning experience if you had no classroom. How would it be different? Now, consider that you do, in fact, have to meet tomorrow morning in a small room with concrete floors. Where do you go from there if that classroom is just a starting point? A global curriculum can't be created or implemented sitting in a room, no matter the miracle of technology.
  - Classroom Strategies
    - Communicate in person with authentic audiences in the community.
    - Use **Project-Based Learning** to literally deliver products and solutions that address "real-time" local problems and issues.
    - Move to other classrooms to collaborate with other classes in other content areas.
- **Leverage the Role of Play**
  - Learners are incredibly creative, curious, social and ambitious. The issue is often their application of these talents to resist the formal learning process. Digital and social media benefit from so much "hands on" time that learning -- in one form or another -- is omnipresent. Figuring out where and how, and using this knowledge to your advantage, is the next step. What are "users" of information doing naturally without my express instruction? What is happening with processes and information when the teacher "isn't looking"? (And if the answer is "nothing," what does that tell us?)
  - **Project-Based Learning** also honors the concept of "play," where learning is not tightly sequenced and scripted, but organic, and learners begin learning to manage their own time, focus and intellectual and creative output.
  - Classroom Strategies
    - Use **Project-Based Learning** that provides multiple potential learning paths, and is open-ended.
    - Gamify your classroom or curriculum. Establish leader boards, offer perks to unlock via task completion, and make otherwise subtle steps of the learning process more visible.
    - Use digital and social platforms for projects. These encourage students to "play" with tools and features that are natural to them.

For more ideas on **Project-Based Learning** and how to get started, check out these Just ASK publications:

- In "Bringing the Standards to Life through Project-Based Learning" Heather Clayton notes that **PBL** is a powerful way to address rigorous state standards and innovative ways for teachers to orchestrate authentic and real-world application of knowledge and skills, as well as the development of next generation skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and communication, and creativity and innovation. **PBL** is exactly what is called for because it allows students to learn relevant and essential content while practicing the skills that will promote success in college, career, and life. Access the guide at: [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/msca/bringing-the-common-core-standards-to-life-through-project-based-learning/](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/msca/bringing-the-common-core-standards-to-life-through-project-based-learning/)
- In the *Just for the ASKing!* issue titled "Project-Based Learning," Bruce Oliver, offers definitions, recommendations, and resources. For example, he recommends the nine videos listed on the next page. Access the newsletter at: [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/project-based-learning/](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/project-based-learning/)



## Project-Based Learning (PBL) Clips

- [youtube.com/watch?v=Pou61mRWz1E](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Pou61mRWz1E) – A **PBL** Essential Elements webinar by John Larmer of the **Buck Institute for Education (BIE)**, a world renowned source of information on **Project-Based Learning**
- [youtube.com/watch?v=dFySmS9\\_y\\_0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=dFySmS9_y_0) – An introduction to **PBL** with numerous examples of student projects
- [youtube.com/watch?v=VDlv7\\_i4mi0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=VDlv7_i4mi0) – Teacher David Grant describing a framework for project success
- [youtube.com/watch?v=2O8eCdkg0vE&list=PL3B4723DD57BCB41A](https://youtube.com/watch?v=2O8eCdkg0vE&list=PL3B4723DD57BCB41A) – **PBL** at the middle school level
- [youtube.com/watch?v=D84sJwKVwoE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=D84sJwKVwoE) – How a high school has restructured the day to create multi-disciplinary integrated projects
- [youtube.com/watch?v=W3jD7LJ6AWw](https://youtube.com/watch?v=W3jD7LJ6AWw) – Fourth and fifth graders demonstrating how they carried out a project
- [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1A80AFF51CE8015F](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1A80AFF51CE8015F) – A series of videos in a variety of elementary school settings
- [edutopia.org/project-based-learning](http://edutopia.org/project-based-learning) – A series of videos addressing a variety of PBL-related subjects including planning for success, assessment of projects, teacher as facilitator, structuring student collaboration, and making projects rigorous
- [www.bie.org/object/video/katherine\\_smith\\_school\\_kindergarten\\_project\\_presentation](http://www.bie.org/object/video/katherine_smith_school_kindergarten_project_presentation) – An example of a final project presentation by a kindergarten class

Remember, as Dale Carnegie said,  
“Knowledge isn’t power until it is applied!”

## Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) Update

The New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association recently hosted a gathering called “**What Do the New Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) Mean for You, Your School, and Your District?**” They invited district and school teams to this free event to explore how the **PSEL** can be used to support growth and the collective capacity of leaders to directly impact school and district improvement. Making the standards more “actionable” is the goal of the **Leadership Reflection & Growth Tool**, which promotes self-reflection and meaningful dialogue by school and district leaders. Access this tool at <http://njpsa.org/psel-leadership-reflection-and-growth-tool>. It is easy to create an account. You do not have to reside or work in New Jersey to create an account. Once you have an account, you can complete the self-reflection. You then receive guiding questions and recommendations for next steps based on your responses. Kudos to New Jersey for this forward thinking approach that allows all educational leaders access!





## Resources and References

(See also multiple web listings embedded in text.)

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