

# LEARNING PROJECT WORK

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Jamila Appleby, M ED  
ESL teacher  
Stratton Academy of the Arts  
Champaign, IL



# WHO AM I?

- I am a teacher, educator, and my new title... coach/guide.
- I've taught grades pre-k- middle school.
- I've worked in a variety of settings: day cares, day camps, migrant summer school.
- I've been working with children for over 25 years!!
- I am currently an ESL teacher at Stratton Elementary School in Champaign, IL.



# MEETING NANCY

- The year was 2000. I was teaching kindergarten at Stratton Elementary.
- I noticed a woman outside my door thoughtfully studying my “circle man” display.
- Dr. Nancy Hertzog walked into my room after with a smile, introduced herself and asked me about the “shape project.” The word “project” I use loosely.
- Nancy asked me questions...that 1 I couldn't answer and 2 it changed how I would learning forever. “How do you know your students know what a circle is, what is your evidence that they learned?”
- Nancy introduced me to project based learning and the possibility of evoking change and meaning.



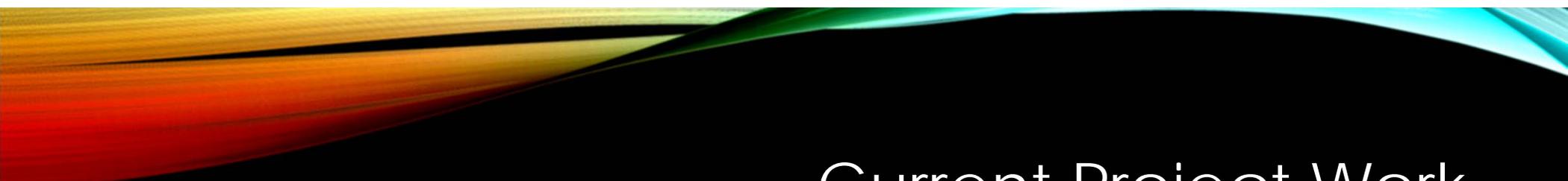
## The shift- Altitude

I met with Nancy on many occasions to discuss project work and the process. She introduced me to choice boards, interviews, observational sketches, memory drawings, and replications.

After weeks of doing our Balls and Ramps science unit through a project based learning lens.

Something happened! In the cafeteria, I noticed a few students using their celery stalks putting them together discussing height and altitude.

That was the day I was hooked! I knew my students were paying attention and learning.



# Current Project Work

1st Grade- Light and Sound Science Unit

I began to ask the kids what they knew about light and sound and what questions they had about it.

I had to figure out a way to bring this topic to life and meaningful.

Sound Walk

Sound drawings

Sound interviews

sound wave art



# Project Work and Language Learners

Why is project work good for ELL students?

- Student voice and choice
- Interest
- Collaboration (in L1 and L2)
- Code switching
- Inquiry, Questioning
- Higher level thinking
- Engagement
- Hands-on learning
- Empowerment



## In Conclusion.....

Once you learn and fully absorb the power and excitement of Project Based Learning you can't unlearn it.

The project approach is a lens that you look through not an add-on, or a unit that you write up ahead of time.

In regards to helping students achieve and experience authentic engagement you have to believe in them and be their guide.

All students deserve a rich, rigorous learning environment where they are so focused on what they are doing that behavior issues decrease.

All students need opportunities to be taught to think, question, and explore their world and have ownership in their education.



Questions/Comments/Recommendations?

You can reach me at:

(Cell) 217-778-2701

(Email) [applebja@u4sd.org](mailto:applebja@u4sd.org)