



**MountainMutts Small Business Website
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*Vanessa Carvalho
with student Lukasz W.*

Hi all,

This is my first ever “public reflection” and I’ve got to say this is probably the most awkward piece of writing I have ever written. Regardless of the feeling, I think my experience with the LASER Program at the Leysin American School has added value to the way I see project-based learning (PBL) and integrating “real-life” circumstances to the curriculum I teach. I am an IB Business Management teacher and I have had the privilege of teaching some of the best students this graduating class of 2022.

One of these students was especially keen on working outside of the class content, integrating his pre-existing website development skills with what he was learning about in the class, in particular about marketing. I have more of a marketing background, having worked with Adobe suite with product managers in a previous professional life; I also wanted to learn more about website development and management – so you could say this was quite a happy pairing.

I decided to cover the costs of this project and in doing so my student and I created our very own online business. I shared my process of using Adobe illustrator to create logos and other images, while he shared his knowledge in using cloud infrastructure and digital content management systems. I linked social networks together to provide consistent messaging throughout multiple platforms and he linked a payment system to sell services and products. We’ve worked together as a team (me as a client in some ways and he as the consultant), which has given him invaluable experiences in communication, project management, problem solving and teamwork.

All in all, I believe that project-based learning offers a sense of purpose for students which is one way in which we can create motivated learners. It was also an outlet for me to step outside of the classroom and work on something I am passionate about. Upon writing this reflection I chose to do a little more research into PBL and its effectiveness.

One study of PBL was conducted in elementary school science classes, with groups that either did or didn’t participate in PBL. Overall, students in PBL classes outperformed in science, social and emotional learning and literacy scores (Krajcik, et al.). However, I am skeptical to use only this approach and it also does raise questions on whether or not it can be applied to all subjects.



Another study found that minimal guidance and no prior or basic understanding of complex content or theories would have negative effects on student academic achievement.

"...strong guidance while learning is more often found to be equally effective as unguided approaches... there is also evidence that [unguided instruction] may have negative results when students acquire misconceptions or incomplete or disorganized knowledge" (Kirschner, et al.).

Although, from my experience it comes down to the type of student you have, how many students are in your classroom, and how much time you have to dedicate to each lesson or time after school. We should also never assume one approach to learning will work for everyone and for every stage of their learning. In business class, we can quite quickly use real world examples to understand the content and from this example create a website and a business in less than a year's time! In other subjects, schools, and classes, this may not be as feasible.

I thoroughly enjoyed working on this project with my business student. It was an exceptional experience and I know that he has taken as much from this process as I have. If you would like to see the progress on the website head on over to www.mountain-mutts.ch.

References

Krajcik, Joseph, et al. "Project-Based Learning Increases Science Achievement in Elementary School and Advances Social and Emotional Learning." Lucas Education Research, mlpbl.open3d.science/sites/mlpbl/files/MLPBL-technical-report-summary.pdf. Accessed 5 Apr. 2022.

Paul A. Kirschner, John Sweller & Richard E. Clark (2006) Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based Teaching, Educational Psychologist, 41:2, 75-86, DOI: [10.1207/s15326985ep4102_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4102_1)