

# Community Connections & PBL Workshop

Community partners join with teacher teams to plan powerful PBL projects.

Loudoun County Public Schools has been training their teachers in Project Based Learning or PBL for years now. Through that training, we have realized the importance of involving community partners in the work. Partners allow students to have meaningful experiences that mimic real-world situations and involve an audience beyond the classroom.

On January 16, 2019, six teams of teachers from all over the county joined six prominent business partners to plan together. The workshop, which was originally designed by Dr. Eric Williams, Superintendent, was led by Dr. Ashley Ellis, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction.

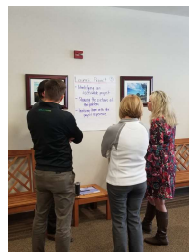
Potowmack Elementary (5th Grade) teachers were partnered with Loudoun Water. Guilford Elementary (5th grade) teachers were partnered with the Energy Management office from LCPS. Harper Park Middle School (7th Grade History) worked with Morven Park. Family and Consumer Science Teachers (7th/8th Grade FACS) joined forces to partner with the Nutrition office from LCPS. John Champe High School combined computer science and environmental science to plan a project with their partner, USGIF, United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation. Riverside High School (Biology) was partnered with Janelia Research Campus.

By the end of the day, all teams had a draft project plan that involved multiple touchpoints with their business partner. Some teams will utilize skype to connect with a variety of people from their partner organization. Other teams have invited their partner out to the school to help present the driving question to students. Many teams will use the resources that each partner so willingly gave them access to.



Teachers were treated to lunch by Ford's Fish Shack and joined by its owner, Tony Stafford, who ended up volunteering to support a project as well. The energy in the room was contagious. As an added bonus, teachers were surprised by a check presentation from Apple Federal Credit Union with the Loudoun Education Foundation. The teams were encouraged to "dream big" with their project plans and awarded Impact Grants of \$1000 each to support this work.

We look forward to continuing workshops like this one. At the end of the day teachers said that the opportunity to sit alongside their community partners allowed them to think deeply about their projects and plan experiences for the students that mimic what they will see in the real-world.



The structure of the day allowed for teacher teams to come with an idea for a project and learn alongside their community partners to align the idea with the PBL project path. All participants had time to think about what it means to truly partner with a business. One of the day's main objectives was to have "community organizations and businesses identify distinct areas of support they can offer to a school partner's project."

Thank you!

hhmi janelia  
Research Campus



MORVEN  
Park

LOUDOUN WATER

