



(2025)

PBL



HABITS

/Workflow Shifts

@castschools

(Spring 2025)

A guide for teachers
of all experience levels.

www.castschools.com



PBL Habit



Practices that Give Life to PBL

“ The monastic habit eloquently reminds the monk every moment of the way he should be living to fulfill his vows.”



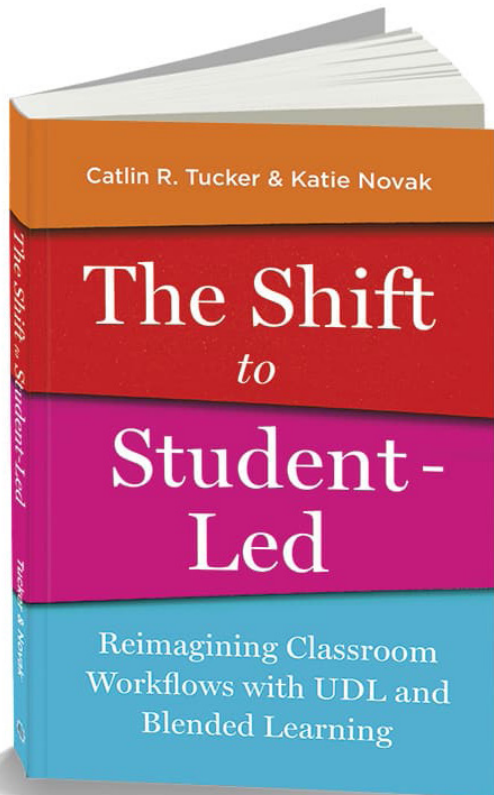
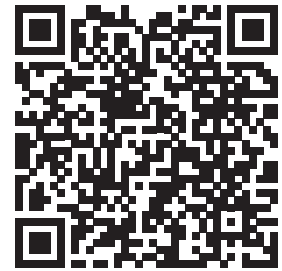
Monks use **habits** (traditional robes) to communicate the values they hold and the commitments they've made to live in a different way. Their outward garments serve as a reflection of their inner values.

In a similar way, CAST's authentic learning model invites educators to embrace a model of teaching and learning that can be reflected in the habits (classroom rhythms, design of learning spaces, etc) to which a teacher commits.

To embody authentic learning well and effectively embrace the “spirit” of PBL, we should critically examine the rhythms, structures, communication, and workflows we use in our classrooms.

We can make those structures and processes match what we believe about learning. We might find that those same shifts offer us a more simple, fulfilling, and enlightening teacher experience as well.

Let's build habits. ↘



The Medium *is* the Message

What is a workflow? Why do they need to change?

Simply put, a workflow is any series of activities that necessary to complete a task. In our classrooms, workflows are the processes, procedures, and collective tasks we use to complete our purpose -- students learning.

Classroom workflows might include how new information is introduced, classwork/homework protocols, how we assess, assign grades, give feedback, plan lessons, the types of work assigned, or any number of other aspects of what we do, day-in and day-out.

Why do they need to change?

CAST's instructional model of Authentic Learning includes aspects of Project-Based Learning, Career-Connected Learning, Blended Learning, and Place-Based Learning. All of these innovative and proven approaches are designed student experiences to develop students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Traditional classroom workflows keep teachers from fully embracing this model, and weigh teachers down with mountains of work that get in the way of the real work of bringing students along towards learning and agency.

In their book, *The Shift to Student-Led: Reimagining Classroom Workflows with UDL and Blended Learning*, Catlin Tucker and Katie Novak introduce ten specific workflow shifts that can facilitate PBL and CAST's instructional model.

We can “do PBL” using the classroom workflows of the past, but the full value and purpose of PBL cannot be realized without changing our underlying approach to something more authentic. These shifts represent both an empowering, challenging change in the norm for students as well as an energizing reset and refocus for teachers who need more time for the things that matter most for our students.

Workflow Shifts

01: From Transfer of Information to Student Discovery (pg 30)

02: From Whole-Group Teacher-Led to Small-Group Student-Led Discussion (pg 50)

03: From Reading as Solitary Endeavor to Reading for Connection (pg 72)

04: From an Audience of One to an Authentic Audience (pg 106)

05: From Teacher-Created to Student-Generated Review and Practice (pg 126)

06: From Formative Assessment as Teacher Tool to a Metacognitive Tool for Learners (pg 140)

07: From Feedback on Finished Products to Feedback during the Process (pg 160)

08: From Teacher Assessment to Self-Assessment (pg 185)

09: From Teachers Initiating Parent Communication to Learners Owning the Conversation about Their Progress (pg 201)

10: From Teacher Project Design to Student-Led Project-Based Learning (pg 219)



What workflows should I start with?

01

From Transfer of Information to Student Discovery (pg 30)



Mike
The Aspiring Pro

- Embrace the Choice Board (pg 36)
[\[Choice Board Template\]](#)
- Leverage Reciprocal Teaching and Jigsaw Activities (pg 38)
[\[Reciprocal-Teaching Comprehension\]](#)
[\[Collaborative Jigsaw Template\]](#)
- Make Direct Instruction Differentiated and Bite-Sized (pg 43)
[\[Small-Group Planning Template\]](#)
- In Practice (pg 48) [\[Planning Template\]](#)

02

From Whole-Group Teacher-Led to Small-Group Student-Led Discussion (pg 50)



Emily
The Beginner

- Co-create Norms (pg 55)
[\[Class Agreements for Discussion\]](#)
- Scaffolds for the Win (pg 58)
[\[Discussion-Preparation Document\]](#)
[\[Discussion Sentence Stems/Frames\]](#)
[\[Collaboration Strategy Choice Board\]](#)
- Student-Designed Asynchronous Online Discussions (pg 64)
- Self-Assess Discussions (pg 66)
[\[Small Group Participation Rubric\]](#)
[\[Reflection Strategy Choice Board\]](#)
- In Practice (pg 70) [\[Planning Template\]](#)

03

From Reading as Solitary Endeavor to Reading for Connection (pg 72)



Emily
The Beginner

- If You Have a Shared Text, Make it Accessible (pg 80)
- Allow Students to Select Texts pg 84
[\[Collaborative Reading Choice Boards\]](#)
- Co-creating Text Sets (pg 90)
- Shift Control of Pace of Reading to Students (pg 95)
[\[Reading Mini-Playlist\]](#)
- Encourage Students to Identify Reading Skills They Want to Focus On (pg 98)
[\[Reading Strategies Choice Board\]](#)
- In Practice (pg 103) [\[Planning Template\]](#)

04

From an Audience of One to an Authentic Audience (pg 106)



Mike

The Aspiring Pro

- RAFT: Role-Audience-Format-Topic (pg 112) [[RAFT Planning Document](#)]
- Build Empathy for Your Real Audience (pg 116) [[Learn More About Your Audience](#)]
- Gallery Walks, Expositions, and Engaging Your Audience (pg 117) [[See, Think, Wonder Activity](#)] [[Connect, Extend, Challenge Activity](#)] [[I Used to Think, Now I Think Activity](#)]
- In Practice (pg 124) [[Planning Template](#)]

05

From Teacher-Created to Student-Generated Review and Practice (pg 126)



Lisa

The Expert Practitioner

- Student-Created Review Questions (pg 131) [[Student-Designed Review Questions](#)]
- Student-Created Review and Practice Choice Boards (pg 133) [[Student-Created Choice Board](#)]
- Prepare for Standardized Assessments (pg 135)
- In Practice (pg 138) [[Planning Template](#)]

06

From Formative Assessment as Teacher Tool to a Metacognitive Tool for Learners (pg 140)



Lisa

The Expert Practitioner

- Co-create Criteria with Learners Using Multiple Means (pg 147) [[Playlist: Create Your Success Criteria](#)]
- Facilitate Classroom Discussion about Formative Assessments (pg 151) [[Exam-Wrapper Questions](#)]
- Memorialize Multiple Means of Feedback (pg 155) [[Memorialize Feedback Choice Board](#)]
- In Practice (pg 158) [[Planning Template](#)]

07

From Feedback on
Finished Products to
Feedback during the
Process (pg 160)



Emily
The Beginner

- Model the Power of Feedback (pg 168)
- Peer Feedback Choice Board (pg 169)
[\[Peer Feedback Choice Board\]](#)
- Peer Feedback with Rubrics (pg 172)
[\[Peer Feedback with Rubrics\]](#)
- Real-Time Feedback (pg 174)
- Read Feedback and Reflect (pg 176)
[\[Read Feedback and Reflect Form\]](#)
[\[WOW Reflection Slide\]](#)
- Leveraging Media for Feedback (pg 180)
[\[Choose Your Feedback Format\]](#)
- In Practice (pg 183) [\[Planning Template\]](#)

08

From Teacher
Assessment to Self-
Assessment (pg 185)



Mike
The Aspiring Pro

- Exemplars, Vocabulary, and Success Criteria (pg 190)
[\[Analyzing Exemplars Template\]](#)
[\[Vocabulary Development\]](#)
[\[Student-Designed Success Criteria\]](#)
- Reflective Journaling, Podcasting, or Blogging (pg 194)
[\[Self-Assess, Reflect Choice Board\]](#)
- Ongoing Self-Assessment Routine (pg 195)
[\[Ongoing-Self-Assessment Document\]](#)
- Showcasing Growth with Student Portfolios (pg 198)
- In Practice (pg 201) [\[Planning Template\]](#)

09

From Teachers Initiating
Parent Communication
to Learners Owning the
Conversation about Their
Progress (pg 201)



Lisa
The Expert
Practitioner

- Semi-monthly Audio or Email Updates (pg 207)
[\[Email and Audio Scripts\]](#)
- Grow-and-Glow Digital Slide Deck (pg 210)
[\[Grow and Glow Slides\]](#)
- Student-Created Toolkit (pg 211)
[\[Student-Designed Toolkit\]](#)
- Student-Designed Digital Newsletter (pg 214)
[\[Digital Newsletter Template\]](#)
- Student-Family Digital Journal (pg 215)
[\[Student-Family Journal\]](#)
- In Practice (pg 218) [\[Planning Template\]](#)

About Workflow Shift 10

The tenth and final workflow shift—From Teacher Project Design to Student-Led Project-Based Learning—represents the culmination of the previous nine shifts. It is the ultimate goal of transitioning to a truly student-centered classroom where learners take ownership of their education, collaborate meaningfully, and engage in authentic, real-world problem-solving.

Together, these shifts gradually release control from the teacher to the students, scaffolding their ability to design, manage, and lead their own projects. By the time educators fully implement Workflow Shift 10, their classroom transforms into an ecosystem of student-driven learning, where inquiry, agency, and real-world application guide the educational experience.

This shift isn't about removing teacher involvement—it's about redefining the teacher's role from the sole architect of learning to a facilitator and mentor who provides strategic support, resources, and feedback as students navigate their own learning journeys. Through these ten shifts, educators empower students to think critically, work collaboratively, and take meaningful action, ensuring that their learning is deep, lasting, and impactful.

10

From Teacher Project Design to Student-Led Project-Based Learning (pg 219)



- Create a Project Buffet (pg 225)
- Embrace a Flexible PBL Sentence Frame (pg 227)
[\[Fill-in-the-Blanks Brainstorming\]](#)
[\[Project Proposal\]](#)
- Create an Authentic PBL Network (pg 231)
- In Practice (pg 236) [\[Planning Template\]](#)