

Project-Based Learning (PBL) brings academics to life



IMPORTANT DATES & ITEMS TO NOTE

- 10-14 July: [Summer Learning Week!](#)
- [K-12 supply lists](#)
- [Board Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Who to Contact and When](#)
- [Academic & Events Calendar](#)

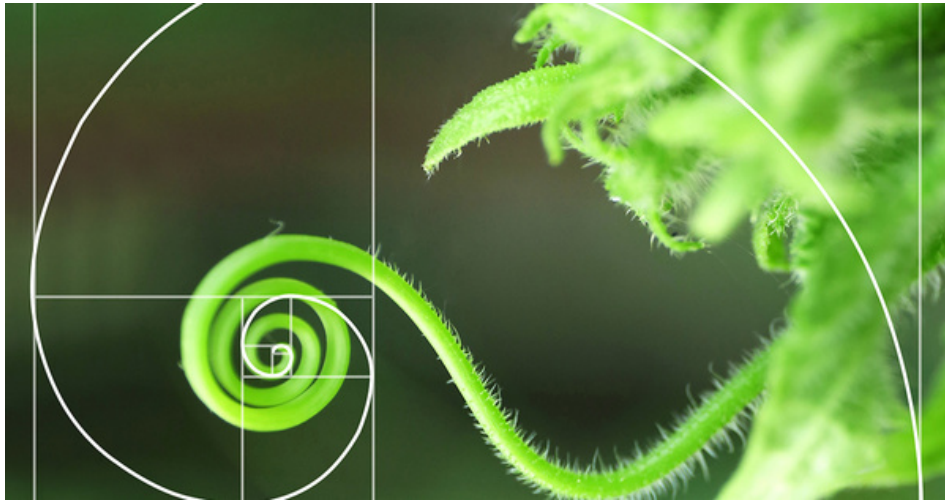
At Pioneer Springs we strive to “keep the desire to learn burning bright in every student through individualized, hands-on, creative exploration of an integrated curriculum.” Project-Based Learning (PBL), an approach to learning in which students investigate real-world problems and present what they have learned to an audience, is one way that we bring learning to life at Pioneer Springs. When classes engage in PBL, they study a problem over an extended period of time, learn content and skills to address that problem, and then produce a polished project that presents what they have learned. Because PBL connects learning to authentic problems and audiences, is interdisciplinary, requires students to collaborate with one another, and culminates in a polished project, PBL facilitates learning that is both engaging and rigorous. If you would like to support PBL at Pioneer Springs by volunteering in the classroom, helping to make or assemble learning materials at home, or by being a guest speaker about your area of expertise, contact Heidi Magi (heidim@pioneersprings.org).

A mascot that encourages connection to nature & symbolizes perseverance

Pioneer Springs has a unique mascot: the salamander. Our school founders chose the salamander as our mascot because salamanders are found in and around springs, and are an important species in North Carolina. Salamanders are keystone species across North Carolina. They regulate the food web, and their presence indicates a healthy ecosystem. 65 species of salamanders call North Carolina home, which makes North Carolina the most biodiverse place for salamanders in the world! In addition to being an essential part of ecosystems, salamanders are powerful symbols in mythology and folklore. Because they are able to thrive on land and in water, they represent adaptability. Salamanders, like the mythological creature the Phoenix, are also associated with perseverance. This lore dates back to the middle ages, when people noticed that salamanders sometimes emerged from logs that they placed on fires. Medieval people falsely believed that the salamanders arose from the fires, and ascribed the ability to withstand seemingly impossible circumstances to them. Salamanders’ ecological significance, combined with their powerful symbolism makes them the ideal mascot for Pioneer Springs, a school that focuses on environmental education and cultivating character traits including adaptability and perseverance in our students. Marbled salamanders (*Ambystoma opacum*) live in the area surrounding our pond. Has your family found any salamanders on campus, or in your outdoor adventures around North Carolina?



Marvelous Math: Games that keep math skills strong



Here are some fun puzzles and games to build math fluency and number sense this summer. Once your family has completed these activities, challenge your student to create games or puzzles of his/her own!

- **Elementary**-take a nature walk and look for 2D and 3D shapes. Who can find the most shapes?
- **Middle School**-create a [math dance](#)!
- **High School**-try to solve [this math riddle](#)

Backyard Science: Go on a bug safari



Step into any backyard or garden right now, and you are sure to notice that it is teeming with life. Grab a magnifying glass and an insect guide and explore entomology with your family. [Here is a guide to great bug websites for kids](#) and [a club for young entomologists](#). Teens might want to learn about [forensic entomology](#).

Want more ideas? [Check out STEAM Bingo!](#)

Make summer reading fun, by Tanya Blumenfeld, Third Grade Lead Teacher



In order to keep your child engaged in reading over the summer, it is helpful to make reading fun! Some children may enjoy participating in a family reading challenge or a book club with friends. Another way to make reading fun is by completing a reading bingo card (a google search will provide you with a free template). Since the goal is to develop lifelong reading habits and for your child to be intrinsically motivated to read, the rewards should be tied to more reading. Perhaps it includes a trip to the bookstore to buy a new book or a visit to a new-to-you library.

Imaginon is a great reading destination for young kids and teens alike!

Recommended books:

Kindergarten *I am Enough* by Grace Byers, *Shh! We Have a Plan* by Chris Haughton

First grade *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes, *Hot Hot Hot* by Neal Layton

Second grade *Once Upon a Time* by Niki Daly, *Mr. Popper's Penguins* by Richard Atwater

Third grade *The Magic Thief* by Sarah Prineas, *Krenshaw* by Katherine Applegate

Fourth grade *The Wild Robot* by Peter Brown, *Serafina and the Black Cloak* by Robert Beatty

Fifth grade *P.S. Be Eleven* by Rita Williams-Garcia, *Baseball in April and Other Stories* by Gary Soto

Middle School *A Wish in the Dark* by Christina Soontornvat, *The Lucky Ones* by Linda Williams Jackson

High School *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, *The Screen Traveler's Guide* by DK Books

Once upon a map



Writing over the summer is important because it gives young people the opportunity to write about their interests in a low stakes setting. This allows students to take ownership of their writing, and to write simply for the pleasure of telling a good story or describing something they find exciting. In each edition of the summer Coop Scoop, we will share writing prompts to inspire young authors.

This week's prompt is "Once Upon a Map". Who doesn't love a book that includes a map of a real or imagined place? Challenge your child or teen to create a map or a real or imagined place, and then write a story to go along with the map!

Get Outside!: How to support risky play, an essential childhood activity, by Karen McKenzie, Kindergarten Lead Teacher



Did you know that taking risks is vital for healthy development? Risky play builds confidence, supports the development of impulse control, leads to independence, and helps kids learn new skills. Additionally, when children become confident about their ability to take healthy physical risks, they often become more willing to take healthy academic risks, which leads to more learning. It can be difficult watching your child take risks, knowing how to respond, when to intervene, and how to talk to your child about healthy risks. [This article has great insights into how to support healthy risk taking.](#)

Getting ready for kindergarten: helping children use their words



Kindergarten is a magical time because kindergarteners are social butterflies. They enjoy meeting new people, making friends, and pleasing adults. Kindergarteners are also developing a better understanding of their emotions. You can help your child prepare for kindergarten by helping them learn how to identify emotions, how to share what they are feeling, and how to play with others. You can practice identifying feelings by playing a game where you take turns making faces and using body language that reflect feelings, asking your child to identify the feeling, and then describe why someone might feel that way. Then, switch roles and invite your child to try expressing feelings with their body. Help your child socialize by arranging playdates with others. If you notice that your child is struggling with joining play or taking turns, rehearse what they might say. You might practice saying “Hello, my name is _____, can I play, too?” or “That toy looks fun, may I play with it when you are done?”

Getting ready for kindergarten: health and movement, by Tosha Casini, K-8 PE Teacher

As we approach the beginning of the school year, it's a good time to think about the growth and development of kindergarteners, especially gross motor skills. Gross motor skills lay the foundation for various physical activities and overall well being. You can take simple steps to help your kindergartener develop these skills.

Gross motor skills involve the large muscles of the body and enable activities such as walking, running, jumping, and climbing. They are essential for coordination, balance, and strength, all of which contribute to a child's ability to participate in sports, play, and daily activities with confidence.



By the end of Kindergarten children should generally be able to:

- Jump 10 times in a row, jump over something and land on their feet, or jump in place with both feet off the ground
- Run around obstacles or control
- Climb a wall or onto and down from furniture without help
- Stand on one foot for up to 5 seconds
- Walk on tiptoes, walk backwards, or walk upstairs while holding onto something
- Throw a ball overhand or catch a ball that has bounced
- Skip, hop on one foot, or start to skate or ride a bicycle

Supporting your child's gross motor skill development doesn't require elaborate equipment or structured activities. Here are some simple ways you can support their progress:

Outdoor Playtime, Encourage outdoor play in safe environments where children can run, jump, climb, and explore freely. Playgrounds, parks, and open spaces provide ample opportunities for children to practice and refine their skills.

Provide Active Toys, Balls, bicycles, jump ropes, and simple sports equipment are great tools for developing gross motor skills. Encourage playtime with these toys to strengthen muscles and improve coordination.

Engage In Physical Activities Together, Take family walks, bike rides, or play active games in the backyard. Being active together not only improves physical health, but also strengthens family bonds.

Encourage Free Play, Allow children unstructured playtime where they can use their imagination and creativity to move their bodies freely. This helps them discover their physical abilities and limits in a safe environment.

Model and Encourage Persistence, Learning new physical skills takes practice and patience. Encourage your child to keep trying, celebrate their progress, and provide gentle guidance when needed.

Balance Screen Time, Limit screen time and encourage physical activities instead. Active play is crucial for developing motor skills and overall health.

Seek Opportunities For Variety, Expose your child to different activities like swimming, dancing, or martial arts to promote diverse movement patterns and keep them engaged.

Remember that each child develops at their own pace, so celebrate their individual progress and achievements. Your active involvement and support will pave the way for your child's continued physical development and lifelong enjoyment of physical activity.