

Volume 6

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# TeachBetter

Professional Development Insights for Teachers in China

Message from the Editor	2
TeachBetter in Review	3
Sessions in a Nutshell	6
Project Based Learning at JPED	10
Teacher Toolkit	11
BCIS Students Most Employable in China	13
The Hidden Head	14
Creative Thinking with PBL	16
BACA & Paragon Books	18
Advice Ayi	19
The 'Personal Project'; a passion project	20
Save the Date	22
TeachBetter: Experiential Learning	23

# Message from the Editor

**Mary May-Miller**  
**Venture Education**

It's now March in Beijing and we are seeing a quick defrost of the harsh winter as the seasons seemingly almost skip spring and go straight to summer... With the growth of new blossom on the trees, our Teachers in China community continues to grow and bring in new educators who are passionate about professional development and supporting each other. This makes us very happy.

At Venture Education, we are constantly keeping our ears to the ground and analysing the trends in education-related news articles, changing policies and ongoing government thinking. This series of TeachBetter was borne out of the fact that the government is putting more and more focus on innovation, enterprise and employability in K12 education.

China's graduate unemployment is currently at the highest it's ever been, and with a predicted 11.58 million students due to graduate this summer, employability is a topic that is extremely pressing. You may have noticed, but this TeachBetter series probably gave you the fewest 'off-the-shelf' resources that you can use in your classrooms. This is because as often noted by our expert speakers, building innovation, creativity and enterprise in students cannot be a simple 'copy and paste'. Developing these skills will look different for each student, each classroom and each school.

For the most part, much of student learning in China is solely for the purpose of passing an exam. Students that face problem solving and critical thinking exercises struggle much more than if they were just presented with the same question already formed into an equation. Students are taught how to solve the equation, how to tick the correct box in an exam to get them the mark. But when in real life are we ever presented with the equation ready and waiting to be solved? Developing these skills is hugely important and will really give them the tools to be creative, critical and think outside the box when they enter employment.

We are immensely grateful to all of our expert speakers, Keith Herrmann, Andy Penaluna, Radmil Polenakovikj and Dr James Davis. Their incredible wealth of experience, research and insight all sparked thought-provoking discussion among the community. We'd also like to thank the amazing members of the Teachers in China community, Nasim Syed, Jo Kedian and Jeannine Laurens who have submitted some really insightful and thought-provoking Chalkface articles, and to this edition's fantastic Hidden Head (you know who you are). I thoroughly enjoyed reading each and every word.

The next TeachBetter series will be run in May on the incredibly important topic of experiential learning. If you aren't already part of our Teachers in China community, make sure you scan the QR code on the final page and share with your colleagues. I look forward to seeing you again in May and wish you all a happy couple of months until then.







## TeachBetter in Review

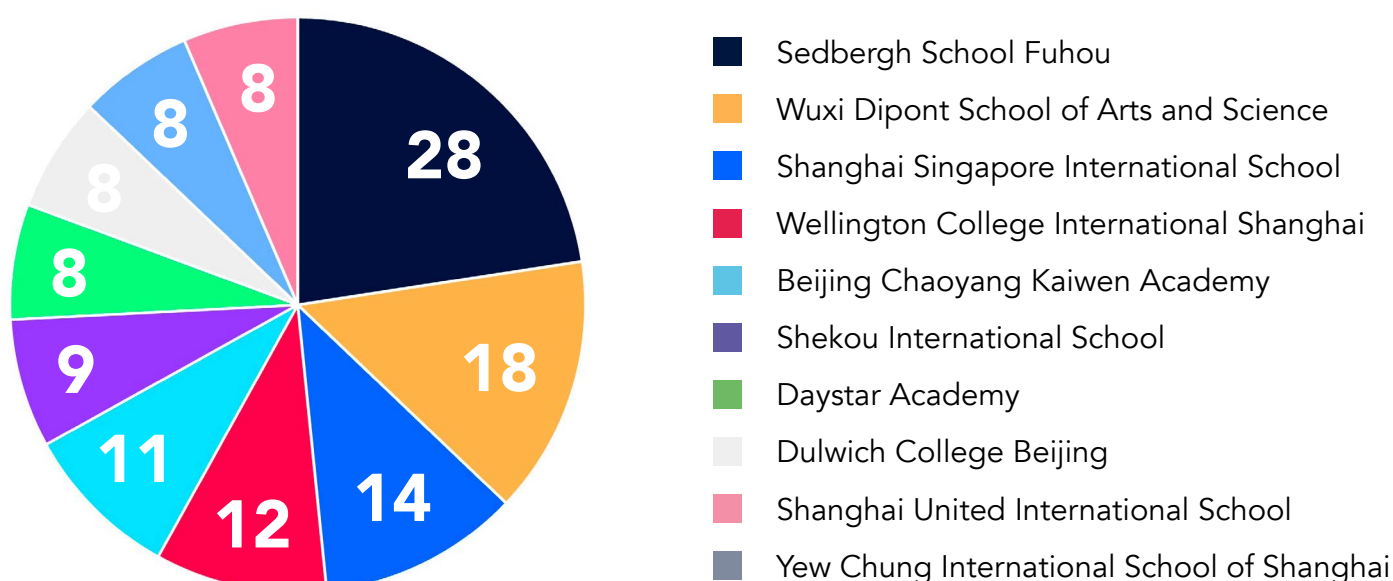
In February 2023, Venture hosted the sixth TeachBetter series: free online workshops for teachers in China

With over 800 hundred registrations, the response for this series's TeachBetter from the community was fantastic. We received great feedback for all of the webinars, led by:

- Keith Herrmann: *Fellow of Student Futures, St Aidan's College, Durham University*
- Andy Penaluna: *Professor Emeritus, University of Wales Trinity Saint David*
- Radmil Polenakovikj: *Professor, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia*
- Dr James Davis: *Senior Lecturer, STEM and Entrepreneurship Education, QUT, School of Teacher Education & Leadership*

The Teachers in China group is a brilliantly diverse group with educators from all across the country. From over 360 different schools and organisations, our community is continuing to grow.

## Teachers in China top 10 schools



Other schools with several teachers involved include: King's College International School, Tsinghua International School, Wellington College International Hangzhou, Yew Wah International Education School of Beijing.

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## Session 1 in a Nutshell:

**Topic:** Contextualising Employability in Education  
**Speaker:** Keith Herrmann  
**Role:** Fellow of Student Futures,  
St Aidan's College, Durham University

### 4 Ideas/Quotations Worth Remembering

1. Don't just copy and paste "employability" just for the sake of it. Think about your context and how you can define it to be relevant to you.
2. Work placements are good, but how you then apply that back to the classroom so that students can consider the learning gained is hugely important.
3. How do you ensure students have ownership and agency in their learning? Educate and engage the 'why' to students, and having them 'manage' the process.
4. Do not think you can create a module on employability that's separate from the academic learning environment. It needs to be built into the system and truly embedding it into the curriculum.

### 4 Recommendations

1. World Economic Forum - The Future of Work. [Click here.](#)
2. World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2020. [Click here.](#)
3. Employability Skills Toolkit: Free lesson plans to support your students in developing key skills. [Click here.](#)
4. TargetCareers: what is employability. [Click here.](#)



## Session 2 in a Nutshell:

**Topic:** The education employability agenda  
**Speaker:** Andy Penaluna  
**Role:** Professor Emeritus,  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David

### 4 Ideas/Quotations Worth Remembering

1. Someone who can envision futures is more likely to be the most enterprising person; not someone who just focussed on the past.
2. If there's no change in an assignment or a project, there's no way to measure how students adapt to ambiguity and risk.
3. Youth creativity dies out. Giving students the opportunities to hold on to this creativity for as long as possible will help young people as they enter employment.
4. How often as a teacher do you stay quiet and let the students learn by doing?

### 4 Recommendations

1. Entrepreneurial Education in Practice - Andrew Penaluna, Kathryn Penaluna, 2015. [Click here.](#)
2. Entrepreneurship for sustainable development Report of the Secretary-General: Seventy-Seventh Session (Item 18) 27 July 2020.
3. Developing a vision for curriculum design. [Click here.](#)
4. Penaluna, K, Jones C, and Penaluna, A. (Eds) (2022) How to Develop Entrepreneurial Graduates, Ideas and Ventures: Designing an Imaginative Entrepreneurship Program.





## Session 3 in a Nutshell:

**Topic:** Education = Employability? Do you agree?  
**Speaker:** Radmil Polenakovik  
**Role:** Professor, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering,  
 Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje,  
 North Macedonia

### 4 Ideas/Quotations Worth Remembering

1. To embed employability throughout the whole curriculum, bring in real life examples. Market a product, put on a show, budget a trip. Everything should have a purpose which relates to our environment.
2. Encourage internal competitions within the class. This develops teamwork, critical thinking, and gives students a chance to experience risk while in a safe space.
3. Students need opportunities to see real work in real settings. Invite local companies to your school, have entrepreneurs come as guest speakers, have students analyse job descriptions and consider the skills needed in the workplace.
4. Each of us is responsible of changing the lives of our students for the better, and we must be proactive in that.

### 4 Recommendations

1. How to teach entrepreneurship? [Click here.](#)
2. EntreCompEdu: Developing teachers' entrepreneurial education skills. [Click here.](#)
3. MTEE Self-assessment tool. [Click here.](#)
4. Visit North Macedonia!  
If you ever want to pay a visit, contact Radmil:  
radmilpolenakovik@yahoo.com



## Session 4 in a Nutshell:

**Topic:** Inclusive Education  
**Speaker:** Dr James Davis  
**Role:** Senior Lecturer, QUT,  
 School of Teacher Education & Leadership

### 4 Ideas/Quotations Worth Remembering

1. Embrace risk. Teachers often think about risk as a negative thing, however well-run businesses engage with both negative and positive risk; compliance and strategy.
2. 'How can I accept a little bit more of the negative risk so that I can see more of the positive risk in what I do?'. This question is a good starting point for teachers who are looking to embed risk in what they are teaching.
3. We don't want catastrophic failure, we want productive failure.
4. Your senior leadership team is much more likely to support you if you come to them with a problem and an innovative solution proven to help the school.

### 4 Recommendations

1. Davis, J.P. (2023). How to become an entrepreneurial teacher: Being innovative, leading change. Routledge.
2. Davis, J.P., Du, J., Tang, J-H., Qiao, L., Liu, Y-Q., & Chiang, F-K. (2020). Uniformity, diversity, harmony and emotional energy in a Chinese STEM Classroom. International Journal of STEM Education. [Click here.](#)
3. Kapur, M., & Bielaczyc, K. (2012) Designing for productive failure. Journal of the Learning Sciences.
4. Jones, C., Penaluna, K., & Penaluna, A. (2020). Value creation in entrepreneurial education: Towards a unified approach. Education + Training. [Click here.](#)



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"How to teach entrepreneurship? What, why, when and who?". Learn more from Macedonian experiences via the Macedonian-English manual [here](#).

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# Project Based Learning at JPED

*JPED Academy, famous for their curriculum-wide approach to PBL, speak about how it works for them and how this supports student employability.*

Project-based learning, is an interdisciplinary learning method with rich content. It helps students to establish a framework for understanding and solving real-world problems by developing appropriate experiments and explorations. Starting with a meaningful problem, the students solve the problem through a multi-step process. The project requires students to use a variety of learning skills, including reading, writing, calculation, research, logical reasoning and other core competences needed by talents in the 21st century. Project-based learning advocates teamwork and encourages students to create and innovate.



Project Based Learning is and has always been integral to the JPED curriculum. It serves as an opportunity to branch from the traditional mode of education and offers the exploration and development of 21st century skills. In JPED's history and tradition of academic practices, PBL was initially conducted as an all-school project where JPED students would collaborate in groups of various grade levels and would work together towards one goal. These PBL "semesters" would typically last for 2 - 4 weeks and end with a final presentation. The goals have been and will always be to engage all students in an authentic and relevant project that will produce some type of product or prototype.



Today our PBL approach looks very different. Project Based Learning has been fused into the semester learning plan through two distinct interdisciplinary projects run within the Humanities and STEM departments to create a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach to Project Based Learning.

By bringing real-life context and technology to the curriculum through a PBL approach, students are encouraged to become independent workers, critical thinkers, and lifelong learners. PBL is not just a way of learning; it's a way of working together. If students can learn to take responsibility for their own learning, they will form the basis for the way they will work with others throughout their adult lives as a part of our global society.







# Teacher Toolkit

## Employability in the Classroom

Employability is not something that should be thrown at students in their final year just so schools can tick a box. Employability is something that can and should be embedded throughout the curriculum from the very start of a student's education.

Encouraging students to **create** develops their employability.

Encouraging students to **speak publically** develops their employability.

Encouraging students to **work together** develops their employability.

Encouraging students to **embrace risk** develops their employability.

Our key takeaway for teachers is to consider how every topic your students are studying can apply to the real world, and help them see that as well.

*After you've considered the above, below is a simple activity that you can run with any age group to help open students' eyes to the world of work, and help them better understand what they might need in order to be successful in employment.*

### **Print out and put up 20 job descriptions around the classroom**

Use a range of companies that students have heard of and industries they're interested in (not just corporate!).

**TOP TIP:** for younger students or those with weaker English, rewrite the job descriptions with graded language appropriate to their level.

### **Groups of 3 or 4 rotate and analyse**

This is likely the first time students will have ever seen a real job description. Encourage students to consider the following questions:

How have the job descriptions been structured?

What similarities do the job descriptions share?

What qualities and skills are the companies looking for in a person?

**TOP TIP:** look on the Venture jobs page of the website for example job descriptions, or the Chambers of Commerce for more!

### **Group discussion and reflection**

Students are encouraged to share their thoughts on the job descriptions. What surprised them? What were they expecting? Had they seen a real job description before?

### **Create!**

Students create *something* about how to prepare for the world of work. This could be a poster, a written assignment, a presentation, anything! Encourage students to see that in most jobs, transferrable skills like positivity, adaptability, dedication etc. are almost always valued more than grades.





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# BCIS Students

## Most Employable in China

*BCIS write about their recent win of the 'Enterprise and Employability' award at the China Schools Awards, and what this looks like in practice.*

BCIS is honored to accept the "Enterprise and Employability" award from the China School Awards organized by the British Chambers of Commerce. This award recognizes the school that shows the greatest commitment and innovation in developing confidence, an enterprising mindset and the creative and collaborative skills its students need to thrive beyond their university pathways into the world of work. Although many schools from around the country applied, BCIS's unique, personalized, future-focused approach to learning made it stand out as the school that best prepares students for future careers.

A team of students including Amelia, Jia Rong and Vivian led the application process, drawing on their own experiences with entrepreneurship at BCIS. Supported by teachers Dina, Jaclyn and Katie and our Head of School, Tom, the students worked collaboratively to gather evidence and craft their proposal as to why BCIS should be the top choice for the award. At BCIS, students start developing their skills in the Early Childhood Center (ECC) through activities and group projects that foster skills in creativity, communication, collaboration and critical thinking. In Elementary School (ES), students continue to inquire and collaborate on projects such as the Grade 5 business contest. The Secondary School (SS) refines these skills through curricular business opportunities in our IDEATE program's internship experience, in addition to extracurricular opportunities such as the student-led Avenir business contest with mentors and participants from around the world.



These great examples of the school's ongoing commitment to encouraging student initiative were described by Amelia, Jia Rong and Vivian in their presentation that convinced the judges that BCIS deserved to win for the "Enterprise and Employability" award. These students are involved in many such business activities. Amelia, who has started her own business of reusing coffee grounds to create a sustainable body scrub, explains how she wants to continue her path of entrepreneurship, stating, "I see myself becoming an entrepreneur or joining a profession in the business industry. My coffee grounds initiative is closely linked to my future plans, where I have the opportunity to explore real-life business situations and develop an innovative circular model for the product."

Jia Rong, who has helped foster sustainability in the SS through his work on Circularity Projects, including green gardening and installing solar panels, is inspired to continue pursuing sustainable science. "I see myself continuously driven by my deep passion towards engineering and design, which is crucial to my Circularity Projects. I also believe my leadership skills will be crucial in employment and further into my future, which is deeply related to both organizing the Avenir Business Competition and leading Circularity Projects." Vivian also believes that BCIS has prepared her perfectly for future employment. "As someone who is passionate about media, I see myself pursuing a career where I can create engaging content with diverse audiences, utilizing my skills in communication, writing, collaboration, and thinking," she explains. BCIS students will use their unique enterprise skills they have cultivated at school to be the leaders of tomorrow!



# The Hidden Head

*What are Heads really thinking when they walk around the school? In this recurring feature, we ask an anonymous School Lead their perspective on the most pressing questions in the sector.*

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*Employers often say that fresh graduates aren't at all ready for the world of work. Although many schools talk the language of employability, in many cases they are really bubbles that coddle. What are the actual challenges schools face in changing this paradigm?*

*Behind many accusations of not living up to or falling short of expected standards, there are often many false assumptions and definitions. Dealing with the suggestion that fresh graduates aren't at all ready for the world of work assumes that we actually know what this world of work is and that it is not different from company to company, from job to job. As we move rapidly through this changing century, the boundaries are shifting all the time. We talk continually of upskilling or of being prepared to be upskilled, but in a world of change we are not always sure what to upskill for or where we are going. There's another assumption, that is that there is a seamless step between academia and the so-called 'world of work'. That has rarely been the case. Employers must always be prepared to train and develop new graduates. Did Adam and Eve really appear in the Garden of Eden fully aware of everything around them, ready to make the right decisions? They needed to learn by experience and make mistakes. They needed guidance, hence they listened to the serpent.*

*Of course, new graduates probably know a lot more than Adam and Eve about the world, but the point remains. What Adam and Eve needed were reliable people to talk to, the powers of reasoning and strength of character to make decisions. So, what can we do in schools to help Adam and Eve and they step into the new world?*

*First, it is true that schools are places where we protect young people from harm. Schools provide communities where children can find security and safety; they are often a refuge and should be happy environments. We talk of pastoral care and inclusion, where we pick people up when they fall and ensure that everyone feels they belong. That is our duty; don't criticise us for that. However, schools can and should provide opportunities to fail as well as succeed through competition, challenge and assessment. Lockdowns and online learning demonstrated what we already knew: that schools matter, they are places of dynamic physical relationships, places for tears without (too many) fears, stretch without (too much) stress. Schools*

*should, therefore, be helping pupils to deal with much that life will throw at them but also give them the security and foundations they need. What these accusatory 'employers' fail to recognise is that the young person's brain is changing hugely all the time; it does not reach its own maturity until around the age of 21. During this time, there is a lot that can go wrong. Employers are not buying a ready-made package off a shelf, but someone who is equipped to learn.*

*Second, schools do often fail in the above. The accusers have a point. Dominated by exams and grades, there is a tendency to teach just to those exams. I interviewed someone recently for a physics teacher's job. He knew the syllabus inside out. So I gave him a scenario, "let's say there is a bright and inquisitive 16-year-old who has asked the teacher in a class to explain something she has read about, 'Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (HUP)'. How do you explain the HUP to the pupil in fairly simple and quick terms?" His response was that it was not on the syllabus, so he did not need to answer it. But, I insisted, "she is a persistent pupil who wants to know the answers to her questions; please explain it". His response was to give me a long lecture on quantum mechanics without answering the question. I dare say that the interviewee concerned can get top grades from his pupils but he destroys their curiosity and their right to question. We all know that this is happening far too often in schools.*

*It isn't an either/or, either pass exams or create interesting people. Maybe society and some schools have never really liked too many questions; questioning and encouraging the young to question led to Socrates' death sentence after all, but academia should always encourage it. It is through the enquiring mind, questioning and debate that that innovation takes place, that humanity has progressed. It is through breaking the mould that entrepreneurs make a difference. [It is perhaps important to point out that breaking the mould does not mean breaking the law; Socrates did not break the law, nor did he encourage anyone to.]*





Let's return to the so-called 'world of work'. How can we prepare Adam and Eve for the world? A lot has been said and written about this in recent years, notably the much-quoted WEF Future of Jobs Report 2018 which listed the emerging jobs and skills for the 2020s and beyond. Many similar lists of this type have been produced, e.g. Forbes What are the Ten Soft Skills for the Future of Work 2019? What they all have in common is the need to develop young people who are versatile and able to deal with change, who are creative and innovative, who can present, share and defend their ideas, and who are culturally aware with high levels of emotional intelligence, and who can show leadership qualities, making decisions when needed.

Of course, AI and robotics are changing the landscape dramatically. If your skills are those which can easily be replaced by 'machines', employers will use machines rather than those people. However, as the great linguist Noam Chomsky wrote recently of ChatGPT in the New York Times, 8 March, "True intelligence is demonstrated in the ability to think and express improbable but insightful things... True intelligence is also capable of moral thinking. This means constraining the otherwise limitless creativity of our minds with a set of ethical principles that determines what ought and ought not to be (and of course subjecting those principles themselves to creative criticism)."

In the world of Western philosophy from which I come, we speak of something called qualia. Qualia is that human quality which separates us from the non-human, from zombies. Qualia is experiencing the world and being in the world, It is truly living. Perhaps the best thing we can do for employers is present them with young people who are bright, questioning, wanting to learn, capable of moral thinking, and truly living. Perhaps, that is why the serpent persuaded Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge...



[Click the image to read](#)  
World Economic Forum, 2018:  
The Future of Jobs Report



[Click the image to read](#)  
Forbes, 2019:  
What Are The Top 10 Soft Skills For The Future Of Work?





# From the Chalkface

*Nasim Syed, a member of the Teachers in China community, explores the theory of project based learning with his piece: Creative Thinking with PBL.*

Students demonstrate creative thinking when they apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, create original works, or identify trends and forecast possibilities (Boss and Krauss, 2007), and “research has shown that trait creativity is important for becoming an entrepreneur and successful in business” (Weinberger et al., 2018, p.1). A poll of 1,500 CEOs even identified creativity as the most important leadership competency of the future, yet there is no concerted effort to nurture children’s creativity in schools (Bronson and Merryman, 2010). According to Sir Ken Robinson (cited in Patton, 2012), designing a curriculum around PBL is a dynamic way to engage learners and cultivate their powers of imagination and creativity.

Studies have shown PBL to be effective in developing creative thinking. For example, an Indonesian study that pre-tested 60 10th-grade science students’ creative thinking found that the experimental PBL class measured significantly enhanced creative thinking skills in the post-test compared to a control group that used conventional learning (Safitri and Suparwoto, 2018). In another Indonesian study, 45 fifth-grade students learning about the water cycle were split between an experimental PBL group and a traditional instruction group, where pre-tests and post-test comparisons found that the PBL group had significantly better creative thinking skills across indicators such as fluency, elaboration and evaluation (Putri et al., 2019).

Some countries have adopted PBL within their education system to encourage innovation. For example, in the 1990s, Singapore’s Government initiated education reforms for a more learner-centred school environment, enabling more time for interdisciplinary project-based learning to cultivate creative thinking among students (Tan and Chapman, 2016). In addition, Norway

requires all upper secondary students to engage in at least one cross-disciplinary project each year to develop skills such as creativity (OECD, 2000), and the Chinese Government aims to develop creativity by moving away from test-focused instruction and incorporating PBL activities (Debroy, 2018).

Krajcik and Czerniak (2018) suggest that PBL encourages creativity by striking a balance between teacher-directed and student-driven inquiry, providing the right amount of guidance to stay focused on the learning objective without too many scripted steps that leave little room for students to solve problems in novel ways. Boss and Krauss (2007) give the analogy of how football games are structured within a narrow set of rules but enable great nuance and creativity within those constraints; without good referees, football would become a free-for-all, and it would be difficult to appreciate any brilliance on display!

Giving students a choice to demonstrate learning through different products, such as presentations, exhibitions, portfolios, demonstrations or performances, also offers opportunities for creativity (Stanley, 2021). Examples of research-based PBL Creativity rubrics are available at: [my.pblworks.org/node/11329](http://my.pblworks.org/node/11329). However, evaluating students’ creativity can be controversial, as teachers should focus on how well students follow a process for innovation and assess their work, not the students themselves (Larmer, Mergendoller and Boss, 2015).

## Nasim Syed

Teacher of Business, Economics  
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## From the Chalkface

*Jo Kedian, member of the Teachers in China community, illustrates how collaborating with real businesses has enhanced student learning.*

### BACA & Paragon Books

As part of learning about the art and design industry, the BTEC International Diploma Level 3 Art and Design students at BACA worked with Paragon Books in Beijing. Paragon Books came in as client, to propose a brief of what their needs were, in terms of workwear, signage, customer facing items, and products that could be sold in their store. The students worked in teams, working on specific aspects of the brief: fashion students worked on workwear, jewellery and product design students worked on signage, textile students worked on developing a shopping bag, graphic, fine art and photography students worked on developing "art" products to sell. The experience of working with someone outside of the school and working to an actual "live brief", gave the students a real understanding of what it means to work for a client. Learning about the needs of the client, being flexible to the customer's requirements, working to a time scale and working in a team are all skills key to success in the art and design industry and so this experience was vital for them.

Through project based learning, the skills our students developed are much more diverse than what they may normally get just from the classroom alone. Throughout the project, Paragon Books would come in for updates and the students would present their ideas, empathetically discuss opportunities with the them and develop a better understanding of their needs.

The culmination of the project was a "pop up" shop developed, designed and run by the students. By ending with a real opportunity to promote their work and sell their art, students had to consider the cost of their time, how best to market their work and how to satisfy the customer. We have seen many benefits from PBL and it is clear to us that collaborating with business hugely enhances the learners' experience.

**Jo Kedian**

Director of Art Training and Outreach  
Course Leader Level 3



The pop-up shop



Fashion t-shirt designs  
for the pop up shop  
(Anita, Mercury and Tina)



Merchandise for the  
store (Amanda)





## Advice Ayi

In this section, we attempt to answer some of the PD-related questions of the TeachBetter community

### Several teachers asked for advice for how to get support from senior leadership:

- How do we get our schools to move past the buzz words to implement meaningful and effective change to our teaching and learning?
- Some tips on influencing school administrators to accept changes in education

**Our advice is to start small. While you don't have control of the whole school, you do have control of your classroom.**

A great place to start is by bringing small changes to student learning into your lessons. Consider how everything you teach can relate to the real world, and give students the opportunity to explore their lesson content in this new context. As long as everything you cover is curriculum aligned, it will unlikely cause problems with senior leadership.

Once you have integrated innovation throughout your lessons, work with colleagues and teachers of other subjects on cross-curriculum projects. This can also start small by just connecting a few subjects with one project. For example:

- **World travel:** In maths, students are set a budget and need to plan their trip, transport, accommodation, insurance etc. for a world trip. In English, students write descriptive diary entries from their 'trip', write emotive letters home to their families, or present on a crazy discovery they made on their 'travels'.
- **Science in nature:** In science, students studying about forces can apply what they have learnt and see the transfer of energy in action while they play sports in physical education.

Having students connect concepts through different subjects, will help develop student creativity, innovation and critical understanding, as opposed to just knowing.

**After seeing the benefits of such learning practices for at least a few months, then you can start to think big...**

Approach senior leadership with a detailed description of how you have brought such learning into the classroom and what the students have gotten out of it. Present an idea you would like to get off the ground to further support the development of these skills in students across the whole school.

**If your school is passionate about sustainability,** have students in maths analyse the school's energy consumption, have students in design and technology create a garden, have students in drama devise a piece about sustainability, have students in English write emotive letters to the district asking for them to better support sustainability initiatives.

**If your school is passionate about sports,** have the students put on a sporting competition, market the event, make signs and posters, calculate the profits, write persuasive letters to local companies asking for sponsorship.

**Struggling to think of an idea...?** Ask the students! Brainstorming and being involved from the very beginning will increase student confidence, commitment to the idea, and will let them experience small failures (if and when the plan doesn't take off, or they encounter challenges in the process).

**The opportunities really are endless.**

*If you implement any of this advice in the next few months, we'd love to hear from you! Please get in touch with Mary at [mary@ventureeducation.org](mailto:mary@ventureeducation.org)*





## From the Chalkface

*Jeannine Laurens, member of the Teachers in China community, speaks about the 'Personal Project' fair and how it allows students to shine.*

### The 'Personal Project'; a passion project

As I walk into the gym, I can sense the tension of my students. Twenty-five grade 10 students are looking sharp in their suits as they sit behind their little booths. Due to the postponement of the initial fair before Christmas due to COVID, the students are now more than ready to showcase their Personal Project to the school and parents. As the project coordinator, I have seen every step of their progress... And I can tell that this year is special. We have succeeded in igniting passions and guiding the development of passions for students.

I am sitting at Maria's table. She is nervous and tries to hide behind a shy smile. I tell her, "Be confident and tell me more about your project." Maria is passionate about making music, she can sing and play the bass, but additionally she is also interested in mental health issues. She decided to bring the two together by composing a song and performing it at the event. Her message and musicality was so powerful that I later learned that it brought several members of the audience to tears.

In the back of the room Gio is proudly showcasing a rocket that he built. He dreams of studying engineering but unfortunately, the

rocket cannot be launched inside the gym... As an alternative, he decided to instead present the mathematics involved behind the construction of the rocket. The grade 9 students at his booth were impressed with the cool mathematical visualisation of his project and the critical thinking behind it. Moreover, after passing by his booth and seeing Gio's calculations in practice, our physics teacher literally cried tears of joy.

Shaeanna's booth is a real attraction and really showcases her passion for crochet. Both students and staff are impressed by the diversity of her work; a big coat hangs on a mannequin, a basket overflows with crochet animal toys, she even sells heart shape key chains and donates the profits to a foundation that supports children with a heart condition. Students at her booth try out crochet for themselves and by the end of the fair she is all sold out.

As a teacher, it's moments like these at the 'Personal Project' fair which highlight the hard work of students and teachers alike, but the pleasure and satisfaction which comes after completing the event for both students and teachers is truly priceless.

**Jeannine Laurens**

Secondary Global Citizenship Coordinator  
MYP Humanities and DP Geography Teacher  
Personal Project Coordinator  
Western International School of Shanghai







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## Save the **Date**

Here are 7 events or courses for teachers taking place in the coming months. Click an event to find out more!

18-19  
MAR

ACAMIS Technology  
Conference



22  
MAR

Digital Technologies in the  
Classroom: Nuisance or  
Necessary?



28  
MAR

Lucie Howell: Inspiring children  
to innovate for success



12  
APR

C3 Webinar: Environments:  
Indoors & Outdoors



22  
APR

Wellington College International  
Shanghai: Festival of Education



4  
MAY

Innovation in Education: Project  
Invent Info Session



16, 18  
23, 25  
MAY

TeachBetter:  
Experiential Learning



**Do you run any courses, webinars or  
other events for teachers in China?**

If you would like your event to be featured  
in next term's newsletter, contact  
[mary@ventureeducation.org](mailto:mary@ventureeducation.org)





# TeachBetter

## Experiential Learning

16 May

18 May

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25 May

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