The Homeschooler's Guide to Project-Based Education

How to prepare your high school student for the real world

unbound

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Education is Broken

Education is broken.

And not just the education **system**, as in schools and universities, although many of those are broken.

We're talking about a deeper dysfunction that goes beyond school budgets, class sizes, or virtual learning.

The models we use and the way we approach education hasn't caught up to the fundamental changes in our world. This has left educators and students alike frustrated.

The internet has fundamentally changed education. Education used to be all about gaining knowledge because, as SchoolHouse Rock (and Sir Francis Bacon) declared, "Knowledge is power". As far back as the 1900s, those with knowledge were society's leaders. A bachelor's degree was a sign of status and it opened doors reserved for the rich and famous.

> **"**
> **The internet has fundamentally changed education. The cost of gaining knowledge is now next to nothing.**
> **"**

The cost of gaining knowledge was high. Often, your only option was to read a book. If you, like most people, didn't have an extensive personal library, that meant many trips to the library. In addition to the time it took to go to the library (assuming you had one in town), you had to find some way to retain information. You had to memorize it or record it somewhere where you could access it later. Until just 25 years ago, learning was a lengthy and involved process.

Contrast that to today's digital world. We walk around with powerful computers in our pockets. We can skip most complex mathematical formulas if we use a calculator. Most historical facts are one internet search away. We have access to just about any information we could need or want. The cost of gaining knowledge is now next to nothing.

Education needs to be about more than knowledge-gain. But in today's world, it's not. Our educational model: attending classes, reading books, writing assignments, taking tests, was built for a pre-internet world. We approach education as a knowledge-gaining exercise. But that's not what it needs to be anymore.

That's not to say we can tell kindergarteners to just google everything. There are great benefits to learning information and knowledge through the traditional methods of reading and being taught by a teacher.

But if it stops there, and if all our education does is put information into our brains, we'll quickly realize that it's not enough. It's like hiring a delivery driver who's never driven before and telling him that once he's loaded the van, he's ready to go. Sure, he's got the van loaded but he doesn't know where to drive or even how to drive!

In a similar way, filling a student's brain with information doesn't equip them for life if they don't know what to do with that information and how that information actually applies to the world around them.

Our society's current educational approach is this: "Come to class and we'll make sure you're filled with the information you need. We'll even test you to make sure it's stuck in there."

This is an out-dated approach. It's not relevant to a world impacted by the immediate information access that the internet provides.

We have to recognize this fundamental change and define what purpose education serves now.

Education should be about preparing students for life. Knowledge certainly plays a part in that but it's secondary to proficient critical thinking, the ability to quickly and effectively master complicated information and the wisdom to apply that information to the problems we face.

The way we're doing education now is not preparing students for the real world. We need an educational model that recognizes the special opportunities and challenges of the internet age and acknowledges how it has changed the aim of education. We need a model built on an understanding of what students need to succeed in the real world and how to equip them with those things.

What Purpose Does Education Serve?

Before we dive into the details of how families can equip their growing students with a practical education, it's important to review why we educate and what the purpose of education is.

As we noted in the last chapter, at the end of the day, education is about preparing students for life. The reason we teach math is so our students can develop critical thinking and apply mathematical principles in practical ways. We teach history so that our students can develop an eye for cause and effect and can trace patterns and learn from the course of events in their own lives. This will lead them to make wiser decisions.

Students will face a wide variety of challenges and problems in the course of their lives. Education serves to prepare them to face these challenges and solve these problems well. It equips them to bring value to the world around them. It prepares them for careers, for nurturing families, for community, and for a calling.

Therefore, a "good" education is one that practically equips and prepares students for these realities. A "well-educated" student is not only confident in their ability to perform math calculations, or recite facts from history, but is also able to confidently use what they have learned in the real world.

If we are to provide our students with this kind of education, *we have to give them opportunities to apply what they learn in the real world.*

The longer we study something, the more specific we get. In kindergarten, everyone is learning the same things: numbers, shapes, and colors. By the time we get to college, there is far more specificity. Not everyone at a university is studying the same thing!

Especially as students grow older and reach high school, a special priority should be given to the practical application of their academic knowledge. As their studies grow more specialized, the need to apply and practice what is learned grows.

That is the aim of this resource. Its purpose is to equip homeschooling parents to practice a high school model that places an emphasis on practical application and preparation for real world challenges and opportunities.

The Most Important Academic Skill For Your Student's Future

What's the most important academic skill for students to learn?

Writing? Test-taking? Reading comprehension? Critical thinking?

All of these are important, but the most foundational skill for your student's future is the ability to ***quickly and effectively master complicated information***.

The speed of change in our modern world can be downright frightening. The news cycle lasts twenty-four hours, sometimes less. Industry best practices have a lifespan of months. Things move and change ***so*** quickly.

Our students have to be prepared to live and work productively in this environment. That's why they absolutely need to know how to quickly and effectively master complicated information.

Chances are, they will find themselves in careers where standard operating procedures evolve constantly. They will face the transience of technology. As these changes happen, we see that adaptable businesses and people thrive while those who get stuck fall behind and struggle.

We will explore this more in-depth later on when we look at the skills that employers are looking for in applicants. For now, let's illustrate this point with a hypothetical story:

Imagine two students graduate and enter the job market. One of them can quickly and effectively master complicated information. The other relies on being taught exactly how to work and what to do. When change happens, this individual struggles to adapt their actions.

Let's say that both of our hypothetical students get jobs in marketing. On day one at their new jobs, they are trained in the software they'll be using, the strategies and tactics they'll be using, and the general approach to take towards their responsibilities.

Six months later, things have changed. Maybe the market has been disrupted by a pandemic or people's preferences have shifted. One of our hypothetical marketers will be ready to change, to pivot. They may need to learn how to reach people remotely as they quarantine. They may dive into learning how to analyze social media algorithms to get their message in front of people at home.

The other individual will struggle to pivot. With so much change and new challenges, they'll be paralyzed and will most likely continue doing what they've always been told to do. Over time, their message will be ignored as it fails to address the needs of the general public.

This isn't just about being a "fast learner". It's about being able to keep up with the speed of change in a disruptive world. It's about being a creative problem solver. It's about the ability to think critically and pivot to use new information to solve new challenges.

Why is this the most important academic skill to learn?

Because it's one that your student is absolutely going to need.

Your student may not ever write a paper after they graduate. They may never need to take an exam again for the rest of their life. But they will absolutely need to grab hold of new, complicated information and master it quickly and in such a way as to effectively use that new information to solve a problem or create an opportunity.

There's a big difference between shrugging our shoulders and saying "I don't know how to do that. Find someone else who can." and saying "I haven't done that yet but if you give me 5 minutes/2 weeks/2 months I can learn."

Increasingly, as students emerge from the education world into the real world, we are seeing that the education system has created a lot of those in the first category. We have a lot of "shruggers" in the economy now — people who lack the ability (or the motivation) to master new complicated information and apply it to the problems they face. They expect to show up and be told what to do.

In contrast, those in the second category will thrive and create impact through their work. They are the leaders.

Preparing students for the real world requires us to equip them with this skill of quickly and effectively mastering complicated information.

In many ways, academic classes in high school serve this purpose. A student looking to go into a scientific field may not be interested in their high school history or literature courses. But they can use those courses to learn how to quickly and effectively master the material covered. This enables them to utilize something from any course they take, even those that they don't deem relevant to their studies.

Essentially, it's all about learning how to learn versus being taught. Anyone can be told what to do. It's an entirely different skill to be able to see what needs to be done and learn how to do it. Employers covet people with that skill. Communities follow people with that skill. Families blossom when they're led by people with that skill.

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What Skills Does Your Student Need?

Businesses, ministries, non-profit organizations and community institutions need problem-solvers. Because life is full of problems. And somebody needs to solve them!

As you work to practically equip your student with the skills they will need in life, there are a few general skills that make people particularly good at solving problems and particularly valuable for businesses.

Later on in this resource we'll dive into *how* you can teach your student these skills and help them practice them. For now though, let's explore what the core skills are and why your student needs them.

Employers are looking for skilled people. But that doesn't just refer to specific technical skills. Sure, an engineering firm wants someone with engineering skills. A hospital wants doctors and nurses with medical skills. But there are a few skills that transcend industries and fields. These are "soft" skills. They're proficiencies that set people apart as valuable team members and problem-solvers.

Here are a few of those "soft" skills that employers are looking for across a wide range of industries.

1 COMMUNICATION

This one may top the list as number one.

The ability to communicate is key to problem solving and creating value in the business world and beyond.

Communication has changed so much in the last twenty years. The digital revolution has made communication simultaneously easier and also more complex. We can call someone just about anywhere in the world. But digital technology has also complicated face-to-face communication and digital habits can be detrimental to our communication if they're not controlled.

Communication is foundational to life and therefore it's an essential skill for students to intentionally build as they prepare to launch into adulthood.

2 WORK ETHIC

Many employers are simply looking for someone who will deliver the bare minimum: showing up to work and working hard. The standards have been lowered, some would agree, by necessity as the basic elements of strong work ethic and personal discipline become increasingly rare.

But most emplyers want more. Beyond simply "showing up" for work, employers want employees with strong time management skills. As one article from Rasmussen University points out, "Employers want to know they have employees who can manage their time well so managers don't have to look over their shoulders to ensure they're staying on track." Another article from the job recruiting website Indeed.com described this as "self-management skills".

3 LEADERSHIP & INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Another big category of soft skills that employers want to see in job candidates is leadership and related interpersonal skills. Reglardless of whether their position is an official management position or not, most people who attend to their work with initiative, vision, and strong interpersonal skills will excel.

Interpersonal skills include emotional intelligence, teamwork, conflict management, and coaching. Building these skills early on in their life can help your student build strong relationships both at work and outside of it.

Building Skill Through Practice

These skills don't come naturally to everyone. They don't just appear in your student's life without intentional effort.

In the next chapter we'll examine a fresh education model that prioritizes practice and application. This model can be used to learn academic knowledge and technical "hard" skills but it can also be used to learn the soft skills discussed in this chapter.

Project-Based Education

As the pace of change quickens and the very framework of education shifts from knowledge to practical preparation, a new model is needed.

That's where project-based education comes in.

Project-based education is a term for a very simple concept: learning by doing.

Students who utilize project-based education aren't separating their learning from their experience. They're doing both simultaneously in a powerful looping model.

You see, most of the time, students go to school, learn and then go out to apply what they've learned when they're done learning. College students spend four years studying a subject and then go to find a job in that field and apply what they've learned. The model is study and apply as shown in Figure 1 below.

STUDY ⟶ APPLY

Fig. 1

Project-based education follows a different model. It's a loop. It's driven by the idea that reflection/learning and action feed off each other. That when you learn something and put it into action and then reflect on the results, you learn more. In turn, that learning helps inform your next action and so on.

Experience and education happen at the same time in a project-based education model. As students learn knowledge, they apply it, examine the results of their action, and learn more. They build skill and experience practically as they learn academically. This looping model is shown in Figure 2.
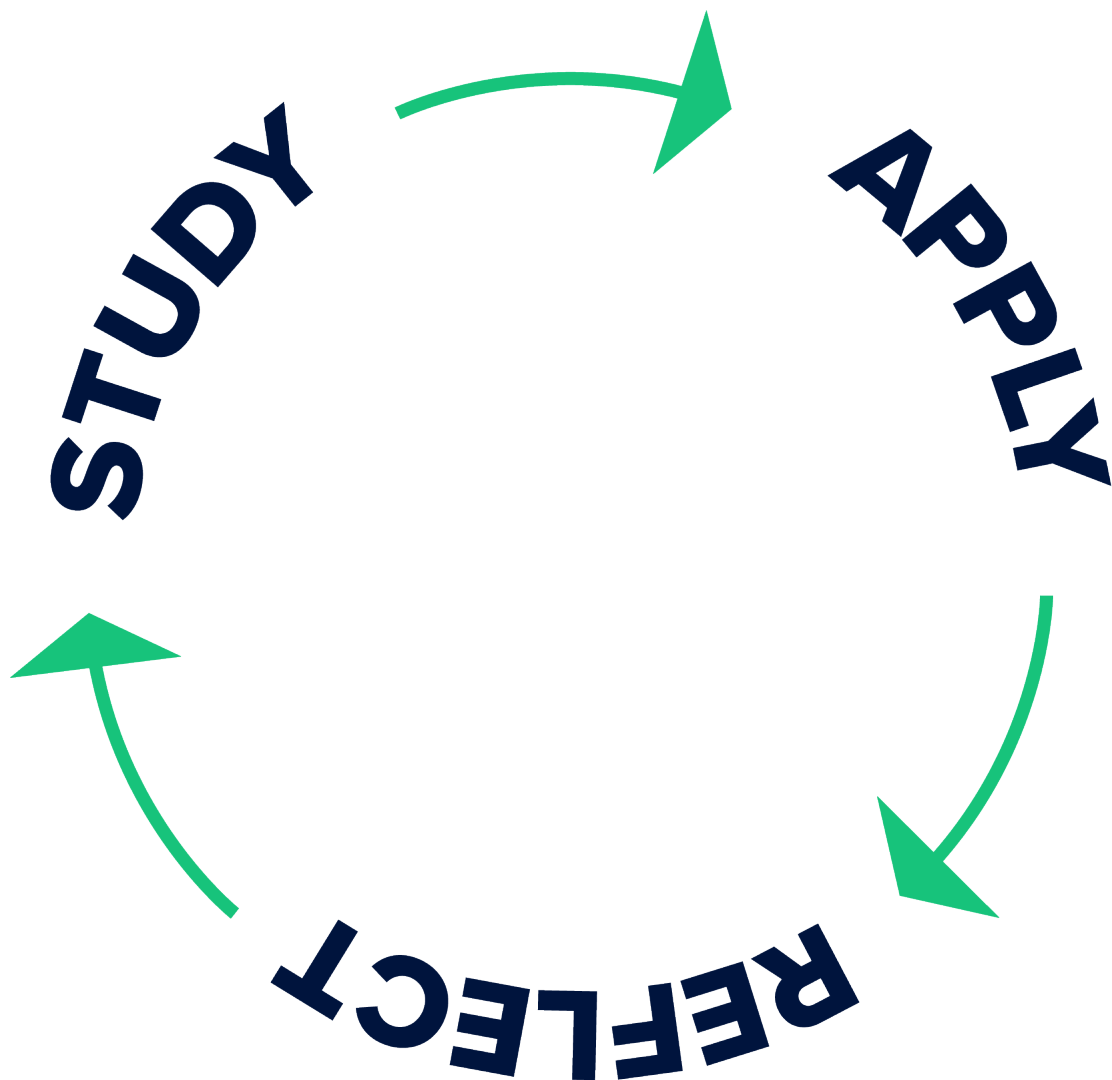
STUDY

APPLY

REFLECT

Fig. 2

How to Use the Project-Based Education Model

As a homeschooling parent with a high schooler, how do you use this model for your student?

While the rest of this resource is dedicated to answering that question, let's start with the basic idea.

High school students are at a point in their life where they have a foundational understanding of their worldview and the basic principles of the world. What they need is a chance to dive deeper into the topics they're interested in and see them play out in the real world.

The simplest way to use project-based education with your high school student is to have them complete a project.

There's nothing wrong with a simple project that is accomplished quickly. But don't overlook the value of a long-term project that is more complex. Your student's project will ideally be something they will work on for a semester at least. There are various stages they will have to complete: ideation, planning, implementation, and reflection. Remember, this is your student's chance to do a project that they can put on their resume or use to build substantial experience in a field that they're interested in.

Starting a Project

The first step in starting a project with your high school student is to decide what project they'll do! You'll find a full list of project ideas to get you started in the Appendix of this resource. These are meant to help inspire ideas of your own. Don't view these as an exhaustive list.

The question that sparks this first step is a question of what your student wants to learn. Are they interested in growing their writing skills? Maybe they can do a writing project. Do they want to learn botany? Perhaps a gardening or planting project would work best for them.

Encourage them to ask: "What am I interested in? What do I want to learn?"

Once they've answered that question, move on to the next question: "What can I do that will allow me to build skill/learn that and get real-world experience at the same time?"

To illustrate this process, I'll use an example from my own education.

When I was around 14 years old my mom applied this model to my homeschool education. I was a history nerd and I loved writing. My mom encouraged me to work on an interactive book about history for kids like me. This would count as both my history and writing credits for that year.

First, we identified what I was interested in (history and writing) and then found a way to grow my skill and understanding of both of those subjects through a real-life project (writing a history book).

Questions for Starting a Project:

1 **What does your student *want* to learn?**

2 **What can they *do* that will help them learn that while gaining real-world experience in that field?**

Planning the Project

The next step, after identifying your student's project, is to start planning what the project will look like, what success will look like, and what goals need to be set.

Let's say your student wants to get some skill and experience in nursing and they decide to apply project-based education by shadowing a nurse at the local hospital for a week. This may seem like a fairly straightforward plan at first but on second glance it is more complex. Your student has to find a nurse to shadow, approach the nurse and get permission to shadow them, and take care of any other legal or insurance details to protect all parties involved as required.

Similarly, if your student wants to write a book as a project, they must prepare for more than just writing. There will be research, outlining, editing, getting feedback from readers, more editing, designing a layout and cover, and going through the publishing process.

Whether your student is building a tiny home, recording an musical album, or putting on an event for the community, there will be multiple steps to consider and much planning to be done. This should be the student's responsibility! If a parent or teacher sets all of this up for the student, they will miss out on learning how to do it themselves. This is all part of the learning process. You can guide your student but let the responsibility rest with them.

In my experience of writing a history book, I soon realized that an interactive book would be too ambitious of a project for the season I was in. Therefore, I pivoted my project to publishing an ebook about American history. While the original vision had included audio and video elements, I stuck with the written word, delivered in an ebook format. (Later I compiled the work I had done for my ebook and published a hard copy. Be flexible and keep your student open to new developments as their project evolves!)

Your student's project will also involve outside resources. This may include physical materials. They should make a list of any materials that need to be gathered so that when they start their project they don't get interrupted midway through by a lack of materials.

Another important resource is guidance from mentors. Of course, as the homeschooling parent you will play a critical role in encouraging and guiding your student in their project. But they will also benefit from direct guidance from someone with experience and skill in the area they want to grow in.

For example, if your student wants to shadow a nurse, they have to find a nurse to shadow! If they are building a tiny home, they will benefit from the guidance of a carpenter. While I worked on my history book project, my parents helped me connect with writing mentors online and in our local community.

Questions for Planning a Project:

1 **What does your student hope to accomplish by the end of their project?**

2 **What stages or steps will be included in the project?**

3 **How often will they review their progress and reorient themselves if they are off track?**

4 **What materials (if any) do they need to gather before starting the project?**

5 **Which mentors does your student need to connect with for guidance during the project?**

Completing the Project

After your student has identified and planned their project, it's time to do it!

While this step is mostly self-explanatory, there are a couple important principles that will really make a difference in your student's experience.

First, keep in mind the project-based education model. Application is most powerful when combined with reflection. Your student should schedule points in their project to review how things are going. This is a chance for them to reflect on what is going well, what needs more work, and if they need to make changes to their plan.

My experience is a good example of this. As I started researching what would be required for an interactive, multimedia history resource I decided that it was too ambitious for where I was at the time. I changed to the ebook project and went to work on that. Pivoting or changing a project is okay.

Perhaps your student set out to build a tiny home but realized that they were more interested in building a treehouse for their younger siblings. Maybe what started as a project to record a musical album evolves into putting on a live concert at a local coffee shop.

One of the beautiful things about homeschooling with the project-based education model is that your student can pivot and readjust their targets while gaining experience and learning along the way!

There may be a number of reasons why your student decides to pivot or change their project. They may find that their interest is leading them elsewhere. (That's the great thing about trying out different fields through a project: your student gets to see if they actually want to keep doing it!) They may find that the resources (time, materials, knowledge, etc.) required for the project are more than they can allocate at that time.

While this idea of "pivoting" is important, it's also essential to balance it with perseverance and diligence. Your student shouldn't just give up on a project when it becomes challenging or they lack motivation. Pushing through these obstacles will help them build resilience.

To help students master this balance, the team at Unbound created the Deciding Forward Model. This model is designed to help students intentionally think through an idea, situation, or decision to determine whether they should continue in the

the same direction or pivot to something new. The Deciding Forward Model is shown in Figure's 3-7 below.

Curiosity
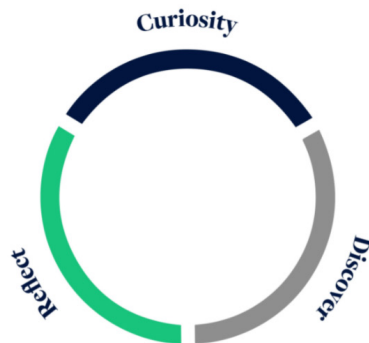
Reflect

Discover

There are three steps to the Deciding Forward Model:

- **Curiosity**
- **Discover**
- **Reflect**

Fig. 3

Curiosity

What are you curious about right now? What would you like to learn more about? What possible interests do you have bouncing around in your mind? What piques more questions?

Curiosity

Reflect

Set a Goal

Discover

Fig. 4

Discover

Curiosity

Decide Your Next Step

Reflect

Discover

*This is where doing comes in. In order to discover, **you must do**. Identify just one small step and make clear markers for finishing it, so you know when you have completed that step.*

Fig. 5

Reflect

Embrace the pause. Ask yourself:
- *What did you learn from doing (x)?*
- *What did you like? What did you dislike?*
- *What are you curious about next?*
- *Based on your answers to these questions, should you keep your current goal or pivot to something new?*

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

The Reflect step in this model is what enables students to balance perseverance with new direction. The essential part of the Reflect step is this question: Do I want to keep the same goal or change my goal? If I want to keep it, what's the next step towards success? If I want to change, what's my new goal?

Options and opportunities usually do not come into view until you have moved forward and, metaphorically speaking, walked around the bend. With action and movement come the skills your student needs to do the stuff they want to do.

> **Options and opportunities usually do not come into view until you have walked around the bend.**

But by employing the Deciding Forward Model — Be Curious, Discover, and Reflect — your student will be poised to find new opportunities, new direction, and new encouragement they may have only dreamed of.

Questions for Completing a Project:

1 Is your student on track to meet any relevant deadlines for their project?

2 If they have planned out multiple stages, are they making good progress in the current stage?

3 Are there any future obstacles that they can anticipate and prepare for?

4 What are they learning from the project? Encourage them to keep a "project journal" to reflect on each step of the project and what they are learning.

5 Are they still interested in pursuing the project as planned? Is there anything they need to change or adjust as they go?

What Happens After the Project?

After your student completes their project there is one final step in the project-based education model — one that is critical.

This is the project review. This is where your student is able to reflect, summarize what they learned, and determine where they will go from here.

As we talked about in the beginning of the last chapter, project-based education allows education and experience to happen together, thus enriching both. Without a final review and reflection, your student may not carry what they learned beyond the project.

Permission to Fail

Before we dive into the project review, we have to talk about failure.

Having permission to fail is powerful.

When we look at the many men and women throughout history who have enjoyed incredible success, we notice a pattern of persistence amidst failure. Examples include Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, and Gladys Aylward. These figures did not stop when they met their first failure. In fact, those early obstacles contributed much to their later impact.

Giving your student this permission to fail forward will help them gain confidence, avoid stress, and will actually help them learn a good deal more through the process of their project.

A responsible student will take this freedom to fail as a growth opportunity, not a license for laziness or foolishness.

While you absolutely want to see your student's project succeed, it's okay to prepare for a different outcome than they originally planned.

Part of the review process in these cases will be to help your student list what they

learned from the project, whether it ended in "success" or not. If it ended differently than they hoped or planned, what could they have done differently to get a different outcome?

Reflecting on Results

Hopefully your student has made a habit of reflection during the entire project. As they approach the end of the project, encourage them to keep up with reflection. This is sometimes the most valuable thing that students gain from projects they complete.

When the project is complete it's time for a deeper reflection on the final results and the process as a whole.

What did your student learn about themself? Did they discover new strengths or interests? What did they learn about the field or subject they studied and did their project in? They should write down the skills they learned or grew in, the knowledge they gained, the people they were connected with, and anything else they want to remember from their experience.

Finally, your student should take all their reflections and determine what they'll do with them. Continue to apply the project-based education model of ongoing learning, applying, reflecting, and repeating.

For students who are seniors in high school, their project may help them make decisions about career paths or whether or not to go to college and what to study or pursue. Younger students may decide to do a second project that dives deeper into an aspect of their first project that they want to learn more about. Or maybe they want to start a business or mobilize a group of their peers to serve a cause.

A Note About Resumes

As your student emerges into the job market, they'll need a resume outlining their experience and skills.

Depending on the scope of your student's project and how much additional experience they have, they can include their project on their resume.

Listing their project on a resume has a number of benefits:

- It helps students with little or no formal work experience practice the skill of developing a resume and it helps them demonstrate experience with a potential employer.
- It can serve as an introduction for an in-depth conversation about their skills and experience in an interview. A potential employer may ask about their project, giving them the opportunity to share about what they accomplished, and more importantly, the process they used to do it and what they learned along the way.

The Purpose of the Project Review

By the end of your student's project review they should be able to articulate several things:

- What they learned academically (i.e. the knowledge they gained)
- What mistakes they made and what they learned from those mistakes
- What new skills or strengths they were able to develop or grow
- What they learned about their own personal strengths and weaknesses
- Who they connected with and what they learned from that person's guidance
- What their next step will be

After reflecting on all this, your student will have learned so much and will have a practical next step for applying those lessons.

Education for the Real World

Let's summarize what we've laid out in this resource so far.

Education is meant to prepare students for life. As the world has fundamentally changed through digital technology, so should education. Education is no longer fundamentally about gaining knowledge; it's about quickly and effectively mastering complicated information and applying it to real-world problems and situations.

Employers are looking for a workforce with soft skills like communication, work ethic, time and task management, and leadership ability. They also want people with experience in the real world.

Skills, Experience, & Community

When it comes to getting a job, there are three key factors that help candidates stand out: skills, experience, and community (network). If a candidate is highly skilled, has experience in the field, and is well-connected with others in the industry, they will tend to have a much easier time finding a job than someone without skill who has no experience and no network.

But these things apply to more than just finding a job. After all, finding a job isn't the pinnacle of what God has created your student for.

Whatever lies ahead of your student, they will need skills, experience, and community to handle the opportunities and challenges of life well. And their life's work, whether it's a career or a ministry or caring for a family, will require skill, experience, and community.

Any education they receive in high school should be actively preparing them with these things. That's why project-based education is so well-suited for high school students. It enables them to practice and build skill, gain experience, and connect with mentors and community in very real and tangible ways.

Project-Based Education for the Real World

I sincerely hope that this resource has helped you reimagine what high school education can look like. I also hope the project-based education approach has provided you with a tangible model for practically equipping your student with the skills, experience, and community they will need as they launch into life.

Education is changing, and it's changing in fundamental ways. It's not just the systems or methods that are changing; the very reality of what it means to be educated is changing. Priorities are changing. The ***purpose*** of education is changing. Students who are equipped for the real world will excel and make a difference in the real world. Students whose education is confined to the theoretical may struggle to apply their knowledge to the real challenges around them.

This guide to practical high school education is just the beginning. After high school, the project-based education model continues to bring value. In fact, project-based education compounds in value as time goes on. A college student applying project-based education will get even more specialized training than a student in high school.

The current higher education system keeps students in their lecture halls. Students need an alternative where they can apply the project-based education model, integrate their faith with their learning, and connect with a community of peers who will encourage them in the right direction.

If you're looking for such an alternative, explore Unbound's project-based education program, Ascend.

www.beunbound.us/ascend

Appendix 1:
56 Projects for Inspiration

Some of us are great "brainstormers". Others of us are slower to come up with ideas. This appendix was developed with that second group particularly in mind.

The ideas are divided into sections based on general subjects or fields of interest. This can help narrow down your student's focus and help them find something they're interested in. But I encourage you and your student to review all the ideas here in case something they see inspires an idea of their own! These aren't meant to restrict which kinds of projects they can do. Rather they are here to inspire your student.

You'll also find certain skills listed that these project ideas are well suited to help your student develop. These of course are just suggestions but can also be helpful when reviewing these ideas with your student.

I hope these project ideas can help your student in their project brainstorming process and inspire ideas of their own!

Arts & Culture

WRITING

Skills to Develop: Writing, Editing, & Publishing

- Write a book (or a portion of a book)
- Write a play and direct peers in a performance
- Write a speech (or a series of speeches) about a cause your student is passionate about and find a public outlet to give the speech (city council meeting, local rally, etc.)

MUSIC

Skills to Develop: Composition, Music Performance, & Music Theory

- Record an album or EP
- Perform a concert for neighbors, church, or local community function
- Learn a new instrument
- Write a composition or series of compositions

FINE ARTS

Skills to Develop: Painting, Sketching, & Visual Presentation

- Paint a piece and sell it in a local gallery
- Lead a painting class for a semester

FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY

Skills to Develop: Videography, Video Editing, Scoring, Post-Production, Photography, & Photo Editing

- Direct/shoot a short film
- Direct/shoot a documentary film
- Create a photo gallery website to showcase photography
- Start a YouTube channel to share educational videos

PERFORMING ARTS

Skills to Develop: Performance, Confidence, & Event Planning

- Choreograph and perform a dance or ballet performance

Business

MARKETING

Skills to Develop: Market Research, Marketing Strategy, & Branding

- Organize a carwash (or a similar event) and market it to the local community
- Volunteer to market a local fundraising event to the community
- Produce a product and develop a marketing plan to sell it
- Build a following on a social media platform

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

Skills to Develop: Business Budgeting, Taxes, Business Law, & Human Resource Management

- Start a small business
- Develop a full business plan and budget
- Earn a bookkeeping certification

DESIGN

Skills to Develop: Web Design, Coding, & Graphic Design

- Build a website to sell a product or service
- Design a set of graphics for a social media campaign
- Create a portfolio of graphic design pieces
- Code a mobile application
- Learn a programming language

EDUCATION

Skills to Develop: Teaching, Grading, Lesson Planning, & Activity Planning

- Teach a homeschool co-op class for a semester
- Tutor a younger student in a particular subject
- Volunteer in a Sunday school class and help plan activities

Law & Policy

GRASSROOTS POLITICS

Skills to Develop: Political Fundraising, Campaign Management, & Local Political Involvement

- Organize a fundraising event for a local candidate you support
- Organize a door-knocking campaign in support of a local candidate
- Organize a campaign to encourage people in vote in local elections

GOVERNMENT

Skills to Develop: Reading Bills & Understanding the Legislative Process

- Serve as a page for the state legislature
- Volunteer to assist at local city council meetings

LAW

Skills to Develop: Legal Writing & Legal Analysis

- Participate in a debate competition
- Volunteer for or shadow a local lawyer

Ministry & Missions

BIBLE STUDY

Skills to Develop: Bible Study, Time Management, & Bible Reading Habits

- Read through the Bible in one year
- Complete a Bible reading plan
- Study and complete a commentary on one book of the Bible

COUNSELING

Skills to Develop: Biblical Counseling, Coaching, Discipleship, & Listening

- Pursue a Biblical Counseling certification
- Mentor/disciple a younger Christian

MISSIONS

Skills to Develop: Evangelism, Teaching, & Bible Translation

- Organize a day of public evangelism with peers
- Translate a book of the Bible into another language
- Teach or lead a Bible study

CHURCH MINISTRY

Skills to Develop: Service, Hospitality, Volunteering, & Church Administration

- Volunteer in the nursery
- Lead a worship night
- Organize a church fellowship event

Science & Technology

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Skills to Develop: Computer Hardware & IT Skills

- Build a computer

NATURAL SCIENCE

Skills to Develop: Scientific Reasoning & Experimentation

- Build a micro-ecosystem
- Complete a long-term science project using the scientific method

MEDICINE

Skills to Develop: First Aid, CPR, Medical Care

- Complete a CPR or First Aid course or certification
- Complete a First Responder certification
- Volunteer with a local rescue squad
- Volunteer at a local hospital

ENGINEERING

Skills to Develop: Design, Construction, & Architecture

- Build a treehouse
- Build a tiny house
- Create architectural designs for a house