

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science

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Abstract

Baxter Academy is a 9-12 public charter high school in its third year of operations. Open through lottery to any student in the largely rural state of Maine, about 320 students commute to the school in Portland, a high-poverty district and the state's largest urban center, where the STEM-focused school develops partnerships with research institutes and tech and engineering industry to connect students to real-world problem-solving that matters. The school's focus is project-based and student centered. Baxter has pioneered the Flex Friday program in which 20% of the week is given over to rigorous student-driven, yearlong projects. PBL at Baxter has overcome learning gaps among students in its high population of special needs students and its ELL learners who come from Portland's significant refugee and immigrant communities and also from the high poverty cities of Lewiston and Auburn, which are served by a school bus. With grant support, Baxter Academy will concentrate on six key activities:

- Multiplying pathways to student success through the FF program and classroom PBL; refining ways PBL can empower disadvantaged students.
- Expanding and creating opportunity around anywhere, anytime learning.
- Designing proficiency-based graduation requirements to reflect different kinds of learning.
- Designing and implementing a project-based program for ELL students.
- Empowering girls learning STEM.
- Purchasing necessary equipment to increase capacity for PBL.