



Beyond individualism: re-imagining teaching practice as a collective act

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In this paper, we investigate how teachers took up a set of core practices for Project Based Learning (PBL) imparted in an extended professional development (PD) within their unique school contexts across the U.S. A prior analysis using a classroom observation protocol suggested to us that teachers were more often observed enacting practices that supported students' disciplinary work and were less often observed supporting students' collaborative or authentic project work. Motivated by this discrepancy, in this paper, we used Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a lens to develop cases of five science teachers' descriptions of their work enacting PBL practices in their school contexts. We found that teachers largely described practices where they supported students' scientific work as something they individually enacted, without reference

to larger community or school norms. Their descriptions of how they supported student collaboration and iteration during project work were more likely to contain references to school norms as well as colleagues they work alongside. Lastly, and perhaps most interestingly, as teachers described supporting students to engage in authentic project work that has meaning outside of school, they often described expanding their school communities to work alongside other community members, relevant professionals, parents, as well as elder students who previously took their course. This led us to question the ways that our observation protocol, attuned to observe an individual teacher's actions while leading instruction, may have failed to capture some of the ways PBL is enacted collectively, and involves expanding who is involved in the work of teaching.