Learning Through Internship: *Projects*

What is a "Project?"
A project is a temporary endeavor with a defined beginning and end, undertaken to meet specific, finite goals and objectives. The temporary nature of projects stands in contrast with business as usual (or operations), which are repetitive, permanent, or semi-permanent functional activities to produce products or services.   (Wikipedia definition, Sept. 2012)

Why do we require students to plan and implement projects at their internships?
People are more engaged, more satisfied, and learn more at work when they are in the habit of proposing projects that address areas of need in their workplaces, are tied to their interests, and are feasible. Developing the habit of project-proposing, and project-implementing are key to attaining positions of responsibility in all organizations and businesses. We want our students to be prepared to be leaders in their workplaces!

What do we teach about how to do projects well?
At Big Picture South Burlington we teach a set of terms to help students understand the characteristics of high quality project management. We call these *The Big Picture South Burlington Project Process Steps:*

The BPSB Project Process Steps:
1. **Explore, discover, and be inspired**: Experience, interview, observe, read.
2. **Define the project**: Set goals, deliverables, timelines.
3. **Research specific questions:** Gather models and readings, interview, watch films, etc.
4. **Analyze information:** Synthesize info from multiple sources; evaluate information for relevance, bias etc.
5. **Create final products**: Events, systems, physical objects, etc.
6. **Reflect on learning:** Think, discuss, write.
7. **Present!**

Where do project ideas come from?
1. **A need at the site.**
   Examples:
   i.   Auto shop: Create a new tool organization system
   ii. Classroom: Lead a small group for struggling students on a particular academic skill
   iii. Youth program: Conduct outreach at schools for new workshop
   iv. Restaurant: Create bilingual guide to restaurant menu and policies

2. **A student's personal interest or a need for personal/academic growth**
   Examples:
   i.   Auto Shop: Learn to write invoices
   ii. Classroom: Lead an origami unit with students
   iii. Youth Program: Lead support group for girls struggling with sexism in their lives
   iv. Restaurant: Learn the chemistry of butter - using butter in 3 forms in 3 recipes
   v.   Bicycle Shop: Build and wire a battery operated sound system on a bike

3. **A need in the broader community**
   Examples:
   i.   Conduct educational workshops related to an issue that pertains to the internship site. (ex: the plight of day-laborers, police-community relations, etc.)
   ii. Advocate for policy changes in governments and businesses that will help a specific population overcome a specific challenge.

iii.   Increase access to a particular field of work or social service through targeted outreach to underrepresented communities.