



New Tech Network

Attwood New Tech Magnet School: An interview with educators from Attwood Elementary School

New Tech Network (NTN), a national nonprofit organization, is a leading design partner for comprehensive K-12 school change. New Tech Network partners with districts and communities to transform schools into innovative learning environments for students and adults. To explore more about the New Tech model and transforming your school, visit NTN's [School Design Studio](#).

Attwood New Tech Magnet School is a “school of choice” 4-6 grade elementary school located in Lansing with 212 students. 82% on Free/Reduced Lunch and 11% English Language Learners.

Q. Why was pivoting to project based learning (PBL) a key piece of Attwood’s improvement strategy?

A. “We were designated as a “priority school,” said Attwood New Tech principal Carla Turner-Laws. “The district is trying to implement a PBL approach, and the New Tech model has helped us in the teaching and learning process of letting go of the reins and giving up more control so the students can take ownership of their learning.”

Q. Why have your teachers found PBL to be an effective form of instruction?

A. “Teachers report a much higher level of student engagement with PBL” said Amber Moreno, Attwood New Tech’s Magnet Focus teacher. “The project-based learning environment has helped with some of the behavior we’ve had, with a shift towards a more positive and productive culture, where students are communicating, collaborating and taking ownership over themselves.”

Q. Why have your students excelled in a PBL classroom?

A. “I see equity in project-based learning,” shared Moreno. “I love how project-based learning offers our students’ choices. They choose how they demonstrate their end product and different methods on how they want to learn. We’re seeing more student voice in the classroom as well. They’re being heard. Their ideas are being communicated. PBL is a really great fit for our students.”

Q. Why is it important for your students to complete authentic tasks with community partners?

A. “Through our project, “Tiny Home Builders: Animal Edition” (which won [NTN’s 2020 Elementary Best in Network \(BIN\) Award](#)) our students had an opportunity to work closely with professionals they may never have crossed paths with,” shared Haleigh Adams, BIN project co-designer. “There were quite a few students who are considering the construction field because of the interaction they had with community partners,” said project co-designer, Caitlin Donnelly.

Q. Why do you think your partnership for school redesign has produced results for your students and staff?

A. “So much of our success can be attributed to the ongoing professional development for our staff,” said Turner-Laws. “Our partnership has increased the quality and intentionality of standards based planning and teaching due to the PBL framework of the NTN model. Our school now has a PBL culture, which has resulted in increasing academic achievement. I love to hear visitors say: “The students are SO engaged and really know what they’re doing!” Students now work together, are comfortable with technology and have taken ownership of their own learning.”