



Interview with The Biome

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The Youth Learning Center, YLC, was founded in 2003 in St. Louis to “help kids learn in a safe environment” and it transformed into numerous STEAM after school programs built on project-based learning, or PBL. In 2012, YLC pushed this vision to found a school, The Biome.

Q: Tell us about your education journey and what you are doing now.

BK: We wanted to create a school that is really responsive. What that meant is that the needs of the students are first and foremost in everything we do. We have an affinity for STEAM PBL and we had to have tools that K-12 learners could use. We started developing the concept for the school without even knowing what tools were available. We looked at a few products to manage individualized learning but struggled to find one flexible enough to meet our needs. When we found Buzz, we started to believe that truly individualized learning could happen.

Q: What do you love about Buzz?

BK:

- Ease of use for teachers
- Custom groupings of students
- Ability to address the unique needs of students
- Can use purchased curriculum
- There are products out there that curate content but none that tie it to students and standards like Buzz.



- We love the Agilix team: their curiosity and desire to understand what The Biome does really matters to us. They took a deep dive to understand how we are going to use Buzz. We believe in the team and want to be partners.

Q: Which tools/features are most exciting to teachers and students?

BK:

- Excited about everything in one place, specifically standards and curriculum alignment
- Kids can move within groups- e.g.: create one big literacy class and kids can move within groups inside that master class

Q: How do you Buzz?

BK: A Day in the Life of a Student at The Biome:

All students are grouped by readiness, not age.

1. Literacy: 90 minutes
2. Big question unit (e.g.: What role does food play in our life?)
3. Adaptive Thinking (e.g.: Teaching kids to be resilient)
4. Lunch
5. Math
6. Unit of Choice (kids pick which unit they are most interested in and are then grouped accordingly)

We imagine that Buzz will be integral in every class.

DW: On bigger units, teachers have drawn out all the different ways kids can go, creating co-constructed curriculum. Kids can make choices and have a voice in the direction of the curriculum. Buzz is the self-directed learning tool that removes the question 'what do I do now that I am finished?'