

Dream Jobs: Construction project manager

By Hailee Romain, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.03.18

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Image 1. Jennifer Battle studied and worked in civil engineering before moving into a career in construction project management. Today, she oversees large-scale construction projects for public housing in Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Battle.

Jennifer Battle is a project manager. She works for a construction company. Construction companies build things. Some build bridges. Others construct tall buildings.

Project managers make sure the work gets done right. They are problem-solvers. Project managers are not only needed in construction — it is an important role in many kinds of businesses.

Can you describe your role?



I oversee the whole building process. **That means I lead the project from start to finish.** I work closely with architects. They design the building. They make pictures of what it will look like. I work with civil engineers, too. They plan things like water for the building. They decide where the pipes should go.

The architects and engineers make a construction plan. It shows how to build the building. Then, I find workers to help us build it. Sometimes I hire roofers. Other times, I need painters.

I make sure everyone finishes their work on time. I also make sure we do not spend too much money.

What has your career path been like?

In school, I was good at math. I liked science, too. And I loved watching people build things. Bridges and roads interested me the most. So I decided to be an engineer. In college, I studied civil engineering. Civil engineers work on really big projects. They build things like bridges and roads.

After college, I worked for the state of Maryland. I helped build highways there. Then, I managed construction projects for schools. We built schools. We even made new playgrounds!

Now I work for a construction company. It builds public housing. There are many kinds of public housing. Some are tall buildings. Others are one-family homes. This housing is not very expensive. Families can live safely there.

What planning goes into the creation of a school playground?



First, we ask the students what they want. They will usually say swings. Many want a slide, too. Then, the architects make some drawings of the playground. They come up with a few different ideas. We show them to the kids. **They can pick what they like best.**

We try to use the school's colors in the playground. That makes the playground special for that school.

Can you describe a typical day at work?

My day starts early. Most construction sites begin work at 7:00 a.m. All day, I answer questions. In big projects, many things happen at once. People have questions about the building plan. Problems come up. I check in with everyone. I make sure they have what they need to work. I solve problems for them. We need to finish the building on time. It is my job to make sure that happens!

What do you like best about your job?

I like that the houses and schools I build help communities. The people who live in those communities get to enjoy the spaces I build. That is the best.

What do you find challenging about your job?



The biggest challenge is time. There is never enough of it to get everything done!

Do you have any advice for kids who might want to get into this field?

Being good at math is important in this role. So is being interested in how things work.

There are many kinds of construction jobs. You need all kinds of people to build things. You cannot do it by yourself. It takes teamwork. If you like working with others, it could be a good field for you.