IMPACT II
The Teachers' Network

Ventura County Teacher-Developed Curriculum Ideas

1993 Disseminator Grants

co-sponsored by

Ventura County Economic Development Association
and the
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
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What is IMPACT II?

IMPACT II is starting its first year in Ventura County and is part of a national curriculum-sharing and recognition program for teachers in grades kindergarten—12 in all subject matter areas and specializations.

More than 30 IMPACT II business/school partnerships exist in cities throughout the United States, including New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, as well as in smaller districts, counties, and even entire states. The program now has several thousand selectively chosen teacher members.

The Ventura County IMPACT II program is a partnership between the Ventura County Economic Development Association (VCEDA) and the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office.

Important Events - 1994

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Through IMPACT II teachers can apply for $400 Disseminator individual grants for classroom-tested curriculum ideas which they have developed. Collaborative grants for 2 or more teachers are $600. A committee of teachers, school administrators, and business leaders selects the most ready-to-share ideas for grants. Business leaders award the grants at the spring Teacher Recognition Program.

An IMPACT II catalog published each year, distributes these "cutting edge" ideas countywide. Any interested teacher may attend the fall Curriculum Fair to meet the teacher Disseminators and order teacher materials.

Why IMPACT II?

IMPACT II is cost effective. The County Education Office funds the day-to-day operation of IMPACT II, so your contributions go directly to teachers and classrooms for student projects.

IMPACT II puts cutting edge classroom projects into the mainstream, turning students on to learning.

IMPACT II enables excellent teaching ideas to reach all teachers in the county, and raises community awareness of exemplary classroom practices.

IMPACT II boosts teacher morale by recognizing innovative teaching as well as enhancing teacher professionalism through local/national training and teacher presentations.
Message from the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

The heart of any excellent school is excellent teachers. In Ventura County, we have many excellent teachers who work, in many cases, in relative isolation from their colleagues. Our current model of schooling calls for one teacher and thirty students in a classroom for the majority of the work day. A typical teacher's work day provides few opportunities for professional interaction and sharing. The result is many "islands of excellence" with too few students reaping the benefits from these excellent teachers. IMPACT II holds promise of reducing the isolation by building bridges between these "islands."

The challenges of teaching are many and the tangible rewards are few. Being a teacher today requires dedication, intelligence, creativity, knowledge, courage, and a whole lot of effort. In order to strengthen the profession, we must be able to attract and retain the best and brightest among us. E. Lee Iacocca has been quoted as saying that "In a truly rational world, the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something else." Unfortunately, our world has not yet met Mr. Iacocca's standard of rationality. Public schools do not currently have the tools to attract and retain the best and brightest to teaching. Excellence among our teachers is only infrequently acknowledged and rewarded. IMPACT II provides a tool for tangibly rewarding excellence.

It is the job of the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office to spread excellence among the schools and classrooms in Ventura County and to create the conditions wherein excellence can prosper. IMPACT II is one of the programs that the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office began to build bridges between "islands of teaching excellence" in Ventura County while tangibly rewarding excellent teachers. The anticipated outcome is more teachers providing high quality instruction and working toward development of world-class schools wherein students meet world-class standards.

The visionary leadership of Ed Lyon, Ventura County Economic Development Association Education Chair, and Stacy Roscoe, 1992-93 VCEDA President, enabled IMPACT II to occur. Mr. Lyon understood the link between educational excellence and the economic vitality and quality of life in Ventura County and, therefore, supported the fund raising effort necessary to secure IMPACT II scholarships. Marshall Milligan, President of Bank of A. Levy, provided the first and largest contribution, without which we would not have been able to proceed. The seed money from the Bank of A. Levy Foundation allowed this first year of IMPACT II in Ventura County to happen.

The business-education partnership that made IMPACT II possible required the dedication of the VCEDA staff and education committee members. IMPACT II enables our business partners to recognize and support the excellence that exists in our public schools. The benefit to businesses in contributing to IMPACT II is the recognition that, regardless of their line of work, when they partner with education they are engaging in the most important work that a community can do... creating a better future. We are very fortunate to have such outstanding business leaders in Ventura County.

I look forward to continuing IMPACT II for many years with Ventura County's business partners assisting us to recognize and reward our many exceptional teachers.

Charles Waiz
Ph.D.
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
July 1993
The IMPACT Advisory Council plays an important role in the success of the entire IMPACT program. They provide direction by establishing policy, planning the awards program, evaluating previous year's events, and most important of all, reading and selecting grant recipients.

1993-94 IMPACT II Advisory Council

Teacher Representatives:

- Sandee Ayers
- Yvonne Badus
- Carol Berger
- Carol Brummell
- Jan Cornell
- Helen Faul
- Cyndy Hall
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- Oak Park Unified
- Simi Valley Unified
- Conejo Valley Unified
- Simi Valley Unified
- Ventura Unified
- Ocean View Elementary
- Oak Park Unified
- Fillmore Unified
- Simi Valley Unified
- Oak Park Unified
- Moorpark Unified
- Conejo Valley Unified
- Ventura Unified
- Ventura Unified
- Conejo Valley Unified
- Ventura Unified
- Pleasant Valley Elementary
- Ocean View Elementary

- Medea Creek Middle School
- Katherine School
- Acacia School
- Big Springs School
- Blanche Reynolds School
- Tierra Vista School
- Brookside School
- Fillmore Junior High School
- Sinaloa Junior High School
- Oak Hills Elementary School
- Campus Canyon School
- Meadows School
- E.P. Foster (PIRA) School
- Montalvo School
- Los Cerritos Intermediate School
- Balboa Middle School
- Pleasant Valley School
- Ocean View Junior High School

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- Alan Friedenberg

PTA Representatives:

- Martha Goodsell
- Pat Sandu

PTA — 12th District

Business Representatives:

- Dale Hoffman
- Albert A. Okuma, Jr.
- Deborah Quyen

- RecreAction
- Conrad and Okuma, Architects
- Soka University
1993 IMPACT II Partners

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G.T.E.
Open the Windows of Your Mind:
Young scientists constructing their own science fair projects

The Idea and Its Value

This instructional video, produced in English and Spanish, features students explaining the process of creating science fair projects. Students are provided an opportunity to view and discuss the complete process of developing a science fair project. This project has been produced with our diverse student population in mind. It’s simplified to be less threatening for young students new to the process. The footage and narration are done by kids to help other students realize that this is something that they, too, can do.

Students use higher-level thinking skills while developing questions, conducting research, recording observations, and explaining conclusions.

This project is a result of my own frustration in finding resources that meet my students’ needs. I have acquired my ideas from many sources and from my own thinking. Ideas I’ve gained from other sources have been modified to make them more open-ended and relevant to my students’ lives.

The video is designed to introduce students to the process, and its various segments can be reviewed and discussed as the students progress. It takes 1 to 2 months to develop and produce a project.

The intended audience is language minority students with little or no previous science project experience. It is not assumed that students will depend on parental support to do their projects. What is assumed is that all students can create and construct their own science fair projects.

Students are shown how to develop questions that stem from their own curiosity. They are successful when they do what interests them, while working individually or with others. As teachers, our job is to facilitate and give support to students throughout this challenging process.

I measure my program’s success by observing students successfully develop questions, conduct investigations, and communicate results as completed projects.

State Frameworks

The objectives of my program support the recommendations of the Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science frameworks which emphasize “real life” application of skills in an integrated and meaningful context. The integration of curricular areas and the use of higher level thinking skills result in the production of meaningful student projects.

The Students

This approach has been used for two years with third grade bilingual students (total of 60 students). The projects varied from individual to cooperative to whole class productions.

Facilities and Materials

I am presently compiling a resource manual to accompany the video which will assist teachers as they take their students through this process. The format will be open-ended to encourage student-generated project design.

Outside Resources

Outside resources include the public library, during the research phase, and other resource materials as needed for students’ projects, including resource people.

The Staff

I have taught preschool through 6th grade for 14 years as a classroom teacher and as a resource teacher. I have taught bilingually for 6 years. I am our district’s science mentor for K-3. Additionally, I am the Associate Director of an N.S.F. funded project called Improving Mathematics Education in Diverse Classrooms, at U.C.S.B. I am a fellow of the Northern Nevada Writing Project, the South Coast Science Project, and the Tri-County Mathematics Project.

Grades 1-5

Science
Mathematics
Language Arts
Art

More Information

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Ernie Morrison, Principal
Oxnard Elementary
School District

Business Partner

Achille Levy Foundation

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The Idea and Its Value

*Old Befana and Babushka* is a literary, bicultural, and integrated curriculum unit that engages all students in divergent thinking and cooperative group activities.

The value of this unit is to expose children to good literature, to write about it, and to use the ideas presented to branch into art, music, math, cooking, writing, divergent thinking, and cooperative group activities.

By using Venn diagrams children are using higher level thinking skills; by cooperative group activities such as the geoboard broom activity, all children can succeed and learn from each other. Success is built into the majority of activities; there being no absolute right or wrong, children are creative. We ended the unit with an Italian feast rather than the "traditional" holiday party. Parents were thrilled at the learning that went on even up to the dismissal. Mrs. Ambrioso and Mrs. Newhard said this was the best party because the children were learning as they enjoyed themselves.

Into: the teacher will review how children in other countries celebrate December holidays. The teacher will explain that the story is an Italian legend. The teacher will review the genre of legend. A legend is a story that is handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another. It may be all true, it may be partly true, and may not be true at all. You decide.

Teacher will read *Old Befana* by Tomie de Paola to the class. If a class set is available, teacher will distribute the books to all. Teacher will explain that Tomie de Paola is the author and illustrator of the book. After reading the book, teacher will web on chart paper or on the board the details the children remember from *Old Befana*.

Beyond: The learner will make puppets of Old Befana or Babushka. The learner will make spaghetti, pizza, or another Italian treat. In my class we did this instead of the traditional Christmas party, and the children loved it. The learner will make a picture of Befana's flight using crayon resist, and imitate the style of Tomie de Paola's stars. The learner will write a holiday legend from their family, or a holiday memory.

State Frameworks

These lessons support the English/Language Arts Framework, Mathematics Framework, and the History/Social Science Framework, which emphasize integration and "hands-on" activities. The lesson plan is designed for students to read, speak, listen, and write about a rich legend originating in Italy. By teaching the story in many modalities, and different learning styles and ability levels, success is achieved.

The Staff

I taught pre-school through third grades for Los Angeles City School District for nine years. After moving to Camarillo, I have taught art for Creative Arts Workshop, pre-school, and for the last four years I have taught second and third grades at El Descanso School in the Pleasant Valley School District.
Animals Come Alive with Shadow Puppetry

The Idea and Its Value

Use of shadow puppets is an exciting instructional strategy to impart "hands on" experience to students as they study animals in relation to various habitats. This was a six-week long unit, executed primarily in cooperative groups.

Using various resources, the students researched numerous world habitats, and the animals that live there. These animals and habitats were realistically illustrated for an effective bulletin board display.

Next, each group wrote “mini-research reports” that became the basis of shadow puppetry skits. The students, interacting with partners, presented information to the rest of the class by manipulating cardboard animal cutouts, casting a shadow on the translucent shadow puppet screen, while simultaneously relating information about their animals.

The members of the class took notes, so that they could answer the questions which had been generated by each presentation group. Finally, in whole class discussion, the presentations were analyzed to identify all the positive techniques used and meaningful content information imparted.

Shadow puppetry has significant instructional value, and is easily adapted for any unit at any grade level. It is inexpensive, motivating, and can involve all areas of the curriculum, thus squeezing more content into limited instructional minutes. Students truly learn while experiencing a hands-on activity.

State Frameworks

This unit supports the Science Framework which recommends that children experience "hands-on" activities for science instruction. It also presents integrated activity based science, and the development of higher level thinking skills.

The Staff

I have taught grades two through six for eighteen years and have been a Mentor Teacher for three years. I am a Fellow of the Early Equity in Science and Mathematics Project as well as the Tri-County Mathematics Project. I have been a presenter frequently in the areas of Reading, Language Arts, and Performance Based Instruction.

Facilities and Materials

A shadow puppet frame was simple and inexpensive to make. It consisted of an 18" by 24" wooden stretcher frame, over which a white plastic shower curtain was stretched and stapled. The animals were photocopied on stiff cardboard, and various habitat scenery was cut out, labeled, and laminated. The end of a drinking straw was splayed and taped to the back of each animal as a handle.
Book Clubs for Kids

Grades 3-8 Language Arts

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Anthony Knight,
Principal
Oak Park Unified
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Business Partner
Oxnard Harbor Association
of Realtors

The Idea and Its Value

*Book Clubs for Kids* (modeled after adult book clubs) allow students to share their love of favorite self-selected books with their classmates and teachers in an informal, highly motivational setting. The club meeting allows for peer interaction, affords opportunities for writing, listening and speaking, and enhances and promotes appreciation and respect for the opinions of others. Students meet once per week in established heterogeneous groups. Each student is responsible for writing a weekly letter to group members in which they respond to suggested (not required) questions composed by the teacher:

- What is the author/title/genre/setting/number of pages? Why did you choose this book?
- Briefly, what is the book about? Who are the characters? What are they like? Do they change?
- Why might someone else want to read this book?
- Did it remind you of other books you have read?

As students orally share their letters they go beyond summarization and literal comprehension. After each student reads his or her letter, the other members of the group ask questions they are interested in. Typically, children mention books with similar themes, ask questions about characters, suggest other titles to other members, share their feelings and responses if they have read the same book, and very often, jot down the titles of books they might want to read themselves.

The teacher becomes part of the group, modeling interpretive questions and adding his/her own insights. Occasionally, the teacher can introduce new books to the club and lead into a discussion of genre awareness and/or author's style. After the program has been in place several weeks, the students take over the leadership role, leaving the teacher free to make observations and evaluations of student progress and difficulties. The teacher can observe both the development of skills and the processes of reading for individual students that are not as easily observed during whole class core literature activities.

One of the greatest benefits of the *Book Clubs* is the motivational factor. The students feel a responsibility to other club members to come prepared with their letters. Other children are recommending books they "just have to read!" A recommendation from a peer is taken seriously. The conversational structure of the meetings promotes a genuine love and appreciation of fine literature as opposed to a trivial assignment or required typical book report. Furthermore, all students, regardless of their levels of reading ability and experience, can participate and feel that they are making valuable contributions to the group meetings.

State Frameworks

The English/Language Arts Framework emphasizes a balanced reading program featuring core, extended and recreational (self-selected) books. *Book Clubs* are a way of structuring the independent reading while allowing the teacher to gain an awareness of individual reading levels. Skills are introduced and reinforced in the context of whole pieces of literature.

The Students

Teachers from grades K-12 have successfully adapted the basic features of the club format in their classrooms. All students participate throughout the entire year. The program can be built upon in succeeding grades with only minor adjustments. Students at all levels write lit letters to share with group members or verbally respond to the questions of their peers.

Facilities and Materials

The only materials required are books for the students to read (classroom libraries, school libraries, student-owned tradebooks, books ordered from monthly commercial book clubs, etc.). Many teachers ask students to write their lit letters in a spiral notebook. The response questions are glued to the inside cover of the notebooks for the students' reference. Most teachers keep simple records of individual student performance and participation. Many clubs bring a simple snack for the meetings. This helps create a real club atmosphere, promoting motivation to participate as well. The children arrange for the snack entirely on their own.

The Staff

Enid and Joni are both Fellows of the South Coast Writing Project and participants in the Ventura County Language Arts Symposium group.
The Idea and Its Value

Inspired by *The Little Engine That Could*, children and their families can "get to the other side of the mountain" with a train filled with lots of good food, toys, books, and clothes for children and their families who are needy.

Through the core literature selection, *The Little Engine That Could*, by Watty Piper, children not only learn about different modes of transportation, taking one of their first steps into times past through trains of today and yesterday, but also focus on different situations requiring perseverance in their daily lives. The value in the culminating service learning project (QUEST) lies in connecting and distributing food, clothing, and toys to needy families. Students will have the opportunity to learn and value cooperation, show generosity, empathy, concern, and caring for others by collecting food, clothing, and toys for needy families.

After many "Into" activities, students will work in cooperative groups to create cars on a train using large cardboard boxes which they design and paint. Paper plates are painted for wheels, and construction paper scraps are available for embellishing each car. After completion, the "train" is place on a masking tape track on the floor in the classroom. Children and their families are encouraged to supply the contents for each car such as food, books, toys, and clothing. When contents for the train are brought to school, the class uses sorting and organizing skills to decide which "car" is to be filled. When the train is filled with "good food and toys for the children on the other side of the mountain", it is taken to a local service organization for distribution to needy families in the community.

The value of this project is far-reaching and makes caring and concern for others a priority. For young people the benefits include: developing a sense of responsibility and empathy for others; working cooperatively with each other and adults; building a deeper understanding of their social world; relating geographic themes to the real world; developing historical literacy through the concept of sequencing, cause and effect, and the roles of people in our community; becoming aware of cultural differences in our society; and developing an understanding of basic economic problems confronting societies.

State Frameworks

This project and unit support the History-Social Science Framework and the goals of knowledge and cultural understanding, democratic understanding and civic values, and skills attainment and social participation. In particular the unit covers the goals and curriculum stands for kindergarten, "Learning and Working Together, Now and Long Ago"; and first grade, "A Child's Place in Time and Space". The lessons incorporate all learning modalities, develop higher-level thinking skills and are accessible to all students. The rationale and philosophy for Skills for Growing (Quest) are integral.

The Students

Fifty-two students in the kindergarten and kindergar­ ten/first grade classes participated in the lessons which are developmentally appropriate and meet the needs of all students.

Facilities and Materials

Materials needed for the train include large cardboard boxes, paper plates, construction paper scraps and space for cooperative groups to paint and work together. Many trade books about trains are used.

Outside Resources

Involvement with a local charity organization is helpful for distribution of the collected donations to needy families. A class could also adopt a children's home or a family to provide needed food and clothing.

The Staff

I have taught kindergarten through second grade for the past seven years. I have been a Mentor Teacher for three years in the Pleasant Valley School District focusing on the "integration of a developmentally appropriate kindergarten program".
But Mom! Everybody Has One!

The Idea and Its Value

*But Mom! Everybody Has One!* incorporates the use of commercials to help the student gain an understanding of the methods of propaganda used by the dictators of Europe during World War II.

After watching a selection of pre-recorded commercials, students discuss the methods used to influence them to purchase the product or service. The seven generally agreed upon methods used (Band Wagon, Glittering Generalities, Testimonials, Card Stacking, Plain Folks, Transfer, and Name Calling) are identified and discussed.

Students then work in collective groups to create a product, write a commercial, video tape it, and discuss the methods used to sell their product.

The groups view the tapes at the Phony Award Show where they vote for the video tape that best represents the methods of propaganda discussed.

The project forces students to look at the methods used by commercial makers to influence the public to purchase their products. They also recognize the same methods used by politicians to garner votes. Students sharpen their critical thinking skills and become more effective consumers and citizens.

State Frameworks

English/Language Arts Framework integrates oral and written language with art by designing the product's packaging. History/Social Science Framework, section 15, specifies, "... to recognize illogical thinking; to guard against propaganda."

Facilities and Materials

Materials: cans, boxes, drawing paper, magic markers, glue, rulers, and scissors.

Equipment: camcorder and a TV. (If you have an Apple IIe computer, you can also use a program called VCR Companion to enhance the project with different styles of titling and animation.)

Outside Resources

Students enjoy the activity of pointing out to their parents the methods of propaganda being used by political leaders and commercial makers.

The Staff

I've taught English and Reading in grades 7 and 8 for seventeen years. I am the Technology Coordinator for my school and a Reading Specialist. I taught Social Studies at the high school level for three years.
The Long and the Short of It

The Idea and Its Value

*The Long and the Short of It* promotes an understanding of probability, numeration, logic, and measurement in the young child through the child's participation in a game that is integrated with the unit of study. First the game is introduced to the entire class so as to model the game guidelines.

Procedure: The “engine card” is placed on the table face up, the remaining 10 cards (the caboose and 9 train cards) are placed on the table face down. The object of the game is to keep drawing train cards and adding to the train until the caboose is drawn. Once the caboose is drawn from the pile, that signifies the end to the train and you can no longer add cars to the train. Probability is introduced at this time and the children predict whether the next train they build will be of equal length, shorter, longer, etc. Build three or four trains with the entire class so they experience probability and measurement comparisons. After the trains are built, have the children use unifix cubes to build “towers” that represent the number of cars on each train. These can be used for comparison purposes and a discussion utilizing math vocabulary terms such as all, none, less, more, how many more, how many in each set, etc. This furthers the young child’s comprehension of these concepts when he or she can manipulate and count objects.

After the children have participated in the game a number of times with the class, they enjoy working in groups and replaying the game. The results can be recorded on a chart. The chart can be discussed and trends discovered. The game can be used throughout the year to encourage estimation and the development of number sense. The children estimate the probable results and then play to obtain the results. Children enjoy the challenge of attempting to predict the probability and “beat the odds.” The game can be changed to integrate it with different pieces of literature throughout the year. I use a caterpillar card for the initial card and chrysalis card for the terminator card when we are studying butterflies and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.* The cards to be drawn are various foods for the caterpillar to eat. This game has exposed my children to the concept of probability in a meaningful manner.

State Frameworks

*The State Math Framework states that a strong math program will expose and instruct every student in the fundamental concepts of each strand.* *The Long and the Short of It* supports this math framework concept through the creation of a game to enable young children to experience probability in a meaningful setting. The game also integrates other math strands: measurement, numeration, prediction, pattern, statistics, and logic; which are all higher level thinking skills. *The Long and The Short of It* also supports the Language Arts Framework by utilizing literature in a meaning centered curriculum, and integrating literature into other curriculum areas. The game also supports the History/Social Science Framework by the development of civic and democratic values as the children work together in cooperative groups and develop values such as sharing and fair play.

The Students

Heterogeneous groups of children participated in this activity throughout 1992-93. It is a cross-age game that fifth-grade “buddies” who visit the kindergarten like to play with the children. This activity appeals to all learners since it is open ended and allows for many extensions of learning.

Facilities and Materials

Use unifix cubes, multi-links, or any manipulative available. For each game, make cards that correspond to the literature selection you are reading. A sample set of cards, to correspond to *The Little Engine That Could*, includes one engine card, one caboose, and nine train cards, for each group of children.

Outside Resources

None are required, but a visit to the Amtrak train station or Gull Wings Museum to see the transportation display could augment the study. Films and videos that support the unit of study are also a good resource. Contacting the Ventura County Model Train Club for a speaker could also prove beneficial.

The Staff

I have taught kindergarten for 16 years, and second and fourth grade prior to that.

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Grades K-2

Math Probability
Measurement
Numeration
Prediction & Pattern
Statistics & Logic
Language Arts
History
Social Science
Ethics & Sociopolitics

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The Idea and Its Value

Extinct is Forever is a four to six week integrated science unit that taps on children’s natural fascination with wildlife, while engaging in activities that promote environmental responsibility and respect for wildlife.

The children study contemporary literature, sing environmental songs, simulate actual wildlife situations, dramatize stories through reader’s theater, and solve tantalizing math puzzles. They also create animal masks, evaluate informational videos, use cooperative learning to research an animal of their choice, and play a teacher-made Jeopardy-type game to review their understanding of the plight of endangered animals.

Cooperatively, the students synthesize what they have learned through listening to each other’s self-selected animal research presentations, and teacher directed lessons. Then they are able to conclude that there are seven main reasons for animal endangerment and extinction. With this information students create a class newspaper, group posters, and multimedia presentations, which are then shared with the community. Newspapers are shared with their families, videos are shown to other classes, and can be checked out to share with parents. Posters are displayed throughout the community.

As part of the unit, the teacher instructs the children on art skills used to enhance their group poster. They are also taught and expected to use research, grammar, and writing skills appropriate to their ability level. Each child is evaluated with an individual, group, and cooperation grade.

The value of this unit is quite evident. Extinct is Forever develops a broadened global awareness and an environmental responsibility in children. Communication skills are stimulated through oral, written, and visual presentations. Life long attitudes are inspired while the children use higher level thinking skills. A strong passion for saving endangered animals is developed which lasts not only through the duration of this unit, but throughout their lives. This unit encourages participation and is successful at all levels and abilities. It stimulates a connection between the children and the world outside the classroom. After our field trip to the zoo, many children were saying, “We can’t believe how many of these animals here at the zoo are endangered animals!” Another child enthusiastically asked, “Can I send the class video to my grandparent in Utah?” The children value what they have learned and the success of the unit lies in their enthusiasm.

State Frameworks

These ideas are supported in the Science and English/Language Arts Frameworks, which recommend activities to develop critical thinking, communication, and creative potentials in students. Children share their knowledge cooperatively, have meaningful “hand-on” experiences, and are encouraged to transfer their learning to real-life situations through community involvement.

The Students

Extinction is Forever has been successfully used with third and fourth grade students with abilities ranging from gifted to learning disabled. The activities can easily be tailored to meet the needs of varying skills and grades.

Facilities and Materials

Materials needed are a blank video tape, VCR, camcorder, posterboard, paint, computer for publishing the newspaper (The Writing Center is a good program for this), and a good selection of resource books on endangered animals. Usage of materials is flexible according to availability. A helpful teacher material packet is available. Ideas from Project Wild and Audubon Adventures newspaper are used. The classroom and playground are the setting for most of the aforementioned activities.

Outside Resources

A field trip to the Santa Barbara Zoo and subsequent Project Discovery workshop entitled “Going, Going,... Gone!” is a wonderful culmination to this unit.

The Staff

I have taught grades 3-5 for 9 years, mostly at Bedford Open School, an alternative school, in Camarillo. I earned a M.S. Degree in Education with an emphasis in Counseling and Guidance.
A Warm Fuzzy Classroom

The Idea and Its Value

In A Warm Fuzzy Classroom, students are engaged in social activities that promote development of a positive self esteem.

The experience of working with Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (S.E.D.) students for five years has made me aware of their need to learn social skills. A Warm Fuzzy Classroom has been developed through trial and error to meet a S.E.D. student's need for social skill acquisition. Students take part in activities that provide moments of positive social interaction.

The mission of A Warm Fuzzy Classroom is to promote positive classroom behavior by addressing the self-concept needs of the elementary student today. The regular educator's role has evolved into serving the academic and social-emotional need of the student. With classroom sizes and the numbers of broken families on the rise, many students feel insignificant and emotionally insecure. As a result, students may act inappropriately at school as a release from the stresses of family life or as a plea for attention. For others, acting out gives them a feeling of significance. A Warm Fuzzy Classroom will help to make all students feel significant and valuable. It will encourage a positive sense of community among peers by engaging them in interactive activities.

Higher thinking skills are utilized as students are examining and evaluating positive qualities of one another. The presentation of this program can be amended to meet the needs of the visual or deaf student. This program is designed for the elementary population. Each day of the week students are engaged in a different social skill activity:

Monday — Students draw the name of a classmate. The student will say, "I like this person because..." The student presents his classmate with a Fuzzy Friend, (a cotton ball with eyes, nose, ears, and the recipient's name attached).

Tuesday — Have students draw a Fuzzy friend from the box. Have students decide on something positive they will say or do for the Fuzzy Friend they drew. Have students draw a name of a classmate to bring a healthy snack for recess on Wednesday.

Wednesday — At recess, have students give out their snacks to the recipients.

Thursday — Have students write a note to a classmate they drew. The note is to include a compliment.

Friday — Design a special bulletin board with each student's picture on it. Have each student draw a Fuzzy Friend. Have students take turns giving a description of the person they drew, including positive personality traits and virtues.

The efforts of this program have proven very worthwhile. By engaging students in these activities daily, you are setting a tone for your classroom that each student should be recognized for positive qualities. Also, students sense that mutual admiration and respect are important. Parents have often commented on the positive, gradual change in their child's once negative disposition toward others.

State Frameworks

This program involves the English/Language Arts Framework and Quest-Skills for Growing. Students utilize critical thinking and writing skills when doing many of the activities. This program can also accompany Quest's and assist in accomplishing many of its objectives.

The Students

A Warm Fuzzy Classroom was used with over 75 S.E.D. and regular education students. It has made a positive impact on students and family members. I feel my rapport with the students has significantly improved due to this program.

Facilities and Materials

This program should be in a place that is relatively free of distractions. One advantage of this program is that it is user friendly and requires little support in terms of materials and facilities.

Outside Resources

Parents are one resource that you can integrate with this program. For example, each week you can invite three parents to come in. Each parent can give a description (traits and virtues) of his or her child. The class can guess who the parent is. Of course resemblances might ruin your efforts!

The Staff

Doris has completed her fifth year teaching the S.E.D. Program (pre-school to fourth grade). She is a Behavior Management Mentor in her district for the second year. She also educates students in the district's home study program who cannot be educated in a classroom setting due to behavioral reasons.

Grades K-6

English

Language Arts

Quest - Skills for Growing

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Cellular One

Corlund Electronics Group
**Fairy Tale Trials**

**Grades 6-8**

- English
- Language Arts
- History
- Social Science

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**Business Partner**  
Shell Western

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**The Idea and Its Value**

*Fairy Tale Trials* consists of simulations of real courtroom situations in which students, taking the roles of various fairy tale characters, get hands-on working knowledge of how our judicial system works.

Beginning with a docent-led field trip to the local courthouse, students, working in cooperative learning groups, select a case, such as “Jack and the Beanstalk”, where Jack is charged with burglary. Each student then chooses a role, either as a defendant, prosecuting or defense attorney, witness, bailiff, or court clerk, and prepares their part of the case, including simple costumes and physical evidence. If their case is not on trial, they become part of the jury pool or courtroom audience. Community involvement from local professionals includes a policeman coming to class to “arrest” and charge the defendants, and lawyers serving as judges.

After a week of preliminary activities, the classroom evolves into a courtroom and the cases go to trial. Each case is videotaped for student critiquing and public viewing. The culminating activity involves students viewing the tapes and writing an account of their part of the case, including a personal response and self evaluation.

Through the field trip, research, and role playing, students actively learn how our judicial system functions. Using critical thinking skills, they apply the knowledge they have gained, evaluate different points of view, and draw conclusions. Thus, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking are incorporated into one process.

The value of the project becomes evident in class as students enthusiastically prepare for their cases, comparing notes, planning, and actively discussing testimony and evidence. Real personal insight is gained about the proceedings of a courtroom, as attorneys must question and recall witnesses; witnesses provide testimony, and jurors carefully listen. Students participate at their own ability level, whether from being a bailiff or court clerk, to being an attorney. Students, parents, the “volunteer” judges, and police officers all stated that this activity is one of the most valuable experiences students have had.

**State Frameworks**

History/Social Science Framework: examines the role of law in society, the value of due process in dealing with infractions, and provides for the study and discussion of the fundamental principles embodied in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights, including the right to trial by jury. English/Language Arts Framework: provides a literary community which integrates reading, writing, listening and speaking.

**The Students**

Two 6th grade core groups of 32 students each, including gifted & talented and resources students, participated in this project.

**Outside Resources**

Needed are ordinary classroom supplies, video camera, and TV-VCR. Outside resources: a docent-led tour of the local courthouse is taken when court is in session. The handbook, “Court Tours”, is provided by the Ventura County Legal Guild. Volunteers were a trial attorney acting as judge and a local policeman arresting defendants and reading them their rights.

**The Staff**

I have taught 13 years at all grade levels from first to eighth. The last three years I have team taught in a sixth grade core program. I focus on Language Arts and Math, and as a team we integrate the curriculum in a thematic approach.
Oceanography - Let's See What's in the Sea

The Idea and Its Value

In August 1991, my principal gave me the news that puts most teachers into a panic. I was to teach a combination class, specifically, a K-1st grade combo. Since 3/4 of the first graders were my former kindergarten students, I knew I had to come up with some exciting vehicle for learning that would be new for them, while challenging the first graders also. As I love the ocean and marine life, one of my choices turned out to be oceanography.

My main purpose in using oceanography as a thematic approach is that it can incorporate many areas of study: science, math, art, reading, writing, literature, values, and ecology. I must admit, I was low on music activities. It turned out the children loved learning about oceanography as much as I did, so motivation was already established. The children can draw from their own experiences and it is a great vehicle to create a whole room environment. We made our room an ocean filled with sealife, the majority of which was student made. The students loved coming to school to make new creations for our ocean and to learn some more interesting facts about ocean life.

I taught this unit for six weeks, the culmination being our Open House where parents and students walked into a complete oceanic environment, which I think was the most innovative aspect of this unit. The large wall window was covered with blue paper. A room mom cut colored paper for seaweed. The children painted sea creatures to put on the window. We made three dimensional crabs which lined the window sill. Hanging from the ceiling were "waves" of crepe paper, two large dolphins and a whale made by a parent, as well as student-made three dimensional fish and jellyfish. The room just looked blue! We stencil-painted a fish t-shirt and made paper snorkels and masks that the children wore to Open House. Talk about enthusiasm and motivation. It was the first time in over twenty years of teaching that I had 100% classroom turnout, in addition to visits by former and in-coming families.

State Frameworks

The objectives of this unit are supported by the Science Frameworks for primary grades. We focused on C-2 (ocean and marine life) and C-4 (human interaction with the ocean).

The Students

My class was a kindergarten/first grade combination class. I had twenty kindergarten students and twelve first grade students, eight of whom were my former kindergarten students.

Facilities and Materials

This unit was taught using a regular kindergarten classroom and materials available to me through the school. I did buy a few things in a craft store to enhance specific projects.

Outside Resources

Two room moms helped me create the environment. I obtained many of my ideas from attending various workshops and conferences.

The Staff

I have been teaching for twenty-two years, my last four being in kindergarten. I have also taught preschool, first and second grade, ESL to elementary and adult students, and parent education.

Grades K-2

Science
Language Arts
Fine Arts
Mathematics
Values
Ecology

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The Idea and Its Value

Around the Curriculum by Way of China is a three to four week multi-cultural interdisciplinary unit which teaches math and its relevance to other disciplines and to the world around us by means of the Chinese tangram puzzle. Mathematical concepts are taught through the use of manipulative materials coupled with the student’s natural fascination of puzzles.

Activities are structured so students have opportunities to work individually as well as in cooperative learning groups. The unit utilizes cooperative group problem solving exercises, culminating in each group creating a puzzle to be solved by another group.

Students read and compare Chinese and American folklore and use maps to determine the relationship of physical position and size of the United States and China. Videos, guest speakers, and resource materials enable students to gain an awareness of another culture. They then design, build, and measure a tangram structure depicting traditional Chinese architecture. Through the incorporation of still life and portrait paintings, students discover shape, angles, congruency, and similarity. They compare actual items and people to a portrait or picture of the items and attention is focused on the importance of mathematics.

Around the Curriculum by Way of China has a built-in motivational factor of allowing students to work together, thus not feeling overwhelmed or intimidated by the expectations. They enjoy the hands-on tasks and see purpose in their study. Students have expressed their enthusiasm about collaboratively working on numerous projects, about using manipulatives to solve problems, and about becoming more knowledgeable and appreciative of another country and its people. Parents, viewing the students in class, comment on the positive level of student involvement, interest, and the practicality of the unit.

A major component of this unit is the assessment process. Students write a letter to their parents explaining the mathematical concepts employed in the unit study and their relevance. Within small groups, students brainstorm ideas, conduct read-arounds, and critique each others’ letters. In the end each group glean information from each member’s paper and on the computer composes a group letter which is displayed with other unit work.

State Frameworks

Mathematics Framework supported in content and pedagogical approach. English/Language Arts Framework - Writing across the curriculum. All state frameworks - authentic assessment.

The Students

One hundred seventy-three seventh and eighth grade students of varying abilities participated in this unit.

Facilities and Materials

Tangram puzzle cut-out sheet; pictures of structures illustrating tangram puzzle shapes; still life and portraits; “Grandfather Tang’s Story”.

The Staff

I’ve taught math, levels 7-12, for 19 years, the past three years in 7th grade.

The Idea and Its Value

Grades 3-9
Social Science
Writing
Language Arts
Fine Arts
Mathematics
Integrated Learning
Architecture

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The Scientific Method of Reading Literature - “s.m.a.l.”

If you think about it, some of the main elements of a short story are very much like the five key steps of the scientific method. Why not enhance the science curriculum by having your students analyze short stories by using these five steps?

The “s.m.a.l.” system not only has your students analyze the plot events, main conflicts, climax, resolution, and theme of the story, but it also causes them to look at the literature critically and connect the literary terms with the five steps of the scientific method:

- **State the problem (conflict)**,
- **Gather information (plot events)**,
- **Form an hypothesis (climax)**,
- **Test the hypothesis (resolution)**,
- **Draw a conclusion (theme)**.

For example, if the students had to “state the problem (conflict)” as noted in the Greek myth, Demeter and Persephone, they would detail the struggle between Demeter, goddess of the seasons, and Hades, god of the underworld. When discussing the “hypothesis (climax)”, the students would explain the moment in the story when the main character takes decisive actions to end the conflict or problem; in this case, when Demeter does not let anything grow on earth until Persephone returns to the surface from the underworld. Finally, as the group “draws a conclusion (states the theme)”, they would discuss the main idea or lesson that this particular myth was explaining to the ancient Greeks, the creation of Spring.

Every time the “s.m.a.l.” system is used, the students have positive attitudes and behavior. The most successful method of implementation is to have the students work in small co-operative groups, making posters to present to the class. The posters listed and illustrated the English literature terms as well as the five steps of the scientific method. After each step, the students had to write an explanation of the analysis. Each group had to orally present its poster to the rest of the class, explaining the literary structure of the story by using the terminology of the scientific method. Finally, the posters were displayed around the room as evidence of success.

**State Frameworks**

Even though the “s.m.a.l.” system can be done in worksheet form on an individual basis, by using co-operative groups, all learners can have “equal access” to quality literature and use their analytical skills. Also, the students are learning how to cooperate in groups in order to accomplish a goal... a very important experience in view of today’s business world.

**The Students**

The “s.m.a.l.” system can be used with any age or level of student.

**Facilities and Materials**

The only materials needed are the stories as supplied by the teacher, and a teacher-developed worksheet. However, if co-operative groups are used, then poster paper and art supplies might be required. No extra facilities are required.

**Outside Resources**

No outside sources are required. However, if you are teaching at a secondary level, a discussion with the science teachers would probably be very beneficial.

**The Staff**

I have been a junior high school English teacher for seventeen years. The last three years I have been involved in an interdisciplinary team of social studies, science, and English. Hence, the creation of the “s.m.a.l.” system.

**The Idea and Its Value**

Grades 7-12

Science

Literature

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The Write Color

Grades 9-12
Fine Arts
Literature

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“s.m.a.l.l.” system.

The Idea and Its Value

This unit promotes creative and interpretive talents and skills in a rewarding learning environment. All of the exercises emphasize concepts and ideas rather than answers. It is a fine tool to teach that the discovery of meaning is a process. Students, even “non-artistic” ones, become focused as they explore their creative impulses and write freely about what the creations mean.

After the class has discussed and written about a literary work, tell them that they will now express their interpretations of the work using color and design. Have students reflect upon their favorite parts of the work, symbols and themes, and the motivation of the central characters. Explain what abstract means, and, using some paintings from art reference books, show the students some examples of abstract art, pointing out the titles. On the board, write down these hints for composition: use colors and shapes which reflect your feelings and ideas about the story; use the white of the paper for negative shapes; work from the inside outwards; discover ideas as you color.

Before beginning I emphasize that quiet is essential to successful discovery and focus. No talking is allowed. While the students are coloring, I play music from an appropriate piece. This I alternate with readings from the work. When complete, all the work is taped to the board and students select one that is not their own and write about how the graphic image, the color selection, design, and composition reflect the ideas in the literary work. For example, how do color, shape, and contrast evoke themes like violence, despair, love, and resolution of conflict. It is important for students to share aloud their writing about each others’ work to validate their creative and interpretive skills. This unit also serves as an excellent springboard for other writing ideas.

State Frameworks

The unit develops skills in observation, reflection, and especially in interpretation, which is one of the most difficult of the writing domains in the English/Language Arts Frameworks, and the CAP Writing Test.

The Students

I have used this successfully with 9-12 graders, and I am currently collaborating with the Art department to foster writing across the curriculum.

Facilities and Materials

One 11”x14” piece of drawing or construction paper for each student. Crayon sets for each student (or for each pair). A cassette player and appropriate music.

Outside Resources

An excellent single text to show students examples of abstract art is 19th and 20th Century Art, by George Heard Hamilton (Abrahms Publishing).

The Staff

I have taught all levels of English and Composition classes for 22 years. Currently I am a Mentor teacher in the development of an extended reading program for Hispanic students based on their history and literature.
Buying, Selling, and Making Money

The Idea and Its Value

Making fractions relevant and useful, while learning about the stock market, is the intention of this five day activity. As an introduction to real world investments, students are involved in purchasing stock in actual companies at current prices. Students use the newspaper to collect and interpret data, complete fraction computation exercises, track and graph stock, and write about their understandings and choices.

Students sometimes think that the purpose of a math course is to learn pure mathematics. We are challenging this perception by engaging the student’s thinking and teaching the math ideas through an application situation. The goal is to learn about the stock market and understand the mathematics used in its description. Our specific focus in this project was to find an innovative way to apply the fractional computation we were already teaching.

The manipulation of fractions is an infrequent occurrence in today’s world. However, both students and teachers spend a great deal of instructional time grappling with the computational procedures. While teachers may see the necessity of mastering these skills as a foundation for later use in higher level mathematics, middle school students need a motivation to learn these skills now.

Students sometimes become confused when trying to memorize a step-by-step procedure disconnected from experience. These lessons helped our students gain understanding and confidence in fractional computation. Students were motivated to improve their ability to use fractions and decimals in problem situations. The math involved helps students to describe the subject and have a clear purpose for its use.

State Frameworks

As suggested by the State Framework, this project shows the power and purpose of math as a tool in the context of a real world experience. Calculators, computations, conversions, graphing, and inference from data are all essential to understanding the topic.

The Students

Two hundred 7th grade students of a variety of ability levels participated in this project.

Facilities and Materials

You’ll need a set (ten minimum) of Business sections, dated at least a week apart, from a large newspaper, in order to collect usable data. The L.A. Times will provide a class set if you participate in their “Ticker Tape Rally.” We have provided worksheets to guide teacher and students through the project.

Outside Resources

Having a broker speak to the class is a valuable opportunity for students to gain first hand information. The L.A. Times provides an extended project, “Ticker Tape Rally,” from which we were given permission to pass on materials to you. Our original inspiration came from a software simulation called “Wall Street On-Line” published by J. Weston Walsh, which includes a computer program to track the stocks.

The Staff

Both Trudy Reid and Jackie Smith are 7th grade math instructors. Trudy is presently a Math Mentor, and Jackie is the Department Chair of the Computer program.

Grades 9-12

Mathematics

Stock Market

More Information

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3 R's: Read, React, Revise

Grades 5-10

English/Language Arts
History/Social Science
Science
Mathematics

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3 R's: Read, React, Revise is a reference list of specific strategies from which students may evaluate, select, and apply to revise the content of varied writing assignments. Revising, critical to the writing process, is difficult for students. There is a tendency for students to feel they have completed their best efforts on the first draft. Often, students believe revising means rewriting in ink or making a final draft look better. Providing students with specific steps for revising empowers them to develop their ideas fully. Seeing the immediate improvements is a strong motivation. Students' responses change from "I don't know how!" to "I can do this by myself!"

Teaching how to revise begins with a common story give to each student. Students read the story and question how the story can be changed, providing more information and interest to the reader. After discussion of the purpose and characteristics of story writing, the teacher provides individual copies of the revision reference list, including strategies to revise from peer editors' suggestions, conference ideas, or self-evaluations. This list is an evolving reference with no set limits and should incorporate additional changes as revision ideas are discussed and shared in class.

The beginning use of these strategies is a simple in-class activity with immediate feedback and reinforcement. Students may overuse vague words, especially nouns. A simple revision technique is have students put a box around any noun in a sentence. Students draw an arrow from a box to the left side margin. In the margin students add any words that describe the noun by answering the questions, "what kind of?", and "which?". To make revision stand out, students use a different color ink or style of handwriting for these changes.

Students use this same technique to box in action verbs. In the margin, the students add words to tell "how?", "when?", "why?", "where?", and/or "to what extent?". Students are prompted to use vivid, image-forming words. These two simple revisions are shared orally in class within a couple of minutes. Students read the original sentences and then the revised ones. Marking vague words such as "thing", "stuff", "a lot", "anything", and "everything" with a "cloud-like" line around them, and replacing the word with a vivid, exact word is yet another revision which students can complete independently.

Through independent use of a variety of revision techniques, students become increasingly responsible for their own learning, but with the support of specific guidelines. Students reference, evaluate, and select the techniques which best meet their needs. With choices and confidence, students can edit their own work before and after peer editing responses.

State Frameworks
Using the writing process, the 3 R's: Read, React, Revise supports the English/Language Arts Framework by focusing on providing students with further skills necessary for success. Furthermore, this activity encourages students to develop their insights and responses as they progress to a more finished product.

The Students
Sixty students of varied ability levels have used these strategies independently. Through their own experiments, they have made additional revision strategies.

Facilities and Materials
Each student needs a copy of the same story, individual copies listing the revision ideas, and colored pencils or pens. A dictionary or thesaurus is helpful. An overhead projector is optional.

Outside Resources
This ongoing activity may expand to include the study of grammar.

The Staff
I have taught for twenty-five years, twenty-one of these having been spent teaching language arts in grades seven and eight. I am a classroom teacher and a School Based Coordinated Program resource teacher.

The Idea and Its Value
Back to the Future

Back to the Future is a quarterly project in which eighth graders discover interesting facts about the lives of their parents and grandparents. Having read about the myths, legends and folklore of Native Americans, the class begins to investigate their own origins and heritage.

Each student selects one parent and one grandparent, preferably on the same side of the family, to interview. Using a list of eleven teacher-developed questions, they ask about such things as place of birth, childhood, education, recreation, occupation, how they met their spouse, and for what they would most like to be remembered. The student then writes the life story of the interviewees in an autobiographical style. The student is required to write about a favorite incident or a special time spent with the person interviewed, describing it in rich, sensory detail.

Students also research their family's ethnic background and select a folktale or myth from their country of origin. The folktale is memorized and retold to the class at the culmination of the project. The interviews, favorite memory, summary of oral folktale, pictures from family photo albums, description of family heirlooms and other written materials are bound together in a folder. The student chooses an animal that best symbolizes his family and creates a colorful illustration for the cover of the folder. An explanation of the symbolism is included in the body of work.

Writing and mailing a thank you note to their grandparent is also part of the project. The last activity is a bio-poem created around the student's family. Students are encouraged to bring in photo albums and other family memorabilia to share with their classmates on "Family Heritage Day".

The value of this project is immeasurable. It stimulates dialogue between family members usually not touched upon and students gain knowledge of living in another era. It not only promotes a sense of pride in one's heritage but through the interviews, a stronger bond is forged between generations. If the interview is recorded the student will have a visual and audio recollection of their grandparent and themselves.

Academically, the project is of great value as well. At the beginning of the quarter, each student receives a very detailed outline on how to structure the project. Included in the directions are the interview questions, format for writing the interviews, example of a title page, extra credit available, instructions on how to be a good story teller and a point sheet explaining the order of the project as well as the number of points available for each section.

Through interviews and research, the student learns about the uniqueness of their families, themselves, and special family traditions. Students gain insight into the special role each family member plays, but most importantly, the sometimes floundering, sometimes boastful eighth grader is secure in the fact that he is a unique and integral part of his family's heritage.

State Frameworks

English/Language Arts Framework integrates reading, writing, listening, and speaking with art and visual and performing arts, while building self-esteem for every student. The History/Social Science Framework promotes student understanding of one's place in history, as well as the value of their family's legacies.

The Students

Eighth graders, including gifted and talented and resource students, participated in this project from 1989-1993.

Outside Resources

After projects have been completed and discussed, Mr. Herbert Bolland, a former Dutch prisoner of war, talks to the class about his life before and after Nazi occupation of Holland, his homeland. This subject matter helps students understand a different era and realize that courage is required to survive oppressive conditions.

The Staff

I have taught fourth grade for eight years and I am currently in my seventh year of teaching language arts to seventh and eighth graders.

The Idea and Its Value
Traveling the Silk Road - Making an Ancient Roman Traveling Journal

Grades 7-10

Language Arts
History
Social Science
Science

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Students “become” ancient Roman travelers (soldiers, merchants, pilgrims, or explorers) writing journal entries, making maps and illustrations, and conducting “roadside” experiments as they “travel” in co-operative groups along the silk trading route of Asia in 150 A.D.

This is an interdisciplinary team project based on the opening chapters of Houghton-Mifflin’s seventh grade social studies book, Across the Centuries. It involves several elements of language arts, social studies, and science. It requires active learning and role-playing, combined with reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The final product is in book form which the students design and publish themselves.

As the students “travel the silk road”, they work on the following skills: research, reading, writing, map-making, science, and the most integral to this project, critical thinking. The students must assume the “role” of one of the travelers, writing journal entries while staying “in character”. They must, as a group, create situations which they all encounter simultaneously.

However, each student’s journal writing must reflect his or her “Roman personality”. For example, if the traveling group experiences a rock slide in the Caucasus Mountains, the “soldier” might write that it is a barbarian ambush; the “merchant” might be concerned about his or her trading goods; the “explorer” might write about what may have caused the rock slide, and the “pilgrim” might write about praying for divine help. Along the way, the traveling group will “encounter” some problem which must be solved by using the scientific method and conducting an experiment.

This project promotes positive student attitudes and behavior by requiring them to discuss problems and come to an agreement about the various aspects. The students have a finished product which give them a feeling of completion and success.

State Frameworks

Traveling the Silk Road supports the language arts, social studies, and science frameworks by requiring the students to “make personal meaning” out of material read. Personal meaning is achieved by revealing the “bigger concept” of using science in real-world situations and by involving “active learning” principles, thereby helping the history and relevancy of ancient times “come alive” for each student. Upon completion of this project, students will have a clearer picture of group co-operation on a project, which seems to be a necessity in today’s business world.

The Students

This project is designed to be implemented with a group of seventh grade students comprised of the entire range of learners, GATE to LH, keeping in mind the “equal access” models as stated by the frameworks.

Facilities and Materials

The only facilities necessary are the classroom and the library. Materials necessary are: reference books about ancient Rome and China, maps of the “Silk Road”, “antique-looking” parchment paper, and pencil.

One main component of this project is book (journal)-making. Supplies needed are: two pieces of cardboard (8 1/2” x 11”), and one roll of clear Con-Tact brand self-adhesive plastic.

Outside Resources

None are needed, but Ben Hur and Spartacus are good films. There is a movie titled, The Silk Road, but it is somewhat boring.

The Staff

Mary Schultz, Karl Thieme, Donna O’Conner, Angela Keyack, and John Kohlmeier all comprise a seventh grade interdisciplinary team of social studies, science, English, and resource specialists.