# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is IMPACT II</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message from our County Supt. of Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of 1993 IMPACT II Business Partners</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT II Faces, Places, &amp; Events</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT II 1994 Grant Recipients</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Instructional Ideas:</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading the Rain Forest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner 2000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castles, Kings, and Medieval Things</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra! Extra! Read All About It!</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inquiring Minds Want to Know</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Notions—New Worlds to Explore</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Faces</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Extraordinary Earth From A to Z</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Night With Tutankhaman</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Machines Help Us Work</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood?</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Is In Your Name?</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s Adopt a Humpback and Use the Seven Intelligences!</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Buddy System</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Voted! Did You?</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What’s The Matter With Atoms?”</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faces, Places and Facts, a Student Review of History</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Toothpick Bridges</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT II 1993 Grant Recipients</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Instructional Ideas:</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open the Windows of your Mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Befana and Babushka</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals Come Alive with Shadow Puppetry</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Clubs for Kids</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Thought I Could, I Thought I Could</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But Mom! Everybody Has One!</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Long and Short of It</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extinct is Forever</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Warm Fuzzy Classroom</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairy Tale Trials</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s See What’s in the Sea</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around the Curriculum by Way of China</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scientific Method of Reading Literature</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Write Color” — English and Art</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying, Selling, and Making Money</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 R’s: Read, React, Revise</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to the Future</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling the Silk Road</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is IMPACT II?

IMPACT II is starting its third 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 - 1995

February

Teachers send Grant application.

March

Disseminator Grants awarded.

May

Teacher Business Recognition Program.

September

Distribution of Impact II catalog of teachers’ award winning ideas.

October

Curriculum Fair — for sharing Disseminator grant ideas with Ventura County educators.
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 IMPACT II program, in only its second year, is beginning to spread teaching excellence around Ventura County. Fifty-two teachers have been recipients of IMPACT II awards since its beginning. This second annual publication highlights the twenty-eight teacher winners in 1994 and their classroom projects. I encourage you to read the descriptions carefully and look for ideas that may enhance your classroom. These winning ideas were selected by a panel of educators and business leaders based on their professional experience. You are also encouraged by the teachers listed in this publication to borrow any ideas to use in your classroom. Our only purpose in publishing this document is to assist you in teaching your students.

The IMPACT II program is in its infancy but it is growing. In 1994, more business partners joined the IMPACT II team by making a contribution for a teacher award. The continued and active involvement of Stacy Roscoe of Procter and Gamble, Kim Peterson of Cellular One, Barbara Ross of the Achille Levy Foundation, Bruce Newland of Corlund Electronics and Ed Lyon of Gaviota Maintenance Services, along with the leadership of Phil Palbaum and Diana Rigby have nurtured this important program. All of the business leaders above are members of the Ventura County Economic Development Association (VCEDA) and we appreciate the forum that this organization has provided to enable IMPACT II to grow. We are very fortunate, in Ventura, County, to have such outstanding leadership.

IMPACT II has emerged as a significant business/education partnership in Ventura County that supports and encourages innovative and successful teachers. The network of IMPACT II teachers will grow and increase in influence over the years to come. I look forward to continuing IMPACT II for many years with Ventura County's business partners assisting us in recognizing and rewarding our many exceptional teachers while spreading successful instructional practices.

Charles Weis, Ph.D.
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
July 1993
Acknowledgements

The IMPACT II Advisory Council plays an important role in the success of the entire IMPACT II program. They provide direction by establishing policy, planning the awards program, evaluating previous years events, and most important of all, reading and selecting grant recipients.

1994-95 IMPACT II Advisory Council

Teacher Representatives:

- Sandee Ayers: Oak Park Unified
- Yvonne Backus: Simi Valley Unified
- Carol Berger: Conejo Valley Unified
- Carol Brummett: Simi Valley Unified
- Jan Brovold: Ventura Unified
- Helen Faul: Ocean View Elementary
- Cyndy Hall: Oak Park Unified
- Kathy Heftman: Fillmore Unified
- Ruth Hofmeister: Simi Valley Unified
- Becky Koch: Oak Park Unified
- Judy Laumann: Moorpark Unified
- Linda Mayo: Conejo Valley
- Margaret Miche': Simi Valley Unified
- Marilyn Newstrom: Ventura Unified
- Jerry Neidenbach: Oxnard Unified
- Patty Peinado: Ventura Unified
- Carol Phillips: Conejo Valley
- Marilyn Renger: Ventura Unified
- Donna Ventura: Pleasant Valley Unified
- Carol Williams: Ocean View Elementary
- Medea Creek Middle
- Katherine School
- Acacia
- Big Springs
- Blanche Reynolds
- Tierra Vista
- Brookside
- Fillmore Junior High
- Sinaloa Junior High
- Oak Hills Elementary
- Campus Canyon
- Meadows School
- Sinaloa Junior High School
- E. P. Foster (PIRA)
- Oxnard High School
- Montalvo
- Los Cerritos Intermediate
- Balboa Middle
- Pleasant Valley
- Ocean View Junior High

Administrator Representative:

- Alan Friedenberg: University School (Conejo Valley Unified School District)

PTA Representatives:

- Marth Goodsell: PTA—12th District
- Pat Sando: PTA—12th District
- Loretta Schieffer: PTA—12th District

Business Representatives:

- Carol Flores-Wallis: Corlund Electronics
- Albert A. Okuma, Jr.: Conrad and Okuma, Architects
- Deborah Ouvan: Soka University
- Ed Romero: Point Mugu
1994 Impact II Partners

**Benefactor**
Achille Levy Foundation
Cellular One

**Donors**
Shell Western E & P, Incorporated
Ventura County Economic Development Association

**Sponsors**
American Commercial Bank
Cortund Electronics Corporation
Gaviota Maintenance Services, Incorporated
Oxnard Board of Realtors
Pemko Manufacturing
Procter & Gamble
RecreAction
Teledyne Laars

**Friend**
Action Personnel
Suzanne's Cuisine

**In Kind Services**
Exxon

**Special Recognition to**
Cellular One
for having the 1993 and 1994
grant recipients as their dinner guests
at the 1994 Awards dinner.
Welcome business partners, teachers, administrators and family to the second annual Impact II Awards dinner.

Chuck Weis, VCSS Superintendent

Marc Charmey, VCEDA President

John Kohlmayer and his vice-principal, Bob Rizzardi, receive his Impact II award from Bruce MacDonald, Convend Electronics and David Bouchet, American Commercial Bank.

Margo Linade and Amada Perez and their principal, Dr. Nancy Carroll receive their Impact II award from Sean Duffy, Cellular One.

Joann Tennyson receives her Impact II award from Marc Charmey, President, VCEDA.

VCSS, Dr. Chuck Weis presents a special award to Kim Peterson of Cellular One for his support for Impact II. Others receiving awards were: Stacy Roscoe, Procter and Gamble; Bruce MacDonald, Convend Electronics and Ed Lyon, Gaviota Maintenance.

Susan Ross and her principal, Gerry Hemor, receive the Impact II award from Kim Gilas, Bank of A. Levy, Achille Levy Foundation.

Mary Schultz and her vice-principal, Bob Rizzardi, receive the Impact II award from Susan Hersberger, Shell Wostom E & P.
Stacy Roscoe of Procter & Gamble gave the closing remarks and set the stage for 1995.

Jack Oliver receives his Impact II award from Kim Peterson, Cellular One.

Impact II recipients attend an orientation meeting regarding their grants and responsibilities.

Members of the Impact II Advisory Committee gathered to read the Impact II grant application.

Sandra Ayers, Oak Park School District and Carol Flores-Wallis, from Comland Electronics study a grant application.

Jerry Neiderback, Oxnard High School District and Carol Berges, Conejo Valley School District review one of the 19 grants funded for the 1994 Impact II program.

Ed Romero, from Point Mugu enjoys the responsibility of selecting one of the grant recipients for 1994.
IMPACT II
1994
Grant Recipients
Reading the Rain Forest

The Idea and Its Value

Reading the Rain Forest is a project that will enhance culminating activities through the use of laser disk and bar code technology.

After exploring the diverse animal and plant life of the Rain Forest, its people, the cause and effect of its destruction, and long term impact on the planet, students work in heterogeneous groups to review laser disk images on the Rain Forest. They select several to focus on. Using reference materials, the students gather information and collaborate to create an informative poster which integrates the meaningful ideas from their learning. Using the computer they create bar codes that link their chosen images with their poster. After composing a mini-report on each of their images, the students present their poster and report, using the bar code reader and the laser disk player in their audio visual presentation.

Through the accessing of prior knowledge, the use of technology and the coordinating of group ideas, the students internalize the interdependence of life and communities, analyze and understand the diversity of life in the Rain Forest, and become more familiar with technology. In the process, many skills are used: research writing, use of technology, effective collaborative work, leadership skills, speaking, and higher level thinking.

The value of the project is observable as the students enthusiastically plan their posters, eagerly await their turn at the laser disk player and computer, and compare and discuss the merits of the ideas each group member introduces. The students are faced with taking a side in a complex issue and gain knowledge about looking at global problems from different perspectives. Students are able to participate at their own ability level, and many learning modalities are represented.

State Frameworks


The Students

A fourth grade class with 30 students, including gifted and talented and resource students, participated in this project.

Facilities and Materials

Various art supplies, a laser disk player and TV, a laser disk, a computer and printer, and diverse trade books on the Rain Forest.

The Staff

I have been teaching for six years, the past four years at the 4th grade level. I motivate my students by integrating technology into all curricular areas using a thematic approach.

More Information

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Gerry Hamor, Principal
Pleasant Valley School Dist.

Business Partner:

Achille Levy Foundation
Learner 2000
Meeting individual needs of each child in a classroom, while promoting the students personal responsibility and self-esteem.

Grades 4-12
All subject areas

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(805) 520-6830

Patricia Dew, Principal
Simi Valley USD

Business Partner
Gaviota Maint. Serv. Inc.
Oxnard Board of Realtors

The Idea and Its Value
Learner 2000 offers students the opportunity to design and carry through an extra credit long-term project based on what they identify as the educational area in which they would most like to grow.

Students choose an educational goal they wish to improve on from a list of ideas. They propose what they can do over a quarter to develop growth, and how they will demonstrate to me that this growth is being achieved. Together, we discuss and refine what they have written and agree on the amount of extra credit they can earn. Finally, their parents are asked to sign signifying their awareness and approval of the project.

Success is measured by evaluating to what extent the student has achieved his/her goal and met the requirements of the contract. Re-negotiation each quarter is required to determine if the original goal has really been something of value to the student and should be kept or if it’s time to change direction or challenge the student with other areas or higher goals.

Projects are completely adaptable, no matter the ability level of the child. A student who can never get her work in, can earn her extra credit for merely getting that work in on time. Whereas, another student who doesn’t enjoy reading, can develop a project of daily home reading verified by a parent. Still, a gifted student can design a community-based project developed around an environmental, social, or political area which concerns him.

It encourages students to look at their areas of growth in an objective way, rather than with shame. They privately select what they want to work on. They get to have a hard time with it and struggle and be awkward, while the teacher gets to empathize and encourage, rather than get frustrated because the student is not meeting the teacher’s goal. The teacher becomes cheerleader rather than task master.

LEARNER 2000 is easily managed with a little organization. Students must see me sometime when I am not involved with teaching class. I keep a copy of their proposal in a notebook that I can always refer to. I also note the number of points they’ve earned and the dates, then enter those points in my gradebook.

It is completely adaptable to other curricular areas. In English, I highlight areas that encourage growth in reading, writing, speaking, listening, as well as study skills. But the emphasis could easily be changed to fit other areas such as P.E., math, history, science, and electives. For example, a P.E. teacher could offer an array of projects from sports skills to health and physical fitness.

State Framework
All of the State Frameworks are asking teachers to provide "real life applications" within our disciplines. They charge us with stimulating the "higher level thinking abilities" of our students. Caught in the Middle, and Second to None, the State documents outlining middle grade and secondary educational reform, ask us to address, "Student Potential: realizing the 'Highest and Best' Intellectual, Social, Emotional, and Physical Development" of our students. This project offers a way to do it all.

The Students
In 1993-94, I used LEARNER 2000 in all my English classes which were made up of three 7th grade, totalling 89 students, one 8 grade of 31 students, and one 8th grade GATE of 34 students.

Facilities and Materials
To make this program function, all I use is a supply of the contracts I’ve designed, with suggested project ideas on the back, and a three ring notebook, divided by class, in which I keep my copies of the students’ contracts with calendars on the back to record progress.

Outside Resources
The outside resources needed are as numerous and varied as the projects that are selected by students. In most cases, however, the burden falls upon the student to gather them.

The Staff
Anne Frankl has been teaching junior high school for 19 years, and has been an interdisciplinary, active learning and middle grade reform mentor, conference speaker and independent educational consultant in California and Oregon for the last five years.
The Idea and Its Value

*Castles, Kings and Medieval Things* is a cooperative social studies project designed for middle school students. This project gives middle school students the opportunity to actively learn how the power of feudal lords was earned and lost during the Middle Ages by "earning" knights and seals of accomplishment and service while designing a poster diagram of a feudal manor.

The specific instructional purpose and value of this project is the creation of a poster diagram of a feudal manor from the Middle Ages, complete with correct labeling of all parts of the castle, cathedral, village, etc. The students "earn" knights and various seals of accomplishment and service as they complete the tasks assigned. As they earn these knights, they are actually experiencing the growth of power of a feudal lord. The knights are being earned so that a manor "group" will have more knights than any other manor "group" and be able to go into "combat," successfully uniting all other manors with their knights and wealth.

There is evidence of higher-level thinking skills being put to use as the students illustrate Bloom's Taxonomy in action, by bartering and negotiating with each other for knights. For example, one student who can't draw well may ask one who is a gifted artist to draw something for the project. It's not unusual at all to hear the cost of service (in knights, of course) being discussed. Obviously, analysis and synthesis are necessary as these "deals" are arranged.

As knowledge about castles, villages, towns and cathedrals is gained, the students write their required reports. The knowledge then has to be synthesized for the poster diagrams to be made.

As the students share, it becomes apparent that when a member of a manor "group" successfully fulfills his or her duties, a sense of success, accomplishment and positive attitude permeates the "manor," making all who reside within "full o' good cheer!"

This is a self-created co-operative group project which took about five to six weeks to accomplish. Other middle school teachers should use this project to let their students have a "real-life" experience with the Middle Ages, as well as to develop valuable skills of co-operation, negotiation and serve effectively, then perhaps, the world "manor" in which we all live will be "full o' cheer an' good will for all lords and serfs alike!"

State Framework

This project supports the recommendations of the California State Framework for Social Studies/History by using active learning principles, co-operative learning techniques and making this experience equally accessible to all learners.

The Students

This project was accomplished by about 129 seventh grade students in 1992-93. Achievement levels varied from GATE to mainstreamed resource abilities.

*Castles, Kings and Medieval Things* was designed to be used in the middle school (6-8), particularly seventh grade. However, the idea and techniques could be adapted to other time periods and social situations.

Facilities and Materials

All work was done in a regular classroom. Supplies needed: poster paper, rulers, scissors, glue, and several books about the Middle Ages.

Outside Resources

Library, guest speakers, trip to Medieval Times theater/restaurant in Anaheim, etc. would all be great but not essential. Movies, slides and other visuals are helpful for reference purposes. For example, Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves is great if you can get copyright privileges.

The Staff

Mary Schultz has been a junior high art and history teacher for eight years.

Grades Middle School Students , 7th

History
English
Science
Language Arts
Mathematics

More Information

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Patricia Dews, Principal
Simi Valley USD

Business Partner

Shell Western E & P, Inc.
Extra! Extra! Read All About It!
Creating a Wall Newspaper

Grades 3-12
All Subject Areas

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Business Partners
American National Bank
Corlind Electronics

"IMPACT II gives a clear and distinct message to all educators...A message that says, 'Educator, try this! It's a great idea!' We, the business community, support it because we realize that this idea has the ability to help our future employees build the self-confidence and critical-thinking skills so needed in the world today. This teaching idea has the power to give us power in the future."

The Idea and Its Value
After your students finish reading anything, how about having co-operative groups create a poster-size front page of a newspaper containing articles, pictures, ads, editorials, etc., all pertaining to the story in some way?

By using "THE WALL NEWSPAPER," you can test your student's knowledge of the reading in a creative and enjoyable way rather than the same old paper-and-pencil test. Here's how it works:

Your students have just finished reading Where the Red Fern Grows or any other reading assignment. Start by reviewing typical newspaper sections, discussing the various parts of a paper.

The students are then put into groups of three or four. Their first job is to create a name for their "newspaper." Then, each group member has to write at least five different articles or sections of the newspaper. Each article or section must pertain to the reading assignment in some way. For example, a good sports article for Where the Red Fern Grows would be one about the annual coon hunt. Or an editorial about teenage marriages would be ideal for Romeo and Juliet.

Then, classified ads, art, pictures, graphs, horoscopes, etc., can be added to "fill space." Remember, in the "newspaper game" space is money!

Strips of blank white paper are cut in widths of two inches, imitating the style of a true newspaper. All articles must be finally written on these "columns." When all articles are edited and corrected, the "journalists" may begin the "lay-out" phase. It's great to see students figuring out how much space is left (measurement and geometry) and how to design it (art).

As "THE WALL NEWSPAPER" approaches final publication (2-3 weeks), it is clear that the students have learned a great deal about the assigned reading. They have also learned the skills necessary for working in a group, successfully completing a project, communicating, negotiating and co-operating with people of various abilities.

State Framework
"THE WALL NEWSPAPER" supports the recommendations of the California English/Language Arts Framework by requiring the students to "use critical thinking skills in developing 'personal connections from reading material' by a method that is 'equally accessible' by all students."

The Students
Approximately 120 seventh grade students (GATE through mainstreamed resource) participated in 1994. Adaptation to other ages as well as curricula areas is only limited by the imagination of the teacher.

Facilities and Materials
No special facilities or equipment are needed. Supplies: sample newspapers, poster paper, colored markers, blank white paper (2 inch column strips), scissors, glue and rulers.

Outside Resources
None are necessary, but a field trip to a local newspaper or a journalist as a guest speaker would be great!

The Staff
I have been a junior high English teacher for eighteen years. I am, a fellow to the South Coast Area Writing Project and was an English/Language Arts mentor for three years.
The Inquiring Minds Want to Know

The Idea and Its Value

The Inquiry Project is an integrated six to eight week unit which encompasses multiple subject areas and a wide variety of writing genre. Although the project is centered in the Language Arts classroom, having other subject areas involved increases the value of the project to the student as well as providing enrichment by using the expertise of several teachers. The end product is a student-generated and produced "magazine," which demonstrates the scope of the individual's writing skills as well as answering his inquiry.

Student selection of a topic involves:
- Group brainstorming ("I've always wondered...")
- Individual decision regarding topic
- Class time to study and list writing genre found in popular magazines
- Large group discussion of how these genre could be used in conjunction with topic
- Conferences with teachers of several subjects to see if it meets interdisciplinary criteria
- Parental input and approval

The end product will include:
- Eight articles related to topic (i.e.: 2 Language Arts, 2 Science, 2 Social Studies, 2 Math)
- A variety of writing modes (see list below)
- Visuals
- List of Inquiry Questions
- Table of Contents
- Attractive Cover
- Forward
- About the Author

OPTIONAL MODES: Poem, first person narrative, third person narrative, personal essay, report, biography, journal/diary entries, letter, newspaper account, dialogue, glossary, script, interview, observation, oral presentation (in one of four classes), others as appropriate to individual topics.

POSSIBLE VISUALS: Graph, chart, illustration, map, flow chart, diagram, schematic, table or other.

Students spend both in and out-of-class time researching, drafting, revising and editing. Their teachers act as resources and advisors. Time is allotted for students to enter articles on school or personal computers.

State Framework

English/Language Arts Framework supports writing across the curriculum. Also provides authentic assessment and provides material for portfolio. Reinforces writing process.

The Students

300 seventh and eighth grade students of varying abilities (including GATE, sheltered, and Special Education) completed this project. The project is culminated with a Magazine Showcase to which parents, teachers, district administrators as well as the press are invited.

Facilities and Materials

A teacher material packet, examples of student magazines, and a workshop are available.

Outside Resources

Personal interviews, hands-on experiences are emphasized as well as standard research sources.

The Staff

Kathy and Lucy are middle school language arts teachers with experience at all grade and ability levels. Both have been involved in interdisciplinary teams, and have conducted inservices as the school site, county, and state levels.

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Michael Berger, Principal
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Business Partners

Telodyne Laars
RecReAction

"The banquet and speeches left us feeling highly honored indeed. We are thrilled to have won and are already planning our next year's entries!"
Ocean Notions — New Worlds to Explore

Grade Level 5
Science
Language Arts
Math
Visual Arts
History

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Judy Harding, Principal
Pleasant Valley School Dist.

Business Partners
Penko Manufacturing
VCEDA

The Idea and its Value
Oceanography, part of the state Earthscience Framework, gives the fifth grade students a semester in which to investigate their notions about the oceans, to open new vistas of exploration, and to learn how oceans affect or are affected by the changing earth. The study is integrated with math, history, arts and crafts, and language arts — reading, writing, listening and speaking. The students are encouraged to respect and value the oceans, discovering ways they can individually help care for them.

The students keep notebooks/journals in which they record observations, thoughts and feelings, and keep records of information. The class reads the information together, and are encouraged to discuss and debate issues regarding the ocean. Daily writing is not limited to journals but includes poetry and essays. One of the more challenging essays an ocean narrative about how one can start from the Great Lakes and go around the world through all four oceans and past all seven continents without ever touching land. Students describe the event and their observations made during the voyage. Energy of wave patterns and currents are examined as students study the history of the age of exploration. Studying land forms and ocean basins includes "sounding the depths" with a straw through a covered tub in which other students have created an ocean "floor," then graphing their findings. Math is integrated throughout the unit by graphing and charting results of the experiments. Influence on weather and climate is related to the water cycle study. The students' favorite section is oceans as a valuable resource for man. We examine ecology and pollution, for example experimenting with cleaning up of spills. Reading excerpts from Moby Dick and watching the film fosters sympathy with preserving whales and other ocean life from extinction. A humpback whale is adopted by the class through "Whale Adoption Project." During the study of ocean life, a research report is written and presented orally on any ocean creature of each student's choice. Then, together with studying the various ocean areas, from shoreline and tidal pools to black depths, students design and draw or make a model of an imaginary ocean creature, writing about how it lives in the chosen real ocean environment. We utilize a classroom visit from an ocean cruise company to learn about kelp forests, later going on a whale watch. Study of humpback whales is enhanced with using the "Voyage of the Mimi." We use math skills to transfer scale drawings of a humpback or Pacific gray whale to a life-size cut-out which, because of its size, must be hung on the gym room wall. We register with the UCSB Marine Lab Visitor's Week, hopefully to win their lottery for a tour which includes a touch tank, to touch and hold many kinds of marine plants and animals. We try to schedule a tide pool visit, such as with the Mountains Conservancy Share and Care program, to gain firsthand experience with creatures and plants in our notebooks. We study coloration and camouflage, tying it in with creatures and plants in our notebooks. We study coloration and camouflage, tying it in with watercolor experiments, painting shells in the style of Georgia O'Keeffe, the seascapes in Winslow Homer's style. The value of this semester-long unit is significant because it creates an awareness and appreciation of oceans and their relation to our daily life.

State Frameworks
The content and the student activities relate directly to the content of both the Science and Language Arts frameworks.

The Students
Our fifth graders are over 50% Hispanic, several of them NEP or LEP. Aged mostly 10 and 11, they exhibit the usual range of skill levels, e.g. reading levels from 2nd through 9th grade. Many come from limited backgrounds, and so the hands-on activities and trips or classroom visits not only make the material comprehensible, but open new vistas to many of them.

The Staff
Mrs. Hamor is a bilingual teacher, herself the child of Hispanic migrant worker parents, who has been remarkably successful in teaching and transitioning Hispanic children to full English classrooms. She has been teaching for 10 years. She recently passed the Bilingual Certificate of Competency, Mrs. Issari has taught kindergarten through 6th grade for 17 years, and is active in many school committees and activities.

Outside Resources
Parents are encouraged to work with children on the many projects involved, including a culminating project for our science fair. Many accompany us on field trips, particularly the whale watch. Parents are also surveyed to find any who can contribute information and materials on any aspect of oceanography. Students are encouraged to use public libraries for research, and outside sources are brought into the classroom or utilized on field trip visits.
Family Faces
Framed Memories as Windows to the Past

The Idea and its Value

The students will photograph their family members at home and will capture them in a still-life setting which is natural and representative of how the child perceives the family member; the main purpose is to write and document what the child perceives as important about each family member. This will be accomplished through personal interviews, tape-recorded sessions, still photos and personal narratives. The photos and accompanying text will be displayed at the Esplanade Shopping Center and in the Oxnard Public Library.

This project is innovative because it incorporates a child's creativity in setting up the photo shots or capturing their family's faces as they want to remember them. This will inspire the students to write because they will be interested in the subject matter, it will be personal-narrative-biographical writing at its best. This project also provides true ownership for what each child is doing.

The specific instructional purpose is incorporating technology (photography) with writing across the curriculum. This is quite valuable to encourage different writing types and styles: biographical, narrative, report of information and autobiographical. The child will take pride in his/her heritage, cultural diversity, and gain a sense of self-esteem as his/her visual and written creations unfold. Everyone will enjoy sharing who they are.

This promotes critical thinking skills because the child needs to synthesize the information gathered and compile it in written form. The child will rely on his/her sense of perception and will develop a positive independence because he/she will be making decisions as to what is photographed, how, when and which text goes with which photo. When a child is interested in the subject, the child is interested in learning. This project will foster positive self-esteem and the home-school connection will be made as families become involved.

I developed the idea as a result of having used photos in the classroom as a means of assessment of student progress. The unit is taught for six months and it can be adapted for a shorter or longer period of time.

Success was measured by student/family participation and by the photos and written text accomplished by the students. All learners, regardless of language will be successful because photos create their own language.

State Frameworks

Teachers should adapt it because it incorporates the fine arts to writing across the curriculum. Their students will benefit because it personalizes learning. In 1992-1993 thirty-four students participated. They were 11 and 12 year-old sixth graders who were classified as limited and non-English readers.

Facilities and Materials

Equipment needed: 2-4 cameras, 35 rolls of black and white film, tape recorder and tapes and a video camera for documentation of the project.

Outside Resources

We will develop lessons with sample worksheets as a resource guide for teachers in English and Spanish and we will produce a video. The community photographers are a great resource.

The Staff

Evie Ybarra-Grosfield has taught kindergarten through twelfth grade for sixteen years. She taught in the bilingual program for five years. She is a fellow of the early equity math and science project.

Robert House has taught for nineteen years and served as a resource teacher and district social studies mentor.

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The Idea and its Value

Students have the excitement and challenge of using hands-on science, artistic expression and creative writing to venture into the worlds of Geography, Geology, and Archeology as they write, illustrate and publish their own books in "Our Extraordinary Earth From A to Z."

This intellectually rich curriculum piques student interest in our changing Earth and enhances the opportunities for all kids as they create an artistic publication of projects from A to Z. The program has proven successful in helping children construct meaning from the relationship between the themes of Science and the concepts of the "Five Themes of Geography." Strategies from the Visual and Performing Arts Framework are delightfully suited to our diverse students as all are engaged in creatively expressing the concepts they have learned in Geography and Geology. "Our Extraordinary Earth" is teacher-friendly and can be used in Earth Science lessons up through Grade Six. The unit is complete in its own right, but it also has a range of potential uses from anticipatory set to on-going assessment tool.

"Our Extraordinary Earth" was planned to coordinate with the California Science Implementation Network (CSIN) unit for both Primary and Intermediate grades and the McGraw-Hill Science Text, "Earth Beneath Your Feet."

"Our Extraordinary Earth from A to Z" is a series of integrated lessons which exposes students to Geology's unending changes from which our Geography evolves. To kick off the "Fantastic Fossil Fiesta," for example, students arrive in archeologist's attire, and begin their day with the delightful core literature selection, "Digging for Dinosaurs" by Aliki. The teacher reads aloud, "Fossils of Long Ago," also by Aliki, and describes the kinds of fossils the children will actually search for in their "dig" that afternoon. The archeologists use their tools (sponges and toothbrushes) to dig for and scrub the fossils they discover in the dirt brought in from the Santa Monica Mountains. The follow-up inside the classroom is one of great excitement. Children are encouraged to apply critical thinking skills to question why marine fossils have been found in clay collected so high in the mountains. With the aid of maps, the discussion leads to a greater understanding of the tectonic plates in California. The day ends with a chance for the children to communicate their observations on the "F is for Fossils" page, designed to allow for artistic renditions and written accounts of their many experiences from the day. The teacher has a truly authentic assessment and the scene is set for the next day's logical lesson, "E is for Earthquakes."

The excitement level stays high as kids explore the Earth's wonders through the remaining A to Z concepts. The activities are carefully planned to include all modalities and to stress higher level thinking skills, such as cause and effect. Mini-lessons on the writing process and the final publishing of the student books are an integral part of the unit. A tremendous value lies in the way this project enriches the teaching of Geology and Geography while allowing significant room for teacher decision: How many of the projects to use? When to use them? In what capacity to use them? To use them as a resource full of valuable information? It's all provided in the colorful "A to Z" lessons which do not have to be used in the traditional A to Z sequence. This integrated curricular unit, used in its entirety, takes about three months.

Each child's published book, filled with numerous writing projects and colorfully illustrated student artwork, offers a golden opportunity for the teacher to authentically assess the child's understanding of the Science and Geography themes. The final publications are shared with fellow classmates, older and younger, and family. Student pride is shown in both their work and the knowledge they share about the Earth.

The success of "Our Extraordinary Earth from A to Z" shines through in student writing and artwork that identifies their understanding of the value, importance, and fragility of this changing planet. It enables kids to develop a global perspective and become caretakers of our Extraordinary Earth.

State Frameworks

"Our Extraordinary Earth From A to Z" supports the State Science Framework by taking a thematic approach, focusing on scientific concepts and the connections between them. The content focus was based on the Earth Sciences/Geology and Natural Resource sections Grades Three through Six. The English/Language Arts Framework is supported by integrating reading, writing, speaking and listening with other curricular areas and using higher level thinking skills in a meaningful context. By using the "Five Themes of Geography" to develop Geographic Literacy, the History/Social Science Framework goals become an integral part of "Our Extraordinary Earth."

The Students

Sixty-two Third Grade students successfully completed the "Extraordinary Earth from A to Z" integrated unit.
Late Night With Tutankhamun

The Idea and Its Value

In *Late Night with Tutankhamun*, 6th grade students use knowledge acquired in their history class to write scripts, plan costumes, make props and backdrops, and videotape themselves performing in a variety of television shows based on Ancient Egypt. King Tut, the host, interviews famous Egyptian celebrities such as Ramses II and Queen Hatshepsut. Students take several roles in their cooperative groups: a group cooperative role such as leader, recorder, or materials person, a preparation role such as script coordinator, laserdisc image researcher, prop and costume coordinator, and performer, each one taking a role in the final TV show. For this role, each student writes their own script, reflecting acquired knowledge about Egypt in as creative and thorough a way as possible. Additionally, students incorporate scenes from a laserdisc on ancient Egypt into each presentation, and learn to operate the technology, which includes the laserdisc player, video camcorder, and VCR. Along with *Late Night with Tutankhamun*, other formats are offered, such as *Lifestyles of the Rich and Powerful*, and *This Old Pyramid*, which allow students, in a project that appeals to them all, to demonstrate knowledge gained from a content area, requires the use of higher level thinking skills and creativity, and also allows each student to participate at his or her own skill level, including RSP and GATE. Each day, excitement in the classroom mounts as students prepare for the videotaping of their production. After group meetings at the beginning of each day, students break out into task related groups and the classroom buzzes with activity. Some students are in the research area, gathering details from the materials available, some are working on backgrounds and props, others are in the script writing area, some scan the laserdisc for images, and others are in the conference area with the teacher troubleshooting problems. As student enthusiasm mounts, the role of the teacher becomes that of a facilitator. Parents become involved in providing help with costumes, videotaping and editing, and providing students an opportunity to work at home on such projects as preparing finished Egyptian food for the Egyptian Frugal Gourmet group. After the videotaping, each group uses additional technology to add titles and credits to their section of the video, and the final tape is shown to all 6th grades and their parents on a special show day. Parents may also supply blank videos and copies are made for students to keep at home.

State Frameworks

History/Social Science Framework: emphasizes the importance of studying major historical periods in depth and provides a variety of content appropriate teaching methods that engage students actively in the learning process, such as role playing and simulations; uses technology to supplement reading and classroom activities to enrich the teaching of history and social science. English/Language Arts Framework: students experience a balanced program which requires them listen, speak, read, and write frequently in all subject areas.

The Students

Three 6th grade core groups of 32 students each, including gifted and talented and resource students, participated in this project. The idea could easily be adapted to any period of history studied.

Facilities and Materials

Video camera, TV-VCR, and ordinary classroom supplies are needed. Materials which were developed to help student groups plan are available in a packet upon request.

Outside Resources

No special outside resources are necessary, although access to editing equipment helps make the finished video more polished.

The Staff

I have taught 14 years at all grade levels, K-8. I currently team teach in a 6th grade core program, focusing on Language Arts, Visual and Performing Arts and Technology. Our team integrates the curriculum in a thematic approach.
Simple Machines Help Us Work

Grades 1-2

Physical Science
Language Arts

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Achille Levy Foundation

"This is the most exciting connection we have made professionally throughout our teaching careers. We want you to know that we are very willingly responding to your lead in connecting school and private industry."

The Idea and Its Value

Inspired by Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel, students come to understand the physical science concept of work and the role of simple machines in their everyday world through free explorations of the functions of wheels, levels, wedges, inclined planes, pulleys, and screws.

Students learn to differentiate the physical science concept of work from its common meaning, to identify the six simple machines and to understand how they make work easier, to discover the simple machines in everyday life, and to find simple machines in more complex machines.

Believing that children remember best when they have fun learning, the unit structures a safe and stimulating environment in which ALL children create meaning from their own experience. It is designed to be a "hands-on, minds-on" curriculum in which ALL children learn by doing, not by watching or listening. Students work cooperatively to discover how pencils underneath a heavy book help to make it move more easily across a table (wheel). Using a variety of problem solving strategies and common classroom materials they move an eraser from a table top into a can without lifting either object (inclined plane). With ingenuity they figure out how to LIFT an object using the force of gravity (pulley). According to the National Science Teachers Association, "Only 27% of elementary teachers feel qualified to teach physical science." The unit was developed to support primary teachers as they entered into a new curricular area, to use materials available in any classroom, to outline simple lessons that model excellent teaching practice and scientific process, and to challenge student thinking while ensuring success.

State Frameworks

The framework states, “To be effective, science education should be enjoyable.” Simple Machines Help Us Work is a highly motivating, developmentally appropriate, and meaningfully integrated unit of study. Students develop confidence and competence through fun explorations. Authentic assessment activities evidenced student understanding of the framework objectives, “What are machines and what do they do?” and “What are principles that govern their action?”

The Students

450 first graders over the last three years have enthusiastically responded to the unit. Six teachers not involved with its development have found it easy to use and to meet the criteria stated above. The unit was adopted by the Pleasant Valley School District in 1993 as the physical science curriculum for first grade and 35 local teachers received a 30 page binder including definitions, examples, lessons, and authentic assessment tools in a full day “hands-on” inservice. It will be presented county wide at the Back-to-School Conference.

Outside Resources

Woody Woodworkers, a local Industrial Arts program, provides a culminating woodworking project.

The Staff

We are three first grade teachers with varied backgrounds including Special Education, GATE, and Technology. Two of us are district mentors, one in Math, one in Science. We have written and received grants in the amount of $1,500 from Litton Industries and $387.00 from Amgen to supplement science instruction in our classrooms.
Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood?
A study buddy social studies project

The Idea and its Value

In this program, students will learn about places in their community and the people who work there through a variety of activities with their study buddies—including building a structure in the block center.

An older class will “buddy-up” with a younger class to work on this group project. This project was designed to increase communication skills, promote cooperation, raise self-esteem, and develop leadership skills. Each “Big Buddy” will be partnered with a “Little Buddy” and then all students will be organized into 7 cooperative groups. Each group will select a place in the community they would like to know more about. The Big Buddy will be in the leadership role. A Researcher will be responsible for collecting information from the library. The “Architect” will draw up the plan for the building they will make with the blocks. Each week, one group will build. The others waiting will be involved in a rotation of activities. They will produce a class book on vehicles, play a game that teaches map skills, write about “What I Want to Be When I Grow Up,” make a community worker puppet, and participate in a listening and following directions project—“Copy My Building.” Big Buddies will be “Supply Managers” and “Publishers” for these activities. When the builders complete their structure, it will remain intact for one week, and the Little Buddy will show and tell their classmates all about the project as they play in the block center during the week.

The motivation for this project came from a kindergarten workshop on using blocks with social studies. We adapted it to our existing study buddy program and to include the variety of activities across the curriculum. Throughout the 8 week project, the students eagerly looked forward to their new activity with their buddy. They were especially proud of their buildings—often working on details outside of class (drawing a movie in progress for the theater) or bringing accessories from home (playground equipment for the school). Several groups even opted to stay in at recess to add finishing touches!

The value of this project reaches far beyond the actual information learned about the community. Parents of both the younger and older children have commented on the positive relationship their child has developed over time with their study buddy. This project helps children to relate to the real world in a “hands-on” method and makes working as a team a priority. Success of this project can be measured by student published books (e.g., How We Built the Police Station) or a photo essay at Open House Night showing each group’s construction.

State Frameworks

The Social Science Framework states that children should have opportunities to explore the landscape in the neighborhood, including its structures and human activities and that they should have opportunities to use large building blocks and miniature vehicles. A major goal of the California kindergarten curriculum is to help children build their sense of self and self-worth through extending their understanding of the immediate world and deepening their appreciation of their own ability to assume individual and group responsibilities in classroom activities. Our project supports all these goals.

The Students

This project was used for two years with 5th grade, kindergarten and 1st grade. All academic levels participated.

Facilities and Materials

All building was done in the kindergarten room. We used the wooden blocks, furniture accessories, vehicles, classroom art supplies and library books for this program.

The Staff

Ms. Chall has taught 5th and 6th grades for 28 years in the San Gabriel Valley and Simi Valley. Mrs. Hopkins has taught kindergarten and 1st Grade for 19 years. She has a Master’s Degree in Special Education and has presented workshops at both the district and state level. Both teachers have served in various leadership roles throughout their careers.

Grades K-6
Social Studies
Language Arts
Math
Art

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What Is In Your Name?

Grades K-1

Language Arts
Skills for Growing
Mathematics
Phonics
Music

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The Idea and Its Value

What Is In Your Name? Is a twenty-six day kindergarten and first grade unit that builds student’s self esteem as it develops pre-reading skills. In addition to recognizing the alphabet and learning the phonetic sounds of the letters, students enjoy listening to such literature as *Chrysanthemum* and *Tikki Tikki Tembo* and singing the songs “What Is Your Name?” and “The More We Get Together.”

Each day children are greeted with their name printed on a strip of paper. A simple pocket chart featuring the letter of the day is placed in the front of the classroom. If the letter of the day appears in the student’s name, the student places his/her name card in the yes pocket and if not, he or she places the name card in the no pocket. Together the class reads each name and decides if it was placed in the appropriate pocket. This activity offers the students the opportunity to become acquainted with all the children in the class, to recognize names of other members in the classroom, as well as, to reinforce letter recognition.

The children enjoy constructing a large class name book. The names from the yes pocket are glued onto the appropriate page that contains the lower and upper case letter. Children illustrate each page of the big book with a picture representing the phonetic sound.

The name book is also reproduced on a computer and each child receives a copy to keep in their home library. Parents share in the enjoyment and excitement as their child discovers how many times his/her name appears in the book, circles the featured letter that appears in each name on that page, and recognizes his/her name as well as other names of children in the classroom.

The value of What Is In Your Name? is far-reaching and beneficial for young children because it develops pre-reading skills through a strategy that is interesting and meaningful to the child. The unit fosters a warm and friendly classroom feeling tone as children become more comfortable with themselves, with their peers, and with the teacher. It builds the child’s self-esteem as they gain confidence in their ability to read. It reaches all children by making them feel important as they identify with their own name and the name of others in the classroom. When completed, the name book is placed in the class library. Its worn state at the end of the year due to heavy use is proof of the popularity of this unit. The enjoyment of reading the book alone as well as in small groups and looking for each other’s names continues throughout the year. The ability to recognize name transfers to the ability to read names on things found in the classroom environment, such as, cubbyholes, homework envelopes, pencil boxes, and journals. What Is In Your Name? has been well received by students and their parents.

State Framework

What Is In Your Name? Supports the goals of the California Language Arts Framework by exposing young children to such readiness skills as left to right, top to bottom, letter identification, letter formation of capital and lower case letters and letter sounds in initial medial final positions. All learning modalities are incorporated throughout the unit. The philosophy of the Skills for Growing (Quest) is woven throughout the lessons.

The Students

About 150 children ages four through six at all developmental stages participated in What Is In Your Name? This unit meets the needs of all students, including special needs, bilingual, GATE, and hearing impaired and has been implemented by the three other kindergarten teachers at the school.

Facilities and Materials

Spiral chart 1” ruled tablet, the record What is Your Name? by Hap Palmer, the books Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes and Tikki Tikki Tembo by Arlene Mosel.

The Staff

Mrs. Harada has taught grades K-4 for a total of 16 years. Mrs. Stahl has taught eight years in kindergarten preceded by more than twelve years of substituting for grades K-3. The two teachers have team taught kindergarten for the past four years.
Let's Adopt a Humpback and Use the Seven Intelligences!

The Idea and Its Value

Let's Adopt a Humpback and Use the Seven Intelligences is a science/service based unit that integrates language arts, science, drama, fine arts, music and geography into a unit that maximizes student interest and success by being both enjoyable and challenging. The unit is rich in cooperative group activities and higher level thinking. The unit has a built in problem in which the class has to collaboratively come up with a solution. The class recognized the problem (endangered humpback whales) and decided to do something positive—adopt a humpback. Our class had a bake sale to raise the money for the adoption. The children advertised, priced, and made arrangements for the baked goods. I used the unit with my second and third graders for approximately one month, but it could be easily used in grades two through four.

All activities were designed for a diverse group of learners. I used the seven intelligences to guide the activities of the unit thus assuring student success. The seven intelligences are interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, musical, logical, kinesthetic, and linguistic.

Into

Vocabulary
Mammal breaching flukes
Vertical tail horizontal tail pods
Migration life cycle

After discussing the meanings of the words, groups of children pantomimed words, guessed the word, and wrote the word, thus this was a cooperative group activity (interpersonal) a writing activity (linguistic) and also a dramatic activity, (bodily kinesthetic).

Through

Children read stories about whales. After reading whales stories children wrote acrostic poems and stories. The object was to include as many scientific facts as possible. After writing, students read poems and stories in small groups and decorated their stories (intrapersonal, linguistic, spatial, and interpersonal). The ocean food chain and the diverse diet of the whales are learned through a song, “Slippery Fish” by Charlotte Diamond. The children enacted the song with stick puppets (bodily kinesthetic and spatial). We made a graph (logical, math). Japan and the culture was explored (spatial).

Beyond

We adopted a humpback whale and receive information periodically.

State Frameworks

These lessons support the mathematics and science frameworks which emphasize integration and hands on activities. By teaching with the seven intelligences all students are successful.

The Staff

I taught pre-school through third grades for Los Angeles City School District for nine years. I have taught second and third grade for the last five years at El Descanso School in the Pleasant Valley School District.
The Buddy System

Grades 5, 6, 7, or any grade that transitions students to another school

The Idea and Its Value

When fifth graders communicate with middle school students, their projects take on new meaning and importance. They practice communication skills and look forward to creating plays, poetry, fables, and cards to share. Meeting their buddies and evaluating their performances enhances their chances for a smoother transition to middle school. This cooperative/collaborative system ensures 100% participation which virtually eliminates discipline problems. The possibilities for projects are endless when students themselves participate in the planning and production through meaningful dialogue.

Higher level skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis are the norm with these groups of students as they develop projects that go beyond the usual classroom assignments. Not only do they participate in creating plays, poems, or stories, they extend their level of understanding to their current units of learning in various curricular areas. An example of this is when the fifth graders produced a play on slavery after reading a biography of “Harriet Tubman” and proceeded to perform it for their “Buddies.” They in turn actively participated by asking meaningful questions on civil rights, and changes that have taken place in society. Congratulatory letters followed boosting students’ self esteem. Reading and writing were natural follow-ups.

Another successful project involved the sharing of modern fables based on the student’s own experiences. Sixth graders wrote about the issues of drugs, alcohol, and gangs as well as friendship, and boy-girl relationships. They illustrated their fables, and planned a performance for their buddies. Fifth graders were so impressed with it as it closely followed their “DE-CIDE” (similar to DATE) program which focuses on staying drug free. They were the most attentive audience one has ever seen. The fact that they took the fables back to their own classroom to be read and discussed made the experience even more meaningful. Every single student in both classes was totally engaged in real learning.

The idea for this exchange arose out of an already established pen-pal orientation program between all elementary schools and the only junior high in the district. It was established in an effort to make the adjustment to junior high a less fearful experience. Letters are exchanged a couple times a year, and followed by an orientation and tour. We decided to take it a step further and have many exchanges throughout the school year, meeting each other at the beginning, and staying connected through more frequent interactions which focus on extending curricular areas.

All teachers and students would benefit by using the “Buddy System.” It would totally demystify the necessary transition from elementary school to junior high. Students and teachers must interact in order to make this work. Fifth graders connect their curriculum to the one they will have the following year, and sixth graders find familiarity in one they already know well. Friendships and bonding naturally occur insuring exchanges in the future.

State Frameworks

English/Language Arts Framework integrates a multi-model approach which offers students a wide variety of writing/reading/speaking tasks which help prepare them for the worlds of work and higher education. The History/Social Science Framework stresses the importance for communication and collaboration using critical thinking skills developing projects which instill a sense of civic values, rights and responsibilities.

Facilities and Materials

Reading/Literature, Social Studies texts, library books, videos, video cameras, computers, art materials (paper, glue, etc.). Alternate meeting sites if possible.

Outside Resources

Guest speakers, parent volunteers, walking field trips.
I Voted! Did You?

The Idea and Its Value

"I Voted! Did You?" is a meaning centered unit involving literature and the voting process. On Election Day in November children experience a peaceful election as the California Young Reader Medal (CYRM) books are voted upon in the classroom.

The purpose of the unit is to begin a basic awareness of civic values, rights, and responsibilities, as students practice democratic processes required of citizens in a democracy. To facilitate this goal, children in primary grades go through the process of a real election on Election Day to choose their favorite CYRM book. Individual classroom votes are compiled onto one school-wide ballot and are sent on to the California Reading Association for the final count and award. At the beginning of the school year, the five primary CYRM nominees are introduced to the students by the librarian during their weekly library time. The librarian reads one story each week, continuing to read and review the books weekly until Election Day.

On Election Day, the students are taken to the polls which are on campus as an on-site field trip. During this visit to the polls, students observe citizens checking in and receiving their ballots, how the ballot marker works, the polling books, and the locked ballot box. Following this visit, students return to their classroom to work in cooperative groups to set up their own "Election Day Polls" where all these processes are included. As each student completes the voting process, he/she designs a visor with the saying "I voted! Did you?" to wear the rest of the day to encourage other students and their parents to vote. Building on the excitement of a secret ballot, the students and teacher tally the votes for each CYRM nominee and fully participate in the voting process to see how everyone's vote counts.

The value of this project is far-reaching as it provides students with their first tangible step in understanding the qualities and individual responsibilities required of citizens in a democracy. For young people, the benefits include: exercising one's rights through voting in a democratic society; acquiring an appreciation of good literature, authors, and illustrators; developing problem-solving skills; working cooperatively with others and adults; and expanding mathematical literacy as one-to-one correspondence and tallying is practiced.

State Frameworks

This project supports the History-Social Science Framework and the goals of democratic understanding, civic values, skills attainment, and social participation. It also supports the English/Language Arts and Mathematics Frameworks which emphasize integration of curriculum areas that provide hands-on, minds on activities resulting in the production of meaningful learning.

The Students

"I Voted! Did You?" has been successfully used with primary students in kindergarten through second grade. The activities are developmentally appropriate and meet the needs of all learners of varying skills and abilities.

Facilities and Materials

The five California Young Reader Medal books are necessary for this unit. The accompanying packet of learning activities is helpful in extending students' learning through into, through, and beyond activities. Materials for creating the voting booths and visors such as colored tag board and construction paper and yarn are also needed.

Outside Resources

The on-site field trip to the Polls is integral in connecting students to the voting process through a real-life experience.

The Staff

I have taught kindergarten through second grade for eight years. I am a Mentor Teacher focusing on the "integration of a developmentally appropriate kindergarten program" and have been a presenter at district, county, regional and state conferences.
Faces, Places and Facts a Student Review of History

Grades 7-8

History

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The Idea and Its Value

Every student "creates" their own review of history. The academic year is recreated and reviewed by the student with their total development of an exciting and fun history review game.

This is an individual or team interdisciplinary project based on a review of all or some part of the resources used in the Social Studies class. The review could include information from the text or the student may use one or all of several literature novels read by the student. The novels used in our class are Nightingales That Weep, The Samurai's Tale, Adam of the Road, The Golden Goblet, The Bronze Bow and the Door in the Wall. The student may also choose to use information from their daily geography journal or current events from the newspaper. The student has another resource in the Bowman/Noble Social Studies reading kits. All these resources are in the classroom and used on a regular basis by every student.

This project has been used for several years and has been very successful. As the student creates their game, they use the following skills: research, reading and writing, and higher level thinking skills; such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. They also can become involved in math, science or map making. The student is not limited in any way in what their review game contains. They are encouraged to be as creative as possible.

The student writes all the rules and game procedures and designs and constructs the game itself. This includes the game surface and pieces needed to play the game. The student makes up all the questions and answers for the game. This meets the new assessment procedures.

This project promotes a very positive feeling for each student. They discover that they can be creative. The students enjoy learning the new games and reviewing the year by playing a game a classmate has created.

State Frameworks

Faces, Places and Facts support both Social Studies and Language Arts frameworks by requiring and encouraging each student to make history fun and exciting. Upon completion of the project, the student will have gained tremendous skills in organization and will have gained so much subject knowledge in the preparation and construction of the game.

The Student

This project can be adapted for any age group and ability. GATE to LH students have participated with equal success.

Facilities and Materials

The only facilities necessary is the classroom and the materials used by every student on a regular basis. The student provides any special materials needed in the construction of the game.

Outside Resources

None are needed.

The Staff

I have taught twenty-two years in the middle school.
Building Toothpick Bridges

The Idea and Its Value

What could be more exciting for any student than to use their math knowledge to develop a business company who designs and constructs real weight bearing bridges! I introduce the bridge project with a brief history of the advent of bridge building. Some of the years I have actually had two engineers who design and build bridges for Caltrans come in and talk to the kids. They show slides and bring examples of the materials used in real bridges. They also come back in a few weeks to look at our finished projects and judge them according to design, feasibility, neatness and does it match their plans. This is half of the students' assessment. Students then enter into several math activities in preparation for running their own business and building their own bridges. The first activity is to practice scale drawing. They choose cartoons and draw a centimeter grid over it. Then they redraw it on graph paper three times its original size. The next activity has to do with a checking account. Since they will have to buy materials for their bridges, it is important to go over how to write a check and how to balance a checkbook. Whenever possible, I try to get real checks and balance books. Now the fun begins. The students divide themselves up into teams of three and choose a name for their bridge building company. They split up the duties of contractor, builder, architect, accountant, designer, secretary, etc. They are to keep a folder with all of their paperwork in it. They put their logo with their company's name on the front of the folder. Inside is all kinds of paperwork that they will be using throughout the project as well as a daily log to keep track of progress. Everyone has something to do each day to keep the project going. They decide what the bridge will look like and the architect draws it to 1:2 scale. The contractor estimates the amount of material that will be needed and the accountant budgets it out and writes the check. The contractor fills out the invoice and turns it in, with the check, to the building supply company. Once they get their supplies, they start to build. The first thing that they do is prepare the land (a piece of cardboard of certain dimensions) to build on. Then they start to build the structure using toothpicks, white glue and some string if they want. They are encouraged to spend the whole amount of money that has been allotted and not to cut corners. The second half of their assessment is the amount of weight the bridge holds before it breaks. The kids love the day that we break bridges.

State Framework

Because the Math Framework indicates that math is for ALL students, that students should learn to work cooperatively, that they should use tools and communication to solve real life situations and to complete and present a project, I feel that this unit would fit in any teacher's classroom and be enjoyed by many students as you can tell that my students have enjoyed this project.

Outside Resources

The book that I use is called TOOTHPICK BRIDGES and can be found in the Dale Seymour catalog. I use a bank to get checks and registers. Caltrans has been very helpful in sending engineers to talk to the students.

The Staff

I have taught 5th grade (containing) through High School (math) classes for 16 years. I have been a mentor teacher for Ventura Unified School District for 5 years. I have been a fellow and a senior fellow with the Tri-Counties Math Project. I have received grants from AAUW, CMC-SS, Toshiba of America, WSDEF and some other grants. I am a board member for Ventura County Math Council.

Grades 4-12

Math Social Studies Art

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"It is so important to involve the public in support of education. I am so glad to be part of Impact II."