IMPACT II

The Teachers' Network

Ventura County Teacher-Developed Curriculum Ideas

1995 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 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 - 1996

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 has continued to grow and flourish in Ventura County in its third year of operation. The teacher response and business response to IMPACT II has been gratifying. To date, over one hundred thirty teacher applications have been received and sixty-two deserving grants have been awarded. Our number of business partners have grown from six in our first year to nineteen in 1995. Additionally, the fund contributions received and distributed have grown each year.

The purpose of IMPACT II is to spread excellent teaching through recognition of good ideas and the distribution of this document. Our early indications are that this effort is paying off. A survey completed by the 1993 and 1994 IMPACT II grant recipients indicated that 664 teachers made formal or informal contact with recipient teachers regarding their IMPACT II project. 221 teachers attended formal staff development sessions regarding IMPACT II project lessons and one school adopted an IMPACT II science idea for all of their first grade classrooms. This catalogue is sent to all schools and libraries in Ventura County and will soon be available electronically through the home page for the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office on Internet @www.vcss.k12.ca.us. Please share this document with fellow educators and business leaders. I encourage you to read the descriptions of winning lessons and look for ideas that may enhance your classroom. Feel free to borrow ideas at will and use them in your classroom as often as appropriate. Our only purpose in publishing this document is to assist you in teaching your students.

Throughout the three year period during which IMPACT II has been in existence in Ventura County, every business contribution received has been earmarked for grants to teachers. All overhead costs are borne by the County Superintendent of Schools Office. I made this investment in IMPACT II because I believe that recognizing and distributing good teaching ideas will help spread quality education throughout Ventura County. Additionally, I believe that a closer connection between business and education will provide mutual benefit. IMPACT II is one of our partner programs with the Ventura County Economic Development Association (VCEDA) guided by the theme, "A Handshake, Not A Handout." This slogan succinctly describes our philosophy that a true partnership should benefit both parties. I believe that IMPACT II fills that bill!

IMPACT II could not survive and grow without the continued support and active involvement of business leaders like Stacy Roscoe of Proctor and Gamble, Bruce McDonald of Corlund Electronics, Kim Peterson of Cellular One, Ed Lyon of Gaviota Maintenance Services, Dave Bouchet of American Commercial Bank, and Jim Stahl of Weyerhauser. All of the above business-persons are members of the Ventura County Economic Development Association (VCEDA). I appreciate the forum that this organization has provided to enable IMPACT II to grow. I also want to express my appreciation to Phil Palbaum and Diana Rigby of the County Superintendent of Schools Office, Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for providing the leadership and Commitment to Quality Education for All. We are truly blessed, in Ventura County, to have such outstanding leaders. IMPACT II will continue to grow and spread throughout Ventura County. The teacher network will grow and increase in influence over the years to come. I am committed to continuing our effort with our business partners to recognize and reward our many exceptional teachers while spreading successful instructional practices throughout Ventura County.

Charles Weis, Ph.D.
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
June 1995
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.

1995-96 IMPACT II Advisory Council

Teacher Representatives:

Bev Aggen                    Pleasant Valley    Los Altos Intermediate
Sandee Ayers                Oak Park          Medea Creek Middle
Yvonne Backus               Simi Valley       Katherine School
Carol Berger                Conejo Valley     Acacia
Jan Brovold                 Ventura           Blanche Reynolds
Carol Brummett              Simi Valley       Big Springs
Helen Faul                  Ocean View       Tierra Vista
Cyndy Hall                  Oak Park          Brookside
Kathy Heftman               Fillmore          Fillmore Junior High
Ruth Hofmeister             Simi Valley       Sinaloa Junior High
Sherri Kerman               Pleasant Valley    Oak Hills Elementary
Becky Koch                  Oak Park          Campus Canyon
Judy Laumann                Moorpark          Meadows School
Linda Mayo                  Conejo Valley     Oxnard High
Jerry Neidenbach            Oxnard UHSD      Ocean View Junior High
Jack Oliver                 Ocean View       Montalvo
Patty Peinado               Ventura           Los Cerritos Intermediate
Carol Phillips              Conejo Valley     Balboa Middle
Marilyn Renger              Ventura           Medea Creek Middle
Lis Silverman               Oak Park          Ocean View Junior High
Carol Williams              Ocean View Elementary

PTA Representatives:

Marth Goodsell             PTA—12th District
Loretta Schieffer          PTA—12th District

Business Representatives:

Carol Flores-Wallis        Corlund Electronics
Marilyn Newstrom           Naval Air Warfare
Ed Romero                  Point Mugu
Stacy Roscoe               Proctor & Gamble
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Interglobal Premier Travel
Jim’s Machining (Division of Thiessen)
Buena Chevron (Kevin Corse)
First Interstate Bank (Moorpark)
Bank of A. Levy (Moorpark)

Friend
Action Personnel

In Kind Services
1995 IMPACT II

Welcome:

Chuck Weiss
VCSS Superintendent

Bruce MacDonald, CEO,
Corlund Electronics
and Judy Crenshaw,
Pleasant Valley School District
President Awards to the
1995 Recipients.

A Few Samples of the 1995 Recipients Projects
AWARDS DINNER

Business Partners, Teachers, Administrators,
Family and Friends to the
Third Annual Impact II Awards Dinner

Carolyn Leaven
VCEDA President

Kim Peterson,
Regional Vice President,
Cellular One
Provided the Closing Remarks.

Supporters
Attended the
Awards Dinner

A Few Samples of the 1995 Recipients Projects
Growing Together Through Vegetable Soup

The Idea and Its Value

Prompted by the core literature selection The Soup Song by Iris Van Rynbach, students collaboratively make fresh vegetable soup which they proudly give to a food distribution center for needy families in the community. This 3-4 week unit takes place in November and culminates with our Quest community service of making the soup. Songs, such as “We All Live Together” and “The More We Get Together”, and books such as Growing Vegetable Soup and Mr. McGill Goes to Town, are used as “hook” activities. After listening to various versions of Stone Soup, students retell the story in their own words and compare and contrast the different versions. Health is incorporated into this unit through the discussion of the food pyramid and of the nutritional value of the vegetables brought from home. As part of our Science curriculum, the five senses are discussed, such as how the vegetables feel, how the soup smells as it is cooking, what it sounds like when it is boiling and how it tastes. Students record their thoughts, their activities, and what they learned in their journals. The mathematical concepts of number recognition, sorting, counting, and measuring are emphasized as students prepare the vegetables for cooking. While the soup is cooking, the children review the process of making soup and record the sequence. Art is experienced through vegetable printing using paints, illustrating their own version of Stone Soup and designing a math pattern using autumn symbols on a placemat.

Value

The value of this project is far-reaching and is beneficial for all children because it connects the curriculum to the real world in a meaningful way. The real value in this unit, “Growing Together Through Vegetable Soup”, supports the vision of the History/Social Science Framework by giving students the opportunity to respect and care for others as they cooperate to accomplish a common goal. The integration of curriculum areas benefits all young children and includes:

- Building self-esteem
- Working together
- Experiencing the five senses
- Discussing and comparing the food groups in the food pyramid
- Utilizing hands-on math skills
- Illustrating their own version of Stone Soup
- Re-telling and dramatizing the story
- Giving to others

This unit has been well received by our parents and children. Parents come to class to help on the cooking day. Working together, caring, sharing and helping others are lifelong skills that need to be cultivated and encouraged at a young age. All of this helps build self-esteem and values in our young children which will enable them to become productive and important members of our society.

State Frameworks

This unit supports the vision and goals of the Language Arts Framework through the opportunities to read, write and speak and the Mathematics Framework through the hands-on, real-life problem-solving situations. In particular, this unit incorporates the History/ Social Science Framework curriculum strands for kindergarten, “Learning and Working Together Now and Long Ago” by addressing the need of schools to connect the abstract nature of the curriculum to the real world of children’s lives. The philosophy of the Skills for Growing (Quest) program is woven throughout the lessons.

Students

About 180 children ages 4-7 at all developmental stages participated in this “Growing Together Through Vegetable Soup” activity. This unit meets the needs of all students, including special needs, full inclusion and bilingual. All modalities are incorporated throughout the unit.

Facilities and Materials

Materials needed are a hot plate and pot, crock pot or electric skillet and an assortment of vegetables and seasonings. The video, Stone Soup, by Weston Woods and the songs “The More We Get Together” by Raffi and “We All Live Together” by Greg Street and Steve Millan on Younglove Records can be used. There are many versions of Stone Soup by such authors as Ann McGovern, Marcia Brown and Troll Associated and The Soup Stone by Iris Van Rynbach.

Outside Resources

Vegetable contributions from parents and a charitable organization willing to distribute the soup.

Staff

After substituting K-3 for more than ten years, Jean Stahl is in her ninth year of kindergarten teaching. Sharon Harada has more than 17 years experience teaching grades K-4 including 9 years in kindergarten. Both teachers have teamed together in kindergarten for five years. Their philosophy reflects developmentally appropriate teaching practices and integration across the curriculum.
Hopping Across the Curriculum
A Pond Unit That Integrates Science

The Idea and its Value

Hopping Across the Curriculum is a pond unit that integrates science and involves all students in achieving the following objectives: What are ecosystems and how do organisms interact? How does energy flow within an ecosystem? How do ecosystems change? What are the responsibilities of humans toward ecosystems?

Each of these objectives is explored across the curriculum. Students compare and contrast attributes of pond animals, experiment with properties of water, and observe tadpoles, frogs, and pond plants. Students communicate by using new vocabulary in retelling of stories and poems, by writing to politicians taking a position on conservation, by inferring and explaining the interdependence of plant and animal life in the pond. Movement, art, and music activities encourage an enjoyment of scientific learning.

Teachers use anecdotal notes and observation checklists to record the use of content vocabulary, demonstration of conceptual knowledge, and student use of factual information while students participate in hands-on activities. Teachers find self-evaluation a valuable source of feedback as students state what they find most interesting, what they want to know more about, and what they consider their best work from their portfolio collection.

As a culminating activity to this 8-week unit, students visit a local pond to observe the ecosystem in action. During the spring or fall, a community service project involves students in cleaning up the pond environment.

This project meets individual needs while emphasizing critical thinking and problem-solving. All students are challenged at their own level by open-ended activities and a variety of questioning techniques.

State Framework

This unit is aligned with the Science Framework. The themes of science are taught, process skills are used, teacher questioning facilitates the scientific thinking processes, assessment is an integral part of instruction and students are encouraged to explore through hands-on activities.

Students

Kindergarten through second grade students have participated in this program. Activities met the needs of students at all academic levels.

Facilities and Materials

We used classroom art supplies, literature, records, and musical instruments. A fresh water aquarium was a stimulating focus of study.

Outside Resources

A parent presented a hands-on explanation of the role of the water hyacinth. Donated plants and animals were available from local merchants for the aquarium.

The Staff

Connie Hopkins and Gail Penn have taught at the elementary level for 15 years. They have written and received grants for work in a variety of curriculum areas. Both teachers have presented workshops at the school site, district and state levels and have served in various leadership roles throughout their careers.

Our love of children's literature and our interest in integrating language arts with science motivated the development of this unit.

Grades K-2
Science
Language Arts

More Information
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Township Elementary
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Simi Valley, CA 93063
(805) 520-6770

Dolores Pekrut, Principal
Simi Valley USD

Business Partner
Achille Levy Foundation
Turn Almost Anything into a Learning Experience

The Idea and Its Value

Turn Almost Anything into a Learning Experience is a meaning-centered and child-centered unit of learning centers. The basic concept behind this project is: Since children learn from the world around them, why not have children focus on everyday objects for their source of learning, rather than boring textbooks, equally boring lectures, or drill and practice? This unit involves a set of learning centers which the teacher provided for most of the year, but which the children themselves generate towards the end of the year. Each learning center folder contains one set of instructions, as well as duplicated recording sheets. The learning centers are varied, and address all areas of the math framework. For example, one center directs the students to take off their shoes, and list as many ways as they can to sort, classify, and measure them. Then they make graphs which record their findings, and implement journal writing in which they describe the procedure they implemented. In another center, the children measure by experiencing the measurement of a cup, tablespoon, etc., as they measure with birdseed or water. Too, travel brochures not only acquaint the children with various aspects of different countries, but students also use wooden models of basic geometric shapes to match structural components in the pictures of each country. The teacher should be looking at all ordinary objects and begin to realize how they may be used to foster a learning center in the classroom. At the beginning of the year, the teacher provides the centers and the activities; but later during the year the students are encouraged to develop their own centers. The value of this project is primarily the enthusiasm and excitement, spiral learning, transference, practice of basic math facts, critical thinking, higher level thinking skills, and authentic assessment. Parents have been extremely supportive, and both in helping children generate ideas for learning centers, as well as reinforcing the math concepts at home.

State Framework

Turn Almost Anything into a Learning Experience supports the goals of the California Math Framework in the following ways. All students participate fully and take responsibility for their own learning because they question, create, and help decide what to do. The teacher is a facilitator of learning. All student regularly use manipulatives, work together, and reflect their thinking orally and in writing. Finally, this program is developmentally appropriate.

The Students

I have used these learning centers for two years with sixty second and third grade students. This program addresses the needs of all students, including special needs, bilingual, and GATE. It could be used with students in grades one through six, and in almost any subject area.

Facilities and Materials

Teacher made directions and recording sheets, as well as ordinary objects and regular classroom manipulatives and equipment, such as scales, calculators, yardsticks, etc.

The Staff

Mrs. Brackett has taught grades two through six for about twenty years. She has been a Mentor teacher for three years, a master teacher for ten years. She is a Fellow of Early Equity in Science and Math Project, as well as a Fellow in The Tri-Counties Math Project.
Lights, Camera, Action!

Big-Little Buddies Perform Operettas

The Unit and Its Value:

Children can lead and support other children in developing their creative genius and imagination through the performing arts. It's Elementary states: "An exemplary elementary arts program includes both doing and thinking about art. It includes self-expression acquisition of skills, and a study of artistic traditions and other cultures." While implementing this unit, we found that when students communicate their ideas in a multi-age environment, it helps develop self esteem and communication with others while bridging cultural and physical differences.

Unit Overview and Timeline:

"Boy, do we have a show for you," exclaimed a third grader to his little buddy first grade teacher. This struggling reader had found his "voice" in the performing arts. For a month, students have been involved in an intense, high interest study of the jungle. This thinking curriculum has produced class work in longer blocks of time for deeper understanding. The "show" is the product. A live performance of an operetta. (The telling of a story through song) Parents have said the Operetta gives young children confidence and pride which cannot be measured. Beginning with purposeful reading our students compare and contrast different thematic pieces of literature to evaluate and select their characters. Integrate poetry, setting and sequence of events. Hands on art integration lets students apply what they have learned about the science of the jungle. Painted paper technique is popular in which they created all the colors necessary for animals, birds, and plant life of the jungle are created with magenta, yellow and turquoise. Swing into action, teams of sponge painters work together to create specific pieces of the jungle and mount them on the background. On other days, students work in teams to create their own costumes from common everyday household materials, learning that designing "clothes" for the character props is often more effective than complete costumes. Because students develop an "I can do attitude," parents have reported that these strategies help children continue to create in innovative ways at home. Music begins to permeate the classroom as children burst into song while they learn words from a tape recording, overhead sing alongs, or an echo modeling technique. As the enjoyment of the singing progresses, big little buddies set special times to come together to sing. During these class periods, decisions are made as to how to divide various responsibilities which involves further authentic replication of the unit through researching picture books, etc. Lots of individual sharing and brainstorming take place. Little-Buddies and Big-Buddies work together. Once Little-Buddy shows his spider to his Big Buddy who suggests making a web together so the spider has a home and "won't get lost." All two and three dimensional artwork is created, arranged, measured, assembled or painted by students and placed on painted paper mural background.

Shadow practicing takes place on several occasions to help children critique and improve performance progress. Students support each other and this leaves little need for adult coaching. Joint writing and art activities are written to publicize and create invitations for upcoming performances and student created programs. Finally, the CELEBRATION! The time has come to share and admire the various projects created. While pictures are taken and ideas shared, children break into song. The performance times are scheduled. All performances are videotaped for sending home to families who cannot attend. Videotapes become the basis for student self-reflection and teacher anecdotal records. An appreciation of the individuality and unusual talents of all children are brought forth in these wonderful performances.

State Frameworks:

Lights, Camera, Action, Big-Buddies, and Little-Buddies Perform Operettas, supports California State Frameworks in Language Arts, Visual and Performing Arts, Science, History Social Science, Art and Math. The multidisciplinary, multi age, format aligns with developmentally appropriate instruction n and assessment. This wonderful unit aligns curriculum with problem solving for a real world audience.

Students:

62 first and third grade students successfully performed and delighted audiences of all ages. Each class held rehearsals and up to 4 performances for the school, staff and parents of Tierra Linda.

Facilities/materiasl:

Normal classroom spaces can accommodate performances by rearranging student desks as a stage. A tape recorder is adequate for music.

Outside Resources:

The following bibliography of copyrighted musicals have been classroom tested by applicants: Jack and the Beanstalk, Little Red Riding Hood, The Emperor's New Clothes, Amaruni and The Moss Covered Rock, all by Pink and Heath, available from Bad Wolf Press, 5931 Spindrift Ct. Camarillo, Ca. 93012, (805) 482-4460. The Three Piggy Opera, by Kaplan and Becter, Mitchell Publishing.
Communication, the Vital Connection
An individualized Tool to Enhance Communication

THE IDEA AND ITS VALUE

Our idea is a simple one because we feel that Communication is the Vital Connection, we developed a process by which speech and language impaired students can communicate ideas, needs, and feelings using a portable support book which represents language in simple formats. It is a valuable tool to enable communication interaction between the nonverbal student and classroom teachers and peers, establishing a vital connection to learning.

Nearly 70% of Ventura County's 13,000 special education students are in regular classes. On a daily basis, regular education teachers and students are faced with integrating speech and language impaired students into their classrooms. It is critical that support system for communication be in place to ensure students success and for optimal learning to take place. The goal of teaching these portable communication systems comes from a student need. Through additional collaboration with other colleagues and from workshop attendance within the state of California, we feel that we have developed a practical tool for helping students.

Initially students with special communication needs are observed in their school setting so that functional inventories of needed vocabulary are defined. This individualized student vocabulary inventory will include words, sentences, and phrases that are common to the classroom setting and curriculum. Next, this vocabulary is represented in picture and written form and displayed using any one of a variety of formats. For example, a portable, wallet-sized, picture communication book has been designed for students who integrate into journalism, music, art, drama, and PE. Whatever size or format is determined to be appropriate, the portable communication book will allow fair student participation in class activities and it will also provide other students and teachers a way to communicate with the speech and language impaired students. For example, if the book is taken to PE, the student can indicate by pointing to a picture or words in the book which team he would like to join or which position he would like to play. When asked a question, the student can point to the appropriate answer in the book, or the student can have a section providing him a means to ask a question. Multiple books using similar or the same pictures, words, and phrases have been developed allowing a group of special needs students the same vocabulary to facilitate their participation in a group lesson.

This kind of communication system is invaluable not only to the student with special needs but also to the teacher and other students as it opens the channels of communication for all the students in the classroom.

Having the ability to exchange thoughts and ideas is a fundamental component of the learning process.

Through the use of these portable tools, communication will be enhanced, new vocabulary and new skills will be solidified, and students will be provided opportunities to express feelings. The result will be greater self-control, higher self-esteem, and the development of increased positive reinforcement by peers and teacher. For example, in a high school setting, a language impaired student wanting to participate in a class discussion often becomes frustrated or upset due to a lack of ability to participate. By using a portable communication tool, the student can actively join in the discussion. The result will be an increase in appropriate communication skills and a decrease in negative behaviors.

Through observation of student use of this new tool, the teacher is able to assess what information the student has been able to understand and assimilate. In evaluating performance, the teacher is also able to ask questions in a 'test' format with optional answers. As the project continues throughout the school year, the books will be adapted, adjusted and the vocabulary will be enhanced as needed.

The flexibility of our approach will allow us to develop books applicable to any age, subject, or ability level. Any teacher who has or may in the future have a nonverbal student enrolled in his or her classroom, can benefit from the ideas for portable communication systems presented in Communication, the Vital Connection.

We know that Communication is the vital connection and we hope that our efforts will serve teachers and students who rely on this support.

State Frameworks

The California English Language Arts Framework supports all efforts to enhance communication for students. In keeping with the goals outlined in the framework, this innovative project will indeed help to accomplish the goal of developing students into "informed and effective citizens in our democratic society."
Nose-to-Nose with Those Who Compose

Grades 2-6
Music
Language Arts
Visual & Performing Arts
History/Social Science

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Business Partner
Cellular One

The Idea and Its Value

"Nose-to-Nose with Those Who Compose" acquaints students with the fascinating and often humorous stories of famous composers from various historical periods, while treating them to the world's greatest musical compositions—all as a vehicle for teaching a host of important skills from across the curriculum. Students begin each month by becoming friends with a composer and his/her music. What did each eat? What were their bad habits? Did they struggle in school or drive teachers nuts? Sharing heart-wrenching humorous stories to expose children to real creative genius, empowers them to reach through time, and to stir their moral imaginations by feeling what others have felt. Videos (i.e. "Beethoven Who Lives Upstairs"), rich pieces of literature (i.e. "Mozart, Young Music Genius" by Francene Sabin), theatrical plays (i.e. "Of Mice and Mozart" by Jill Gallina) and a host of colorful anecdotes all awaken in children a sense of common memory and of shared humanity. Integrated activities that grow out of the composer's music cover a variety of areas. Leonard Bernstein conducting Gershwin's "American in Paris" lends itself beautifully to a simple, but impressive, "perspective drawing" of life in the big city. Handel's steady, even tempo of his "Water Music" is the perfect setup for cinquaines on "Rain" over a water color background. Tchaikovsky's colorful life provide the background for a wonderful introduction to note-taking ("Skinny Notes") and a follow-up written narrative. Each month includes a varied Language Arts Strategy, integrating the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening with artistic touches of various media. Children studying a musical instrument receive kudos for being our "Musician of the Day" and performing a work by one of our composers. The ultimate assessment comes in June when students present speeches on favorite composers chosen from the collection of monthly "Nose-to-Nose" projects. The class creates a rubric together to assess the quality of each speech.

State Frameworks

This unit supports the Visual and Performing Arts Framework: Music and the Arts call for symbols beyond words, making them precious gifts to verbally restricted children who need other means to convey feelings and ideas. "Nose-to-Nose" follows the HSS Framework's notion of Historical Empathy in many ways, including the creation of an on-going timeline on Tom Snyder's "Timeliner". The Math Framework with its emphasis on real-life setting is also represented: How long ago did this composer live? What would his salary be today?

The Students

"Nose-to-Nose" is geared to 2nd through 6th graders (Resource to GATE) who relate easily to these historical figures because of the focus on the composer as an ordinary person with extraordinary talent.

Resources

"Nose-to-Nose with Those Who Compose" is teacher-friendly as it can be used in part or in its entirety. Teachers choose from suggested musical selections (all easy to find by virtue of their lasting impact on the world) and from literature and videos listed, in the hope that their libraries will make these permanent additions. No other resources are necessary.

The Staff

Mrs. Fessenden has taught in the Primary Grades for 17 years in 3 states. She presently teaches 3rd Grade in the Pleasant Valley School District.
Amazingly Academic Alliteration

The Idea and Its Value

Amazingly Academic Alliteration is designed to provide students with a motivating way to learn about adjectives, nouns, and verbs all year long. The idea has been adapted and expanded from an art project that I had seen while substitute teaching 6 years ago. Students use various sources of literature to experience how authors use alliteration to enhance their work. Students use higher level thinking skills to produce their own Alliteration Animal complete with a tongue twister.

They complete Mad Libs using alliterative words to fill in the blanks. This unit encourages students to learn language skills while working alone and in cooperative groups. They seem to enjoy the collaboration and sharing of final products. The alliteration animals can be used as a tool for assessing sentence structure. All of my students participated and produced sentences varying from 5 to 10 word tongue twisters. This unit combines Language Arts and Visual Arts. It could easily be adapted to fit any grade level.

Amazing Alliteration Animals

1) Introduce the concept of alliteration by using ABC picture books.
2) Use Dr. Seuss books to have students find examples of alliteration.
3) Student groups brainstorm lists of adjectives, nouns, and verbs beginning with the same sound or letter.
4) Using the lists, have students mix and match their words to produce their own tongue twister.
5) Have students use scraps of paper to make an animal and display the tongue twister on its tongue or body.
6) Use Mad Libs with alliterative fill ins as a refresher for using parts of speech.

State Frameworks

These activities support the Language Arts Framework and Its Elementary. It also provides the teacher with a format for alternate assessment.

The Students

This series of activities has been used with approximately 32 students each year in my class for the past three years. A wide range of students has participated, including GATE, RSP, and LEP students. The students enjoy the activities and many times ask to do Alliterative Mad Libs. This has been a WONDERFUL way to teach parts of speech and proper sentence structure.

Facilities and Materials

All activities were done in a regular classroom with materials from the school supply room, book clubs, local bookstores and libraries.

Outside Resources

Some books specifically used are listed below.

Alliteration Alphabet
Books

| Animalia by Guerne Base Heller |
| A to Z by Jody Linscott |
| Allison's Zinnia by Anita Lobel |
| Away From Home by Anita Lobel |

Books about the parts of speech

| Kites Sail High by Ruth Heller |
| Many-Legged Lollopops by Ruth Heller |
| Merry-Go-Round by Ruth Heller |
| Up, Up and Away by Ruth Heller |

The Staff

I have taught upper elementary for the past five years. I enjoy integrating literature into just about everything I teach. I have recently begun conducting teacher workshops demonstrating the use of literature in upper elementary classrooms.

Grades 3 - 6
Language Arts
Fine Art

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David Lopez, Principal
Rio School District

Business Partners

American Commercial Bank
Oxnard Board of Realtors
Are We There Yet?

Young travelers learn firsthand how to journey across this great country!

Grades 3-6
Language Arts
History/Social Science
Mathematics
Art
Technology
Visual Arts
Science

More Information
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VCEDA

"I am extremely honored to have been chosen as an award recipient. Educators need to be reminded that someone is pulling for us in this great big world and IMPACT II clearly sends that message!"

The Idea and Its Value
Students, broken up into teams of five members each, took the journey of a lifetime in a simulated cross country car trip. "Are We There Yet?" does not simply play lip service to the terms "interdisciplinary" and "technology oriented"; this is a truly integrated, technology driven unit.

Each "carpool" was given a different starting point on either the west or east coast and a final destination on the opposite coast. They earned both miles and dollars weekly by completing various assignments. The mileage and money earned is used for their journey to the next site. These assignments included diary entries on each site visited (cultural information, history of the city, climate, population and economic statistics, landmarks, etc.). Pictures were hand drawn or obtained from magazines, brochures, or CD ROMS; even computer graphics and maps were included in these entries. Students were encouraged to personalize their work, offering their opinions and feelings about what the city was actually like, based on the information they have gathered. Travel brochures/travel posters (with appropriate art work), financial management entries and essays comparing and contrasting sites previously visited were also done weekly. These assignments were completed on a rotating basis, with each team member performing every task at least 3 or 4 Times. Additionally, each team had a weekly "information gatherer" who was responsible for obtaining information on the site they planned to visit in two weeks.

Students were required to budget their money as they calculated miles driven, travel expenses (including gas), food and lodging expenses, and money spent on tourist attractions and souvenirs. A spreadsheet was designed for "financial managers" to keep track of their expenses. These costs were decided on by each group based on information they received from Tourism Books and outside research. Gasoline coupons were created that had to be purchased. Travelers Checks were issued as the students earned dollars for their assignments. Mileage vouchers were given out which were traded in as they used them up. Student travelers were using road maps to calculate distances between sites. They were also checking these calculations using a CD-ROM entitled U.S. Atlas.

Frameworks
This project touches on EVERY area of curriculum: Language Arts, History/Social Science, Mathematics, Art, Technology, Visual Arts and Science are all incorporated into this exciting project!

The Students
This fun journey can be taken by entire classes (grades 3-6), either through the United States, across one state in particular, or even internationally.

I constantly measured this project's success by joining these students at each "location" and sharing their enthusiasm for continuing on their journey! It was not uncommon to overhear participating students at lunch and recess say, "Where are we going next? El Paso, Texas? Do we have enough miles and money to get that far? I want to write the Diary Entry this week. El Paso sounds like a great place to visit!"

Facilities and Materials
We had a Green, Purple and Blue Team, and color-coded folders were developed ("Diary", "Compare/Contrast", "Financial Management", "Brochures/Posters" and "Information Gathered") to assist each team in keeping their work organized and neat. Additionally, Macintosh computers with HyperStudio are necessary for the students to prepare their final presentation (Multi-Media).

Outside Resources
Research tools included the following: AAA Travel Guides and state maps, tourist guides obtained from tourism offices or Chambers of Commerce, CD's, school and local libraries.

Information was also obtained from classes all across the country that were participating in this project, through America Online. Each Meadows team posed historical, cultural, and tourist information about the Los Angeles area, as well as sites they had visited with their group on an electronic bulletin board on AOL.

At the conclusion of the journey each team prepared a HyperStudio multimedia presentation of their entire trip which included information on all sites visited. An "Are We There Yet?" night also was planned so the students had an opportunity to share their work and HyperStudio presentations with their parents.

The Staff
This is my first year teaching Computers and serving as GATE Coordinator.
Moon Journals: Observing the Night Sky as a Writer, Poet, Scientist and Artist

The Idea and Its Value

Moon Journals provide an inviting context for students to observe the night sky, the phases of the moon, and the beauty of the natural world by recording their nightly observations through detailed descriptions, poetic interpretations and artistic improvisations using a variety of mediums. Moon Journals are just the beginning of a year-long fascination with the natural world: they are truly a vehicle for learning that continues for not just a month or a year, but for the rest of the students’ lives. Other teachers who have experimented with Moon Journals have reported that their students have responded with motivation, interest, and curiosity.

State Frameworks

Moon Journals support the State Frameworks in a Language Arts, Visual and Performing Arts and Science. They provide a framework for a thematic study that integrates writing in several genres, art using a variety of media, and scientific observation and notation. The project also incorporates dramatic arts as the students share their entries orally and through musical composition and poetry readings. Assessment of student understanding of scientific concepts, their reading and writing (both detailed and poetic), and expertise in using a variety of art techniques is ongoing and observed daily; the final product or completed journal becomes a prized artifact in the student portfolio. It is solid evidence of learning across the curriculum. When students keep Moon Journals, they make daily observations about the phases of the moon for at least a month: preferably from new moon to new moon. They are provided with a simply put-together journal of blank pages for making their sketches and recording their observations. The only printed pages are in the very front and in the book: a preface with simple instructions and ideas, and a page with a brief description and drawing of the phases of the moon. The students are instructed to record the date, the time of their observation, the weather conditions, and their detailed observations of what they see in the night sky. Along with the observation, the sketches are invited to make improvisational sketches of the sky and/or the moon. After the pre-writing and pre-drawing experiences, they often compose a poem about the moon that particular night. Finally, they consider various art mediums (pasted, watercolor, colored pencils, etc.) and create a special artistic entry for that particular night, depending on what they observed. For example, pastels lend themselves to soft clouds or a ring around the moon.

Watercolors are perfect for rainy evenings, or beautiful sunsets. The teacher may choose to keep a Moon Journal her/himself, and begin the day by sharing the previous night’s entry. During the initial month that the journal is kept, supporting lessons introducing various art techniques may be introduced. In addition, legends about the moon, scientific articles or picture books about the moon, and various poems about the moon may be shared. As the students share their entries, poems, drawings and paintings, others become excited to try new techniques or styles of writing. Everyday the class as a whole posts a class-written entry, poem and drawing; this provides modeling for students who need extra sup-

Grades 2-8
English
Language Arts
Science
Art

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Jeff Hamlin, Principal
Oak Park USD

Business Partner
VCEDA
Achille Levy Foundation

Facilities/Materials

Students will need some type of journal in which to record their observations and sketches. I put together simple journals out of construction paper with a laminated cover and binding for support, but any type of journal will do (even a composition book). The sketch may be as simple as pencil drawings, but I made a variety of art media available to my students including watercolors, markers, pastels, tissue paper for collage, tempera paints and construction paper. We also used some rubber stamps and stamp pads, especially in metallic colors.

Outside Resources

I showed videos about the moon that were available through the county media center, and I checked out several miscellaneous books from the library about the moon. Favorites were The Moon and You by Robin Rector Krupp and Papa. Please Get the Moon for Me by Eric Carle. I encouraged the children to look for books about the moon and to bring them in. I also searched through various anthologies of poetry for children and found a plethora of moon poems. A wonderful guest speaker is available through the Ventura County Seasons program, who brings his telescope and helps demonstrate how the moon and earth rotate, creating the phases of the moon.

The Staff

Joni Chancer is a 5th grade teacher at Red Oak Elementary School and a mentor teacher in the Oak Park Unified School District in Agoura, CA. She is also a Co-Director of the South Coast Writing Project and Literature Institute for Teachers. She is the facilitator of the Ventura County Summer Writing Academy for Teachers. She is the author of several articles on portfolio assessment and Book Clubs (independent reading programs), and is currently co-authoring a book on Moon Journals and the art and writing connection.
Kid-To-Kid News: A Student Oriented Video Language Arts Project

Grades 4-6
Language Arts

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The Idea and its Value
Four years ago I implemented a new project in my classroom. My students produce a school news program. After using various technologies in the classroom for many years, including more than ten years of experience with a video camera, I decided to try a television news program with my students. We call our program the Kid-To-Kid (KT) News. Current research supports this idea. There is much research advocating the use of technology as a tool for instruction. Research also relates active student involvement in language arts with improved student achievement.

The students start off by brainstorming ideas for the news based on what is happening at school. They may choose from past, present, or future events. Commercial segments are also planned to advertise school events or fund raising projects. Once segments for the news program are agreed upon the students volunteer to work in cooperative groups on a segment of their choice. These groups function as news teams. Several steps are followed by each news team in creating their segment of the news program.

Their first task is to formulate questions for their segment of the program. After each news team has created their set of questions they gather information from their sources. Once news teams have answered their questions they start writing and revising their news segments. These are written by the teams in the form of a script. Each news team decides how their segment will be presented in the news program. The news program is videotaped in a corner of the classroom which is set up as our studio.

Finished news programs are shared with other classes. Some teachers use our news program as a listening exercise for their students. The students in my class also watch their finished product. Each segment is analyzed for content and presentation. Our goal is to learn what does and doesn't work so that the next program will be better than the last.

The Kid-To-Kid News has been a great success. My entire class became involved in the language arts aspect of this project. Everyone learned from their participation in writing, reading, speaking, and listening. Students and teachers in other classrooms have responded positively to the students efforts. Encouraging comments from administrators at the school district office have been gratifying. Feedback from parents has also been very positive. They have enjoyed seeing the programs at Back-To-School Night and Open House.

Many parents taped the programs that were broadcast over our local cable channel.

State Framework
The Simi Valley Unified School District like most in our state has implemented a dramatic change in language arts. As a result of the many writing projects developed in our state as well as nation wide, our State Framework for Language Arts calls for increased opportunities for students to write, read, speak, and listen. I felt that a news program using video tape technology would help in all four of these areas. A news program requires written scripts. Once the scripts are prepared they are read and spoken. Video taped programs provide a listening experience. The project, I thought, should act as a motivational tool in language arts by giving students a realistic situation.

The Students
This project has been implemented with four different classes at two different schools. Both 5th and 6th graders have been included. Students from all academic levels have participated.

Resources
- Video camera or camcorder, tripod and video tape
- VCR and Television (at least 26 inch)
- Cart for transporting television and VCR (if they are not available in classrooms)
- Computer with graphics capability and output for VCR (optional)

The Staff
Mr. Bullock has been teaching elementary school for 24 years. After 21 of those years at Knolls Elementary School in Simi Valley he transferred this year to Garden Grove Elementary School in the same district. In addition to teaching elementary school Mr. Bullock has taught both continuing education and undergraduate courses in computers in education at California Lutheran University. While at CLU he earned a Masters' Degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on computers in education. He has also served several years as a Mentor Teacher in Simi Valley in computers and instructional technology, presented at the state and national level and authored several articles which have been published in professional publications. An article authored by Mr. Bullock describing the Kid-To-Kid News project was published in March 1993 edition of The Computing Teacher.

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Hold Your Own State Fair

The Idea and Its Value

This State Fair unit is a creative and fun Social Science unit that integrates Language Arts and Visual Arts. At fourth grade, student partners research some aspect of California State history, while in fifth grade, students pair together to research important information about a state of their choice. (Sixth graders hold a world's fair.)

After the research report is completed in a published form, students create posters, maps, and three-dimensional projects to illustrate their reports and display them in a booth. The booth could be like a science fair board or two sides of a 3-4 foot box. Students design a game related to their topic to reach visitors who come to their booth. Students provide tokens or prizes to each customer who plays their game and answers the questions correctly. An example of a related prize would be a few goldfish if the project was related to the fishing industry, or orange wedges if the project dealt with the farming industry or discussed state produce. Students are to help customers get the answers correct by only asking questions which are presented some place on their booth. I usually hold the state fair the day of Open House so parents can share in the fun! I have had very positive responses from students, parents, and administrators. Six weeks before Open House, I teach note taking and research report writing techniques.

The student teams select their topic and begin their search of information during Language Arts and Social Science periods. Most of the research and rough draft writing is done in class. The published version of the report can be typed at home or on class computers. The preparation of the display box is completed at home and kept there until needed. My state fair idea originated when I went to the fifth grade several years ago. When I held my fifth grade state fair, my student population included several learning disabled students and some limited English speaking students, as well as a cluster of GATE students. By pairing more limited students with stronger students, all were able to be successful.

When I moved to fourth grade, I decided to modify my unit to match the State Framework, focusing on topics concerning California history. This unit also enabled me to cover topics in the book in a more creative and student-centered way.

State Frameworks

This project supports the English/Language Arts Framework, and the History/Social Science Framework, which emphasizes an integrated and correlated approach, and engages students actively in the learning process. Students are assisted in using all media and technological resources as learning and communication tools.

Students

In May of 1994, twenty-fourth graders presented their State Fair projects to their parents at Open House, and invited the third graders to participate in the Fair activities. The make-up of the class included five resource students, eight ADD students, and twenty average ability students. Facilities/Materials Needed for this unit are resource books, art supplies, a science fair type of board or 2 sides of a box, and food for game prizes. The classroom perimeter is used to arrange the desks to hold the booth displays. I can supply a student check list, the report format, and the grading score sheet, as needed.

Outside Resources

Public library, contributions from parents, parents and third graders as an audience.

The Staff

I have taught grades 3-8 in four states during the past 19 years of my teaching career. Most recently, I have taught grades four and five.
Open a Treasure Chest with Treasure Island

Grades 5-7

Language Arts

More Information

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Business Partners
First Interstate Bank
Southern California Edison Company

The Idea and its Value

By beginning my school year with a unit on Robert L. Stevenson's Treasure Island, I engaged my students in citing, varied, interdisciplinary activities with an emphasis on building student self-esteem that set the positive tone of my instruction for the year. While I have used Treasure Island as my primary book this year, please do not consider this only as a unit on Treasure Island. These practical activities are adaptable to many units and subjects.

1. I feel that the best way to get students "into" a book is through writing personal responses and that it is the ultimate way to have students know their ideas are important, building self-esteem. I distribute a log of questions that could be answered as personal responses. They make "Response Cards", write each question on an index card, hole punch the upper left hand corner and connect the cards with a ring. When I ask for a personal response, the student with writers block simply pulls out their personal ring of cards and instantly has codes of response questions at their fingertips. Students date the card each time it is used to encourage variety. 2. At the conclusion of a book, we do the "Lightening Round". I assign a section to a group of students. The task is to summarize the most important parts of the chapter. Emotions must be conveyed and all critical action covered. The book is played out in front of the class in a matter of minutes. A variation of this activity is to have each student privately select and prepare a part to pantomime and other students guess the action, or you may have a rapid search to locate the page being pantomimed. Action packed drama, group interaction opportunity for expression and review.

3. An Excitement Graph is an activity I adapted from an idea by Dr. Eleanor Black and can be used with any book. My adaptation allows for integration of math. I first describe the elements of the graph, then it is up to the student to calculate the division of the page. Along the "X" axis is to be a row of squares with a short summary of each chapter. Moving up the "Y" axis is a scale. On a post-it note, the student will write a pertinent illustration and caption from each chapter. Now place the illustration on the chart at the point corresponding to the level of excitement the student felt in the chapter and above the chapter summary (creating X, Y coordinates). Use post-it notes so the pictures can be moved about as the student compares the chapters' excitement. When the comparisons are finished, tape the post-its and connect the lines to form a graph. This activity lends itself especially well to group work, a frequent goal in middle school curriculum. Each member is assigned a specific job in the group which I make sure they are equipped to handle well. Presenting these graphs to the class was a blast as each group member rated each chapter.

4. Skills for Adolescents (Quest) is a required exploratory class in our school. In leading up to that quarter, the students do a character analysis of Jim Hawkins and of Long John Silver. With Jim, the young hero, I give activities such as trustworthy, brave, courageous, and quick thinking. Through this book students are able to see the development of a young, fatherless boy, his decision making opportunities and his acceptance of responsibility. We look for parallels in our own lives, making for lively discussion. On the other hand, Long John Silver is a unique combination of villain and occasional hero. Using Silver, students analyze actions and ulterior motives. We discussed and wrote about alcohol problems of the sailors.

5. "Hot Seat" is an exciting review. The homework assignment is to write ten questions with answers and page numbers from a specified section of the book. In class one student sits on the stool and challenges a classmate to ask a homework question. The student remains on the "Hot Seat" until a wrong answer is given, and the challenger becomes the "Hot Seat" occupant. Bonus points are given for correct answers. Since we subscribe to a literature-based approach to language, this book is a "treasure" for teaching setting, characters, plot, theme and climax. It is ruled with wonderful figures of speech, slang, foreshadowing...I could hardly get through a page without stopping to show exquisite examples of writing.

State Framework

The unit supports many elements of the framework: writing across the curriculum, building a sense of self-worth, samples of authentic assessment for portfolios, high level thinking activities, interdisciplinary activities, drama, group activities, dangers of drug abuse. This unit could be adapted to cover almost all elements of the framework.

Students

Supplemental novel: one quarter GATE, honors, regular ed, easily adaptable for sp. ed.

Facilities/Materials

Only those mentioned in first heading

Outside Resources

1. Throughout the book, the students recorded facts about life on a ship in Jim Hawkins' day. I offered an assignment using the school's Prodigy so students could research olden times more specifically. Through the U.S. Navy Public Affairs Office, an officer from Port Hueneme came to speak to the class. He was our resource on life at sea today, bringing scientific, technical information to us. The product from this part of the unit was a compare and contrast paper on life at sea in the past and in the present. 2. Singing is a major part of the novel, "Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum". I was able to secure the services of our choral director for a workshop on pirate songs. We sang old English sea chants, listened to recordings, played the keyboard, viewed movie clips of pirate songs (Disney has many). Then we wrote responses to the music in our journals.
A Bicycle Race From Albania To Zimbabwe?
(Is it possible...is it safe? Can't we just fly?)

The Idea and Its Value
In this unit student teams explore an area of the world as if they had to pedal every kilometer. The challenge is to be the team that finds the geographical locations corresponding to each clue, draws them on their map, then determines the shortest route that connects all locations. Remember, on a bicycle teams will want to avoid steep vertical gains, long desert crossings and they might want to research the political stability of the country they are bicycling through. This unit is easily adapted to any geographical area. Clues may be drawn from any subject area and designed to appeal to all learning levels. Stage one: Students are put in heterogeneous groups as they familiarize themselves with the physical geography of the region. After small maps are complete, teams are given poster paper to draw a group map. You may wish to assign specific roles which include trip leader, navigator, mathematician, and lead artist. Finished maps include a compass rose, legend, scale of miles and are colored with pencils showing elevations. Stage two: Political borders are superimposed over the geography on the group map using black markers. Discussions extend student learning about how borders throughout history have been dictated by conquerors or physical barriers. If appropriate for your grade level, current events are integrated at this level. (Why should we not be bicycling through the former Yugoslavia just now?) Stage three: Teams are presented with the quest clues which depend on the age and ability of your students as well as your content area. All teams are given the same clues, but they may not all come up with the same answers. The winning team will be the team that is able to find answers to all clues while pedaling the least distance. Clues may ask questions about culture, history, literature or any subject you choose, but the answer must be geographical locations. To encourage critical thinking (and divergent maps) I include several questions with more than one correct answer. Go to a country where there are three official languages, for example. Or visit a place where pita bread is traditional. Answers to the quest clues are placed on the group map. This research phase takes several days and a real cooperative spirit. All classroom reference materials, textbooks and literature may be used. For homework, the team leader divides up those difficult to find destinations and students go home to the library or to the Internet to research their assigned clues. Stage four: Using the scale of distance, students calculate the distance traveled as the winning team will have traveled the least distance. Your chief navigator and mathematician may work on the calculations while the others complete the artistic details on the map including symbols, the compass rose, legend, and final touch-up. Stage five: Groups present their maps. Destinations and overall miles (kilometers) traveled are recorded on the board. Your high-end groups may argue that an opponent’s team actually traveled more vertical miles than they calculated. These discussions are wonderful reinforcement for the existence of geographical features which cannot be ignored. Stage six: As an individual culminating activity, each student may write and illustrate a journal or postcard. This fictitious daily log forces students to closely examine where they've “travelled.” An invitation to mingle fact and fiction opens the assignment to students of all abilities.

State Frameworks
The History/Social Science Framework requires instructional programs that emphasize the integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and that guide students through a range of thinking processes. The Framework's encourage collaboration as well as writing tasks that include presentation. The Geography Supplement stresses the importance of teaching geographical literacy.

Students
I have enjoyed this project with 95 seventh grade world history students. Students’ abilities have ranged from GATE to resource with success for all. Subsequent blank map testing of the region through which students bicycled resulted in an average score of 85% retention of geographical facts.

Facilities/Materials
Social studies texts, library reference materials, poster paper, colored pencils, black markers, overhead map of the region, individual maps of the region, Atlases that include both physiographic features and political boundaries.

Staff
I teach world history at the junior high level and have taught in several different middle school settings. Prior to teaching, I was an editor and writer for travel magazines, newspapers, radio and television and have traveled extensively.
The Idea and Its Value

A Conscientious Archaeologist Is Hard to Dig Up makes 6th grade studies of ancient civilizations, such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece, come alive and take on meaning as students become archaeologists on a dig site. Working as teams, students experience the excitement of finding buried fossils and artifacts in a hands-on archeological dig. Through digging, discovering, cleaning, organizing, and finally assembling a chicken, students employ higher level thinking skills, in much the same way professional archaeologists do in their field work. Parent volunteers have followed a detailed set of directions on how to cook, clean and bury whole chicken bones in a paper plate basket, scattering the fossils hither and yon. Prior to the dig, in the classroom, students are given a brief survey of the science of archeology, are arranged in teams, and determine how the dig will progress. Dividing responsibilities and making a team commitment that each member will be ready on the day of the dig.

The day of the dig finally arrives and student enthusiasm is high. “Look at this!” “What is that?” “How come there are so many of these?” “Where does this go?” “No! No! That can’t go there!” “Do you know what a chicken is supposed to look like?” Even though the students know it is a chicken that has been buried, they assume their roles as archaeologists, and experience the excitement of discovery as well as the difficulty of the tasks faced by professional archaeologists.

After a day in the dirt, students begin the culminating writing assignment. The students evaluate successes, problems, discoveries, and ultimately the archeological skills needed for this science, with lists of skills and the hands-on experience to support them. Students are given a writing prompt about a mysterious journal found by the student. They must use this as an avenue to explain and illustrate the traits an archaeologist needs to be successful. An assessment rubric accompanies the prompt so that students are aware of the expectations prior to grading. The hands-on experience has prepared the students for a successful writing experience, reflecting knowledge acquired, not only of archeology, but of “real work” experience and its accompanying problems and prizes.

State Framework

A Conscientious Archaeologist supports both the History/Social Studies and Language Arts Frameworks which emphasize integration and hands-on experiences, actively engaging students of all learning abilities in role playing, cooperative learning groups, writing from life experiences and across the curriculum. This balanced program is key to success, being based on a meaning centered curriculum.

Materials Needed

Parent-prepared buckets with chicken “fossils” buried in dirt. Students supply whatever “dig” tools they feel appropriate.

The Stuff

I taught kindergarten for three years and then pole vaulted to grade six and have been here for 11 years. I have taught in an integrated core situation for 5 years, in which history and writing have dominated.
Democratic Speaking

The Idea and Its Value

Students are much more equal to understand the meaning of living in a democratic republic when they experience democracy in their own classroom all year long. They not only learn about fair representation and voting but they learn to fairly solve problems that arise in their daily lives. They develop speaking skills as they prepare speeches, or participate in lively and meaningful dialogues and debates. They practice oral and written communication skills as they struggle with applying justice to their world. They learn the power of words. They also learn to decide which issues warrant a majority vote or a consensus. The most important issues in establishing a democratic classroom are elected class officers, monthly elections, regular classroom meetings, problem posing, and shared power among teacher and students. When there is a vote, the teacher's vote counts as one. Little things like sitting at a student desk during meetings and elections, and raising your hand until called on by the class president help to ensure that there is sincere equality in the classroom. Genuine appreciation and trust quickly grow out of this system while discipline problems disappear. The most necessary officers are President, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. They perform the usual duties of leadership and responsibility as in most civic organizations. They also serve as an advisory group to the teacher. Their jobs are REAL, and they use real money and deal with real issues such as collecting money for donating books to the library, a tree to the school, or a gift to a needy family. They also routinely adopt a whale, buy a piece of the rainforest, or select an area of their community to improve. They are able to be an officer only twice until everyone would like to serve but has had an opportunity to be elected. Usually by the last month of school, EVERYBODY has had a chance. Their self esteem grows by leaps and bounds. Even students who are recent arrivals have been elected as class presidents after only three months. Their classmates want them to succeed, therefore they are willing to help them. Their cooperation and collaboration are indeed admirable. Since they are our representatives, they know that they must set an example for the rest of their classmates. They try extra hard to live and play by their agreed-upon rules and to be kind and helpful to others. Sometimes they wonder about the ethics of our real elected politicians.

An interest in the media and current events naturally follow, as do reading and writing activities.

Through regular classroom meetings usually held twice a week for 15-20 minutes or as often and as long as necessary depending on the issues, important and valuable dialogue time is established. Students or teachers may bring up anything that needs to be talked about. Problem posing may be used. Class meetings have dealt with the conditions of the bathrooms, the need for soccer nets, lying, stealing, party planning, drugs, freedom, slavery, discrimination, racism, sexism, field trips, homework, justice, and a multitude of other issues. Only 3-5 issues go on the board while the secretary records them in her meetings notebook. The officers prioritize them, and discussion follows. Eventually it is determined what action will be taken. All students are actively engaged in the entire process. Problem posing is a process used by Paulo Freire as he worked to help the illiterate masses in Brazil become literate. He used their own lives as their curriculum. Students respond very positively to this process as they struggle to make sense of their world and to do something to make a difference. We usually use a code (an emotionally charged newspaper picture, letter, article, song, play, name and describe the problem. 2. Next we examine why there is a problem. 3 Then we make personal connections to the problem. 4. Then we seek the root causes or conditions of the problem. 5. Finally we decide what action will be taken. Of course the most important part is to actually take some form of action such as writing letters to their school principal, student council, newspapers, or legislators, making fliers or posters, creating a class play or poetry concert, staging a speech or debate competition, taking up a collection of money, food, clothing or any needed items. The possibilities are endless. Problem posing is different than problem-solving in that time and energy are spent examining root causes and relevance to self and society. Action is only taken after honest, sincere, and sometimes heated dialogue. Perhaps we would all get along better if we practiced this more often. It is one thing to study about democracy from a textbook, but it is quite another to actually LIVE it in a classroom setting. The experience is always a valuable one for all participants.

State Frameworks

The History/Social Science Framework encourages developing civic values in all students so that they will know and appreciate their rights and responsibilities and participate fully in the election process. They will use speaking/reading/writing skills in doing something meaningful as per the English/Language Arts Framework

Facillities and Materials

Social Studies texts, library books, pamphlets, election materials, literature, pictures, posters, computers, video, newspapers, magazines.

Outside Resources

Field trips to the polling booths, and county government elections offices, gift speakers, parent volunteers.
My, What Lovely Puce and Gamboge Plaid Socks You’re Wearing!!!

Grades 6-8
Art
Literature

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The Idea and Its Value

This is a six-week unit that creatively combines art and language arts. The unit begins with the introduction of a series of color words, such as gamboge, puce, and indigo. Depending on the interest and ability of the students, the teacher chooses from 62 color words (see p.2) that can be used as weekly spelling and vocabulary words. Once these words have been mastered and the student begins to realize that the world is made up of more than nine basic colors (black, blue, green, purple, brown, red, yellow, white and orange), an "Inside-Outside" chart is given to the student to complete. The student is given the opportunity to leave the four walls of the classroom and note the various colorful objects that are seen, perhaps the eager colored walls of the principal’s office, the soft colored trash barrels, the periwinkle sky, and their mother’s sienna eyes. Slowly, the students train their eyes to discriminate between “just red” and carmine. Next the teacher reads HAILSTONES AND HALIBUT BONES (a collection of color poems) to introduce the poem format that will be used when the students create their own color poetry. Overhead transparencies of selected pages from the book can be used with other illustrations during discussions with the students.

Meantime, through discussion and teacher input, the students are learning in their art class how colors can have different moods and meanings. For instance, we often associate green with fresh, envy, or spring. While white is thought of as pure or clean. In this unit the students discuss the various meanings of color and use this information to evaluate how colors are used in advertising to get people to associate a certain idea or meaning with a product or company. The students select ads in which color is used for obvious reasons, glue the ad on a piece of construction paper, write a short paragraph on the paper describing how the color was used, and then decorate the remainder of the paper in the style of the ad. When students become familiar with the vocabulary, tone and moods of color, they are now ready to create their own color poem book called, THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF COLOR. (see page 3 for directions) Upon completion, these delightfully illustrated color poem books are then shared with primary grades through authors “readings.” Every student is given the opportunity to read and share their book with small groups. Each poem is unique and creatively describes the student’s own world. In combining art and language arts, the students are given the opportunity to “open their eyes” and see the world with precise color, detail and knowledge of the world around them.

State Frameworks

In language arts, this project supports the writing process and can be adapted to the framework in grades 4 through 8 and beyond. In art this project supports the state framework for color and design.

Students

In 1994, 32 seventh grade (resource, gate and regular ed.) students participated in this cross-curriculum project. It is currently in progress in 1995 with 30 seventh graders.

Facilities and Materials

In language arts, a thesaurus may be used to help generate the color words. Color poem book HAILSTONES AND HALIBUT BONES. In art, a selection of numerous magazines, 12 x 18 white construction paper colored pens, pencils, crayons, pastels etc.

Staff

Both Jo Ann Tennyson and Tom Sheaffer are middle school teachers. Joanne has taught fourth grade for eight years and is currently in her ninth year at the middle school level. Tom has taught high school for one year and is currently in his sixth year at the Middle School level.

Color Vocabulary

green: emerald turquoise violet

blue: vermillion sapphire

red: apricot azure

yellow: saffron gamboge

white: oliveumber

black: sienna scarlet

brown: plum charcoal

orange: cinnamon cerise
The Idea and Its Value

The Wall of Shame is a one week social studies unit on tolerance. It incorporates literature, current events, and personal experiences to help students recognize and understand methods and types of prejudice.

The study begins with identifying and discussing the four methods of prejudice: stereotyping, sweeping generalizations, labeling, scapegoating and the four types of prejudice: discrimination, racism, nationalism, sexism. Vocabulary games and video viewing for examples of prejudice help students to master these terms.

Then, in small groups (or individually) students create pages of shame for a prejudice notebook. Each student makes one page for each method and each type of prejudice. Pages are creatively designed and filled with examples. Their examples come from the news, campus events, literature, popular movies, television and personal experience. In addition to the pages of shame, students also list persons that are deserving of an award of tolerance. Each student needs to list 2 recipients, and describe their contribution to a more tolerant society. These come from the same sources as the prejudice examples.

At the end of the unit student pages are used to make a large bulletin board or wall display. This is the Wall of Shame, it is a powerful vehicle that forces students to look at prejudice. This colorful display of prejudicially loaded remarks diminishes the power of these words.

At the close of the unit, a tolerance awards ceremony is held. Here students choose their favorite recipient to honor with colorful awards they create. Food and music make the ceremony more fun. This closes the unit in a fun and positive way. The unit creates a visual message and its impact will sharpen citizenship. It captures the interest of all students and encourages self inspection and responsibility in the area of prejudice.

State Frameworks

The State Framework asks teachers to provide real life applications. The History/Social Science Framework section 13 specifies: "Through the study of controversial issues both in history and in current affairs students should learn that judgments should be based on reasonable evidence and not on bias or emotion." This project offers a way to do both.

Facilities and Materials

Lesson plans are available with a daily schedule. Materials: drawing paper, markers, glue, newspapers, magazines, rulers, and scissors. Equipment: TV, VCR, some movies that provide examples of prejudice like: The Outsiders, S. E. Hinton; Taking a Stand, ABC Afterschool Special; Monsters are Due on Maple Street; Twilight Zone episode; Shade of a Single Protein, Oprah special.

The Student

The students were 7th graders in heterogeneous groups. I have used this unit with over 100 students, the activity appeals to all learners since it is open ended and allows for many extensions of learning.

Outside Resources

None are required. Students enjoy pointing out to their friends and family the methods and types of prejudice seen on TV, and in current events.

The Staff

Jackie Law has been teaching English and social studies at the junior high level for twelve years. Also, she is very active with SAP (student assistance programs) and working with students of all academic levels.

Grades 6-8

Social Studies
Language
Literature

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Readers are Winners!

Grades 6-8
Language Arts

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The Unit and Its Value
Art projects, mini-lessons involving authors, stories and literary elements, journal writing, Readers' Workshop, visits from enthusiastic book-lovers combine in an ongoing unit to convince young people of the value and pleasure of incorporating reading into their lives. Readers' Workshop is an integral part of this unit and takes place every Friday of the year. The workshop begins with a mini-lesson. A discussion of dialect and a reading of James Whitchurch Riley's "The Bear Story", a short film about adventure writer Gary Paulsen, a presentation of the "classic" mystery writers and a class discussion of current popular writers whose books have become films (e.g. John Grisham - The Firm) are some examples of weekly mini-lessons. Always present on Fridays are books, books, and more books. A grouping of books particular to that week's mini-lesson are on display and available for checkout. This mini-lesson takes up no more than 20 minutes. The balance of the class is spent reading! The overhead lights are turned off, reading lamps (purchased over years of garage sales) turned on — and everyone reads, even the teacher. Visits by community members, staff or faculty members who discuss their love of books (and bring in their favorites) are popular lessons. Every five to six weeks a student is expected to complete a novel. The culminating event for each completion is used to emphasize one or more literary elements. For instance, after a study of plot the students will complete a story board (comic strip) project that will demonstrate their knowledge of the elements of the plot and of the individual book. Some other projects used are an illustrated timeline used after reading a biography, a scrapbook filled with items that symbolize events or themes, and an illustrated crossword puzzle to cap off a study of mysteries. Students are grouped in clusters of four or five to work on their projects and share "book talk". Each is asked to rate his or her books and share that information with the group. Art projects are displayed in the class and around the school.

State Framework
English/Language Arts Framework integrates reading, writing, listening and speaking with art. The framework emphasizes the need for reading, for enjoyment.

Students
Each year since 1988, over 300 seventh and eighth graders, including gifted and talented, ESL and special needs students have taken part in Book Share/Readers' Workshop.

Facilities/Materials
Paperback novels, library books, white drawing paper, markers, colored pencils.

Outside Resources
Book lovers from the community willing to speak to and be questioned by middle schoolers are a terrific boon!

The Staff
Lucy is a middle school language arts teacher with fifteen years experience at all grade and ability levels. She has been involved in interdisciplinary teams and has conducted interservices at school site, county, and state levels. She is currently learning about computer technology, especially the Internet, for incorporation into the curriculum.
March Madness

The Idea and Its Value

March Madness is a cross-curricular middle school unit that capitalizes on students' love of the game of basketball, and serves as a hook to get students to start thinking about their future college plans. Using the NCAA College Basketball Tournament as a motivating factor, students all compete to see if their school will make it to the "Final Four". The unit begins as soon as the Tournament pairings are announced on TV. Each student is randomly assigned one of the 64 schools who have qualified for the tournament. While some know which schools are the good teams, many want to know what the chances are of getting their favorite school, or being paired with a small, unknown university or college.

(We know the obvious place to introduce probability and random drawings, lotteries, etc.) After students and colleges have been matched, we proceed to fill in the tournament pairings on a bulletin board sized, single-elimination matrix. The mathematics that follows is a natural outgrowth of the problem setting, and is a constructed word problem designed to match a specific skill. (How many games are played? How many games must my team win? How are teams seeded and ranked to ensure the favorites of the best chances?) March Madness has ties to all of the disciplines and is easily adaptable to being taught by several members of a team, or by one teacher in their own class. Capitalizing on research skills they are learning in social studies, students go to the library and use atlases, encyclopedias, almanacs and college catalogs to get information regarding their school’s location, city, state, population, longitude, latitude, climate, rainfall, elevation, etc.

Students are provided a list of the minimum information necessary to get started with the project, but the tasks are open-ended enough to allow students to take off in several directions if they are so inspired. The first task in the class is to locate their school on a large map of the United States. Degrees, minutes, and seconds are used as well as non-standard units of measure are investigated and practiced at this time. In addition, practice with time zone problems are valuable here. Each student places a pennant on the map to show where their school is then students are asked to interpret the data from the map and make conclusions regarding the distribution of the schools. Using the statistical information from the almanacs, students compile a profile for their school and the city in which it is located. Using information from more than one year, we look at population growth (or decline), student-teacher ratios, and the city’s population over time. To tie in science, we look at the pressure inside a basketball, and what happens when it is inflated to different pressures. Also, what are the effects of temperature on the pressure of the basketball. Students are asked to consider the effects of differences in elevation between games played at a sea-level school versus a game played at a high elevation such as Denver. Climates and weather patterns can be compared between the different cities as well. Students also calculate the surface area and volume of different sized balls.

The culminating assessment is a portfolio project which includes all of the work done as well as a research paper on the student’s assigned school. Throughout the unit, students deal with vast amounts of data and information. Students move beyond basic knowledge and comprehension questions and are expected to analyze and apply the information to solve questions and problems that may arise. Many students reflect on their current academic plans and evaluate where they want to be in their near future. As the research suggests, and as more and more requirements are necessary for college admission, many students need to be taking the right classes for college as soon as 8th, or even 7th grade. By having students research their university and its admission requirements, students learn that college is not that far away for many of them. They are encouraged to call, write, fax and/or e-mail their school to receive information regarding their school. Students are eager to report the results from the games as they are played (students are motivated to look at current events in the newspaper). As the tournament progresses, most classes will get to watch portions of some games if they are played during class time. All students are motivated to succeed.

State Frameworks

We are in the unique position where all of our major reform documents, State Frameworks and Program Quality Criteria ask teachers to do the same things, namely to provide real life problem solving experiences that span the disciplines. What better way than a cross-curricular project that stimulates students to learn about themselves and their subject areas while learning skills and concepts in context.

Students

In 1994-95, I used March Madness with 120 7th graders in four classes of mixed ability from GATE to Resource students.

Facilities/materials

All work can be done in the regular classroom with a USA wall map. A trip to your school library is beneficial for those students who may not be able to go on their own time. Students will need access to almanacs from 2 different years. College planning resources such as Lovejoy’s are also beneficial.

Outside Resources

My librarian has worked extensively with my students to help them locate the information needed for their projects. A visit from a high school counselor or a college admissions officer will help students to investigate their future possibilities.

Staff

Craig Nicks has taught math at Los Altos for 9 years. He serves as SBCP Resource Teacher, Department Chair and District Mathematics Mentor for the Pleasant Valley School District. He is a staff consultant for the UCLA Mathematics Project. He is the coordinator for the annual Math and Science Field Day at Magic Mountain.

Grades 6-9

Mathematics
Social Studies
Geography
Language Arts
Science
Career Planning

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"Scientia Porestas Est" or Knowledge Is Power!

The Idea and Its Value

"Scientia Porestas Est" is an in-depth active learning, co-operative group social studies project that complements the California Framework. The specific instructional purpose and value of this project is to enhance the understanding of leadership in ancient Roman times and in today's world. As the students gain knowledge, they keep a research folder of important items such as people, towns, customs, life styles, and innovations. From this research, the students then have to analyze and synthesize all of the information to be used in reports, creative diagrams, maps, charts or models to be turned in for payment in DENARI, an ancient Roman coin, a day's wage for a soldier. All students are placed in co-operative groups of three to four. One group is randomly selected as the ruling "PATRICIANS" and are directed to set up their "empire" with rules for payments and taxes. The rest of the students become the lowly commoners or "PLEBEIANS" who are given the challenge of overthrowing the PATRICIANS by earning, buying and building an army of "LEGIONARY" soldiers and if successful, to set up their own Empire of governing rules. Every group is cautioned not to tell any group how wealthy they are. An example of how a challenge works is any group would total their wealth in denomin, submit this to the teacher, who notifies the PATRICIANS that they have been challenged and to total their "wealth". The teacher verifies the count and then announces the results. If the challengers succeed, they take over the class leadership and define their rules. If they fail, they continue as lowly PLEBEIANS, to live to challenge another day! The excitement and anticipation is always overwhelming! There is evidence of higher level thinking skills being put to use as each group must barter and negotiate as they build a bank account. As the student's share, becomes apparent that when a member of the group successfully fulfills his or her duties, a sense of success, accomplishment and positive attitudes permeates the "lowly group of PLEBEIANS. A definite change can be seen! Smiles, confidence and encouragement is contagious! All of which are necessary in the business world of today. If we can educate students to communicate, negotiate and serve effectively then perhaps "our" world will improve and we can help to rekindle strong values along with the empowerment of education! "CRESAT SCIENTIA" or may knowledge increase.

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.

Students

This project was accomplished by about 120 seventh grade students in 1992-1993, 1993-1994 and currently. Achievement levels varied from GATE to mainstreamed resource abilities. 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: five to six teams of white and gold paper, other colors for legionaries, scissors, glue, many books about Ancient Rome and lots of patience.

Outside Resources

Library, guest speakers, movies (for scholarly purposes) such as Spartacus and Ben Hur.

Staff

I have been a high school teacher for fourteen years. I am currently involved in an interdisciplinary team with English, science and resource specialists. Our team has conducted inservices with our Partnership members.
Apres Matisse

The Idea and Its Value

Apres Matisse provides 7th grade students in a quarter exploratory art class an opportunity to enjoy, understand, and appreciate on the foundation of 20th century abstract art, Henri Matisse. (1869-1954) while applying principles of color and design learned in previous lessons. The week long unit begins when students enter the classroom and see a variety of Matisse prints taped to the board with the question, "What do these have in common?" written above them. Students then must look carefully and think critically about what they are seeing. Their initial reaction to Matisse is usually one of explanation and curiosity. "Weird, didn't he know how to paint real people?" The teacher explains that these are valid remarks, and that in his day, Matisse and those who painted in his style were called Fauves, or "wild beasts" because of their dramatic break with the art of the period, even the impressionists, who laid the groundwork for them. Questioning strategies lead students in two directions, "What do you see here?" One conclusion is that the paintings, especially the female figures, are seldom "realistic," but rather are just the opposite: brilliant, multicolored faces, figures flattened rather than "rounded," and out of "realistic" proportion. This leads to the second part of the discussion which revolves around the question of "Why?" Students conclude that this artist cared little about "realism" as most 7th graders define it, but was more interested in color, shape and pattern. After they are told that Henri Matisse is considered one of the fathers of abstract art for that very reason, abstract art prints are introduced to the students and discussed in a similar fashion. Students are now free to abandon their fear of being unable to produce photographically real portraits and the hands-on part of the lesson begins. Budding Matisse artists search through magazines to find large single figures of any kind, from athletic to fashion, and use these as the basis for their "Fauve" works. Because we are only interested in color and shape, students are free to trace the form they will use onto large watercolor paper. They then trace over their pencil lines with white glue. When the glue dries it becomes transparent, and prevents the watercolors we use from unwanted blending and also adds additional shapes to paint. Excited students then begin to paint in the "Fauve" manner, dividing faces into areas of color, adding wallpaper-like pattern to clothing, and turning surrounding spaces into interesting shapes, patterns, and color. Art lessons in this class are presented as problems to solve, with no single "right answer." Students are free to explore and express themselves creatively, and the results reflect one major theme for this class: Unity With Diversity. We critique all works collectively at the end of the project, commenting on what works well, and what unique each of us is in the way we solved this problem. Students write in their art journals about the experience. One comment was "Once I knew it didn't have to look 'real,' I could play with color and shape, which is what I like to do." A representative sample of work is on display at Open House and students share their portfolios with parents at the end of the course.

State Frameworks

Visual and Performing Arts Framework: To develop and expand visual arts knowledge and skill to express ideas imaginatively. (Goal I) To acquire knowledge of historical and cultural developments which occur as a result of varying needs and aesthetic points of view. (Goal III)

Students

All 160 Seventh Grade students at all levels of academic achievement including GATE participated in this project. This could be adapted to other grade levels, using less or more time as needed.

Facilities/Materials

Materials needed are visual resources, such as prints, slides, and videos about Matisse and the Fauves, watercolor paints, white glue, watercolor or construction paper, and magazines. Hair salons often will donate large magazines to use.

Outside Resources

Students are encouraged to visit various art museums in Los Angeles to look at works by Matisse and the "Fauves." In addition, library books may be checked out from school, district, or public libraries.

Grades 7-8

Fine Arts

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What's Up at the Dump?

Grades 7-9
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The Idea and its Value
Students learn about the trash crisis through collecting numerical data and information. Presented with the imminent closure of the local landfill, a controversial selection of a new site and a mandate from the State of California to reduce our school garbage by 25%, students must consider options and solutions to the problem. Students propose solutions using these facts at a presentation to the “City Council”. Students are presented with a “garbage dump dilemma” that compels them to become involved in the solutions. The task is to figure out how much trash is generated at school, how much is actually recycled and what steps would be necessary to reduce the volume of trash sent from our school to the landfill. Students write-up their proposals using the format of the Problem Solution Essay used by the California State English Framework. Math concepts of per cent, ratio and proportion, volume and statistics are imbedded in the complex story and solutions. This unit engages students in environmental responsibility while applying math skills to a real world problem. The numbers don’t answer the questions posed, but are tools used to develop a real-world plan. Instead of just reading a word problem and figuring out what operations to apply to the numbers, this project engages the students thinking by having them identify the mathematical data needed to support their position relative to solving this dilemma. The problem solving process is divergent. All students start with the same set of information, but each group is likely to come up with its own solution. Looking for a way to connect students to the incredible volume of litter we were dealing with on campus, we stumbled on to a more complex and real world dilemma. We saw “What’s Up With The Dump” as a way to involve students. Just lecturing students on this topic didn’t have as much value as involving them in an investigation into the problem. Students are guided through the process using a series of assignments and assessment tasks including: A video presentation of information gathered from a student committee’s field trip to the Baird Land Fill. A cost-estimator form detailing the cost to the school or district for each alternative solution proposed. A Landfill Survey to help calculate the volume of the unfilled section of the landfill and predict the period of time left to use it. A “Weighing Options” form for comparing the strengths and weaknesses of various plans. A series of reflective questions asking what student behaviors would be necessary to implement their plan. An oral presentation of the students’ solutions to a simulated “City Council”.

The State Framework
As suggested by the California State Mathematics Framework the subject matter of this week-long investigation is important and relevant for all students in their everyday lives. The activities clearly show the power and purpose of the mathematical data and ideas around which it is organized. The mathematics involved are essential for a clear understanding of the solution to the problem. Concepts from a variety of strands of mathematics (number, measurement and statistics) are represented throughout the unit.

The Students
Four hundred 8th grade students of a variety of ability levels participated in this project. The use of cooperative groups was essential to the successful gathering of data and the City Council presentations.

Facilities and Materials
Video equipment, several trash cans full of trash, rubber gloves, graph paper, calculators, rulers, compass, and protractor. Workbooks and forms specific to this unit.

Outside Resources
A field trip to your local landfill and/or recycling center is valuable. A classroom guest speaker from an environmental group or the County Waste Management District may help your students collect important community information. Our inspiration for this unit came from a unit called “The Garbage Dump Dilemma” published by Human Relations Media, Pleasantville, New York.

Staff
Deirdre Fisher and Trudy Reid are both Math instructors at Matilija Junior High. Deirdre is a Tri-County Math Project Fellow, and Trudy is the Math Mentor for Ojai Unified School District.
Happy Birth Day, America!

A Colonial Faire Celebration

The Idea and Its Value

The study of our nation's early beginnings and life styles, famous orators and "traitors" to the English government, and the birth of the nation culminates with a colonial fire in which students assume roles of early Americans. They become "experts" in a craft, in the area of music, or in patriotic speech making. Other grades attend and learn about early America from the role playing of their peers as well as from participating in the crafts and games.

The unit begins with an historical backdrop of the troubles the colonies were having with English rule. History and Language teachers dedicate at least three weeks to the study of maps, newspaper and speech replicas, proclamations, personal diary accounts and historical references to the events of the early 1770's. The literature book April Morning, about the massacre at the Lexington Commons, is studied in depth. The poem "Paul Revere's Ride" is read, studied and memorized. Approximately three weeks before the fire date, students are "apprenticed" to teachers, other staff members, and parent volunteers. All learn at least two crafts to be demonstrated and shown at the Colonial Faire. (Held in the school auditorium) Some students "become" historical figures and memorize speeches to be delivered in the town square. Others dress for the fancy "Liberty Tea" offered as refreshments at the fire. Some are the "game masters" who conduct apple dunking, top spinning, corn husk doll making, candle dipping and other such past times. Students also enter cooking and baking contests as well as quilt making contests. Products are judged by "guests" from the high school history staff and ribbons are awarded.

State Frameworks

This unit fits into the language and history state frameworks as well as addressing the fine arts that is lacking in the current school day. The study of America, with all its birthing pain, comes alive for students who not only study the materials and textbooks, but put themselves in the role of a person who must reject his heritage and tradition in favor of a better, freer future. Students see the words of history come alive, first in the character of the book they read, later in the role of Paul Revere and in the frustration of Thomas Jefferson as they watch him write and rewrite the declaration of Independence in the movie "1776". Writing across the curriculum, hands on activities and role playing are all methods supported in the framework as well as current middle school literature.

Students

Approximately 145 eighth grade students and 20 seventh grade honors students participated in the pilot of "Happy Birth Day, America!" during the 1994-95 school year.

Materials/Facilities/Resources

The needed materials for colonial crafts involved candle making supplies, embroidery, sashes for rag braiding and quilting, pens and papers for calligraphy, a ledger and quill as well as training equipment for the recruitment of colonial "militia men" as well as cardboard stocks for "offenders and sinners", and several other displays. Most materials were donated from members of the community or purchased with a small lab fee collected from students. School Site Council donated some materials as well as support. Teachers, librarian, community members and parents donated time and resources. Students evaluating the unit felt it was the first time they had truly understood the birth of America. Said many, "History was alive!"

The Staff

Kathy is a second year Impact II recipient. She has been a language arts teacher at Chaparral Middle School for eleven years, and has worked closely with members of other departments to integrate curriculum as much as possible.

Grade 8

English
Literature

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Environmental Impact of Priorities
Can I Make a Difference?

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The Idea and Its Value
The importance of our natural resources and their diminishing affects us all. E.I.P. (Environmental Impact of Priorities) is an interdisciplinary unit studying how Native Americans viewed the land, how foreign civilizations affected their way of living, how we view the land today, and how our views differ from those of the Native Americans. Not only do students do a historical study of Native Americans, but they learn to recognize different priorities cultures impose. Students list their priorities and decide if they are responsible with regard to environmental issues. The goal is that students will realize that they can impact their environment. As a result of this interdisciplinary unit, many students choose to join local conservation projects, realizing their responsibility in taking action to protect our environment. The students are guided through a series of readings and documentaries about Native Americans, they take notes, keep a journal, participate in a dramatic reading, make comparison charts, write poetry, make a video and develop a resource guide of local conservation projects and organizations.

State Frameworks
The History/Social Science Framework promotes student understanding of living in a different era. The English/Language Arts Framework integrates reading, writing, listening and speaking with visual and performing arts. Students are learning how to cooperate in groups to accomplish a goal, while building self-esteem. They learn that one person (the student) can make a difference.

The Students
Heterogeneous groups of eighth grade students participated in this unit throughout 1994 and 1995. This unit could be adapted to grade levels 4-10.

The Staff
Our interdisciplinary team consists of three master teachers who have a combined teaching experience of 49 years. They have taught grades ranging from kindergarten through the university level. They have held positions from "Intergroup Relations" resource specialist, Miller-Umuh reading specialist to school administrator. They continually seek new ways to make education meaningful to their students and strive to make what is taught relevant to their lives. Their unit was presented at the 1994-1995 Ventura County Middle Schools Conference as a model for integrated team teaching.

Facilities and Materials
This unit includes five books on Native Americans supplied by the teachers. A copy of the unit is available upon request along with a list of supplement materials that can be used.
Linking Art, Mathematics, and Technology through Tessellations

The Unit and Its Value

In this mathematics unit, students learned about transformational geometry including reflections, rotations, and translations by creating Escher-like tessellations which were displayed in the school's student art gallery, submitted in a national tessellation contest, and scanned into a computer hyperstudio slide show. A tessellation is an arrangement of closed congruent shapes that cover a plane without gaps or overlaps. The Dutch artist M. C. Escher (1898-1972) used transformational geometry on grids of triangles, hexagons and parallelograms to create many perplexing tessellations.

Teachers have been using tessellations to motivate students and to integrate art and mathematical concepts. However, one of the features of this unit is that innovative use of the connections made by these students made this a particularly interesting project. This unit has been used and modified over a period of six years and its success was validated by the quality of the original work the students produced. Further, students produced creative computer techniques and mathematical concepts, and they conveyed a sense of pride when their work was displayed. After a period of six weeks each student completed this unit successfully.

The unit was introduced by displaying a variety of M. C. Escher's work throughout the classroom. His work generated much discussion and a few students shared books on his art. Students were then given instructions for a tessellation project. In Part 1, students were required to complete three worksheets from the Patty Paper Geometry book, in which they used party (tracing) paper and practiced making three different kinds of tessellations. In Part 2 of the project, students were given the guidelines for creating their own Escher-like tessellations, which included instructions for creating the generating polygon and how to create different versions of their tessellations.

After students completed Part 1 of their project, a day was spent in the computer lab where students created Escher-like tessellations using the software, Geometer's Sketchpad. They followed instructions that helped them create rectangle transition tessellations. Students were challenged to use other polygons and other transformations to create tessellations.

On subsequent days, students completed other investigations on transformational geometry using Geometer's Sketchpad in order to enhance their understanding of the mathematical concepts fundamental to their tessellations. Upon completion of their tessellations, the lead pencil versions were entered into a national tessellation contest. Students were taught how to use a scanner and their color tessellations were scanned into the computer and became part of a hyperStudio stack which was later presented to the class. The color versions of their tessellations were displayed in the student art gallery.

State Mathematics Framework

Transformational geometry topics for grades five through twelve are part of the NCTM Standards outlined in the Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools. On tessellations in particular, the document states that "symmetries, tessellations, fractal geometry, and packing problems are not only important but also fascinating for high school students." Later in the document it states that the study of tessellations is one of the non-traditional subjects that "deserve a prominent place in the curriculum along with more traditional concepts." The Framework advocates the use of computers and sophisticated special-purpose software like Geometer's Sketchpad.

Students

For the school year 1993-94, forty of my ninth and tenth grade geometry honors students completed the unit. I have also used an earlier version of the unit with Math B and college prep geometry students. This year my Interactive Mathematics Program 2 students will be creating Escher-like tessellations as part of their "Do Bees Build It Best?" unit. A unit on tessellations can be adapted to other age groups. For younger students, a teacher could limit the tessellations to translations and the teacher could create the hyperStudio stack. Students in grades 3-12 could use either Manual computer software which would allow them to explore transformational geometry while creating Escher-like tessellations.

Facilities/materials

Students completed the unit in the classroom, at home, in the computer lab and their work was displayed in the student art gallery. Materials needed: Patty Paper Geometry worksheets, Patty paper, unfilled paper, pencils, color pencils, tessellation project information sheet, tessellation contest information, computer software and hardware, and samples of M. C. Escher's work.

The Staff

I have 22 years teaching experience of mathematics at the high school level, including seven years at Oxnard High School, my current position.