The purpose of IMPACT II is to spread excellent teaching ideas throughout Ventura County.

IMPACT II does this by partnering with local businesses and organizations to provide $500 individual and $750 team grants to educators for unique, original and innovative curriculum that has been classroom tested.

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 through both grants and an annual awards dinner where we celebrate the true heroes and heroines in our communities.

Over the years Ventura County IMPACT II has matured into the program that we envisioned at its inception in 1993. Business leaders, teachers, and administrators are becoming aware of the program and are participating in unprecedented numbers.

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

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

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A Unit on Our Students’ Journey for Justice and Understanding in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Ginger Brandenburg, Donna Fulgham – Moorpark High School
Business Partner: Affinity Bank
For grade levels 6 – 12
Curriculum Areas: Language Arts

The Idea and Its Value:

In this *To Kill a Mockingbird* unit, students incorporate habits of mind--behaviors that require a mental discipline--that help them practice more intelligent thinking and action. Students search for justice, empathy, and understanding as they “climb into [another’s] skin” and walk “in their shoes” through a unit involving an Internet Thinkquest, interviews, role plays, prejudice metaphors, poetry, the novel, and a trial to reveal “then” and “now” perspectives that guide their thinking as they apply lessons learned to future dilemmas in their journey for justice. As students examine prejudice, the power of words, racial and gender equity, discrimination, and justice, they discover the power of developing stronger critical thinking skills that empower them to become more self-directed learners in charge of their academic success.

Imagine walking into an English classroom and spotting a large picture of a brain, then being asked to respond to the question, “What is a Habit of Mind?” A lively discussion follows the journal quickwrite; in essence, the basic answer deals with developing intelligent behaviors. We reveal the steps to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in stages with specific lessons on how to become more self-directed learners at school and in the workplace. Our lessons address: managing impulsivity, persisting, listening with understanding and empathy, thinking flexibly, thinking about thinking, striving for accuracy, questioning and posing problems, applying prior knowledge, being creative, responding with wonder and awe, using humor, and communicating with clarity and precision, which are woven into the novel unit. For example, students practice listening with understanding and empathy when they participate in an early part of their journey for justice in a Black and White seminar, using articles from the 1930’s in the South. These interviews have radically different perspectives so students must actively work on understanding and empathy as well as managing impulsivity, skills that have been detailed in earlier lessons. Half of the students read the Black interview and the other half read the White interview. When students arrive in class the next day, they form two groups—those who read the Black interview are placed on the floor in the center of the classroom in a tightly packed circle while those who read the White interview loosely surround them, spreading out comfortably as they engage in discussion. As the students who read the Black article begin to comment on the article, candy is passed out to the White article readers, along with encouragement on relaxing and spreading out while Black
readers must compress themselves into a tight group as they discuss their findings. We cater to the White article readers and do not give candy to the others (until after the seminar experience). Black article readers indignantly comment on the lack of fairness in terms of space, treatment, and sugar, which helps them connect with how different things were when fellow citizens had to ride in the back of the bus in every sense of the term. For the seminar, practicing habits of mind are crucial to reaching higher levels of understanding and learning. Additionally, key vocabulary is explored in depth as students create prejudice metaphors where they work on the habit of mind: precision of language and thought. Throughout novel reading and discussion, students practice cognitive development through questioning and problem solving and use their habits of mind to compile key pieces of Atticus Finch’s advice where they reflect and comment on his philosophy and great courage on his quest for justice throughout the novel. They learn to “walk in the shoes” of all the characters through Atticus’s advice and practice listening with empathy and understanding as their peers present their golden lines from the novel, as well as support their quotes with specific details from the novel along with commentary, pictures, graphics, and mementos illustrating the occasion/events from the novel.

All of the habits of mind converge in the trial at the end of the unit where students achieve remarkable success by applying these Jedi Knight thinking skills to this dynamic activity. For example, flexible thinking, creativity and wonderment, drawing on past knowledge, and questioning and problem solving habits of mind all are applied in the trial as well as in The Maycomb Tribune newspaper that documents students’ role-playing of judges, lawyers, witnesses, and the press. This culminating trial enables students to practice critical thinking and evidence of deep understanding of the novel. After creating high level witness questions and answers, they dress in clothing appropriate for the times and develop accents to accompany their testimony. They are only limited by their imagination in the use of a mystery witness that can travel through time and space barriers to testify at the trial. This year students continued research in their biology class to learn about genetic information that could help them prove their case and called in an expert C.S.I. individual to testify. These intense learning activities help students focus on career goals as they discover the growth of their self-directed learning. Several students signed up for our school-sponsored Mock Trial team this year to continue feeding their passions. This year, one of our judges was a young woman who began the trial blushing scarlet when she had to rule on an objection; yet she developed her confidence and responded with in-depth novel understanding that was supported by her trial performance, judge’s summary, and reflective personal evaluation indicating her growing ability to harness habits of mind for her S.U.C.C.E.S.S. as well as the success of her peers. Her reflection about how “one person’s lies can be another person’s death” focused on how justice can be illusive at times and how we must all strive to use our habits of mind to ensure justice and understanding as we strive to walk in another’s shoes. Through persuasiveness and the
habits of mind our students performed very well in their challenging trial roles as lawyers, witnesses, members of the jury, the press, and the judge.

**State Standards**

This unit supports many elements of the framework: Use of precise language and sensory details in writing, high level thinking activities, interdisciplinary and group activities, integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing that guide students through a range of thinking processes. General, CP, GATE, and AP students benefit from these activities with success for all. As core literature for our freshmen, over a hundred students have participated with enthusiasm.

**Materials and Resources**

*To Kill a Mockingbird* novels, Internet, overhead projector, gavel, and robe.
A Day in the Life of a …
Kathleen Broder, Las Colinas Middle School
Business Partner: Rockwell Scientific
For grade level 8
Curriculum Areas: Language Arts, Career Education

The Idea and Its Value:

“A Day in the Life of a …” is a project where each student displays research and artwork about a career he/she would like to pursue in order to “advertise” this career. Each student completes an oral report using a board as a prop, and eventually writes a three paragraph reflective essay, which requires close attention to the other oral presentations. This creative, exciting project incorporates research, documentation, reading, writing, oral language, and attention to aesthetic value while educating all the students about careers, an eighth grade standard.

Before researching, the students spend a week considering what they will research. This begins in class with a journal write, “What would you like to be when you grow up?” This is repeated over the next three days, but the students must consider additional factors each day: location, education, stress, salary, natural ability/talent required. After settling on four possible career choices, they peruse the internet for at least two more careers that they may consider. The final stage involves handing their career choice ideas to their parents and asking them to comment on them. Students take notes on this discussion with their parents and reflect on any new insights.

Now the research begins. After a formal lesson on how to document sources for a Works Cited, the students spend two full days in the research library. They are required to find information in four sources, which must include at least one internet source and one book. The other sources may be their choice, such as a personal interview or a review of a video on their topic.

Students research information on a minimum of five topics: salary range with specific reasons for the high and low, required education and/or training, a thorough description of the tasks required by the career which includes “a day in the life of a …”, and two additional topics that should be tailored to the specific career; for example, a student may research dangers involved with being a fireman, the cost of malpractice insurance for an anesthetist, or how weather affects the job of a forest ranger.

As the students research, they must keep in mind the design of their board and what types of illustrations would best teach their audience about the job. The artwork is to be informational as well as aesthetically pleasing. The five researched topics are displayed separately as five sections on the board, and each must include accurate internal citation, which leads the reader back to the Works Cited. There must be a sixth box, which is their Works Cited, set up according to the MLA standards. They are assessed on the information as
well as the appropriateness of the artwork and the overall affect of the board. Most students use an 18” x 24”
board, but some use half that size and some use full tri-folds just as effectively.

When the boards are finished, the formal oral reports begin. They must be from two to four minutes and
must include a description of the career, the salary range, the education/training involved, the significance of
the illustrations, and whatever else they may want to share. This is rehearsed for several days before the
actual presentation because many students freeze in front of their peers, which defeats the purpose of
“informing the audience.” They may dress in their career’s uniform or bring in props. As the students listen
to the oral reports, they must fill out a form on each, which helps them to stay focused. They must note
which presentations were the best and why; they are to consider poise, topic, voice level, eye contact,
preparation, etc.

The final step of the project is a reflective three-paragraph essay where students describe their own trials and
tribulations while conducting their research and share surprising information they may have come across.
They also use the notes that they took during the oral presentations to describe the most interesting career,
the most informative board, and what, if any, additional careers they may consider for the future as a result
of the whole project.

This set of lessons can easily be adapted to a history or science theme: battles of the Civil War, molecules,
great inventions, etc. It can also be adapted to different grade levels by varying the amount of teacher
intervention.

**State Standards**

This project supports the standards of oral presentation, writing, and career-based reading.

**Students**

All of my 8th grade language arts students for the past seven years have thoroughly enjoyed this project.

**Facilities/Materials**

A school library with books about careers and a computer lab are both helpful; however, this is easily
adapted to a public library.
All That Glitters
Carolyn Zimring, Sunkist School
Business Partner: The Gas Company
For grade level 4
Curriculum Areas: Social Studies

The Unit And Its Value:

All That Glitters is a unit designed to motivate student appreciation for one of the most influential events that contributed to the development of California and the significance of this event to their lives today. This “glittering” event was the California Gold Rush. Between 1848 and 1852, more than 200,000 people journeyed to California looking for gold. These people came from all over the world and many of them stayed to help build California into a state. Thus, California became home to people of many different cultures. The relevance of these cultural exchanges continues to impact students in California today. The unit combined an interdisciplinary approach with social studies, literature, technology, art, math, and music all woven into an exciting experience for the students.

Working with a GATE group of twenty-five fourth graders, the unit encompassed five months, meeting once a week. Students formed an appreciation of the difficulties and rewards of being part of building a new life in the West and a new state whose influence is felt across our country today. Students learned that many gold seekers discovered riches in areas far different than they may have first anticipated. Though many did not “strike it rich” with gold, they prospered in business ventures that brought them even more riches. Students also came to realize how California has retained its richness through all the cultural exchanges that were built during the gold rush era and beyond.

We started with lessons on the discovery of gold, how word of this discovery “got out,” and the key participants in this discovery: John Sutter, James Marshall, Sam Brannon, and President Polk. We then studied the different journeys and routes that the gold seekers took to get to California. Students made charts advertising the advantages of the Cape Horn, Panama, and Oregon Trail routes to convince those in search of gold to travel with them. Students had an opportunity to simulate a journey through the Oregon Trail problem solving computer game. Students wrote letters home to their friends and relatives explaining the hardships of the sea or land route. At home they found out if their parents or grandparents were born in California, and if not, why and when they came to live in California.

Next, we compared and contrasted the different methods for mining the gold. Through the use of a wading pool, sand, pie tins, and gold-painted aquarium pebbles, students were able to experience “panning for
gold.” We then used a scientific scale to weigh the “gold nuggets” and figured their worth both in 1849 dollars and in 2005 dollars.

The next section of the unit was a study of how business people such as Levi Strauss, Henry Wells, and William Fargo prospered during this era, and how their influence is still felt in California today. We also studied women of the West such as Biddy Mason and Nellie Cashman. We discussed the leadership qualities and entrepreneurial skills these people exhibited. We listened to a Miners Farewell CD and heard songs like *Old Frisco*, *Days of Forty Niners*, and *Oh, California*. Literature of the era was incorporated as we read Mark Twain’s adventure of *The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*.

We discussed the treatment of Chinese immigrants and how some Mexican citizens in California lost their land rights. We discussed the fate of Native Americans as more and more miners and settlers came to California. We learned how the California gold rush influenced later “rushes” in California such as the development of agriculture in Ventura County and the Hollywood movie rush in Los Angeles.

Culminating the unit was a Gold Rush camp reenactment in the school multipurpose room in which the students dressed in costume and demonstrated panning for gold and using the Oregon Trail computer game as well as displaying their posters and travel diaries.

**State Standards**

The unit supports the social studies standards in studying the history of California and providing meaningful and exciting activities to bring history “alive” and relate to the student’s life in California today. The unit was able to integrate reading, writing, art, math, and technology. It showed students the impact of the cultural diversity brought to California by the gold seekers of yesterday.

**Students**

This unit offered many opportunities for reading, writing, artistic creations, and internet research. With many hands on activities, it is a great way for all fourth graders to learn a special part of California’s unique history.

**Facilities/Materials**

Materials can be obtained from libraries, media centers, California historical internet sites, and the educational store at the Marshall Gold Discovery Site Historic Park in Coloma, California. Art materials included markers and poster board. Panning for gold materials included inexpensive sand, pie tins, and aquarium pebbles. The Oregon Trail computer game can now be purchased for five dollars.
Around the Spanish-Speaking World
Ana Cuevas, Moorpark High School
Business Partner: Santa Barbara Bank & Trust
For grade levels 10-12
Grades: K-3, audience
Curriculum Areas: Spanish

The Idea and Its Value:

Around the Spanish-Speaking World is a unit that allows student and teacher collaboration between grade levels and between curriculum while serving the community. High school students enrolled in Spanish 4 and Spanish 4 Advanced Placement are assigned a Spanish-speaking country early in October. Each student has to do a thorough research on that country and write a report in essay form. Each student is responsible to complete one research per month for a total of seven, and each research explores one of the following themes:

1. Climate and geography
2. Main products exported by the country
3. Culture and costumes
4. Education
5. Politics
6. Recreational activities
7. USA influence completes the research in April.

The culminating activity for this project involves sharing their work with younger students. By April, students would have completed all their research projects since they are graded along the way and each research is due at the end of each month. Students write and illustrate an original, bilingual (English/Spanish) storybook. Their imagination has no limit and the characters and events may be created, but the facts must be real and based on the assigned country. In addition to their storybook, students grouped by country will also decorate a tri-fold display poster representing assigned country; each student makes a storybook, but pairs or groups of three or four represent one country. Students display their posters creating “country stations” in the cafeteria, gym or outside in a big circle. Younger students walk from station to station and listen to the high school students read their books in Spanish or in English. At the end of the reading, the high school student gives the younger student a souvenir of country presented; souvenirs can be very small like stickers, stamps, etc. This project allows teacher collaboration across the curriculum and across grade levels.
How to arrive to the final product:

1. A country is assigned
2. Students decorate a tri-fold display poster reflecting the country
3. Students create a bilingual book (10-20 Pgs.)
4. The book must contain the elements of a short story
5. The book must contain an author page and a dedication page
6. Souvenirs respective to the country and the representation in the book

The true connection is made when high school teacher and elementary teacher work together. Elementary school teachers prepare students for their travels ahead of time. Mexico, Spain, Central America and South America are discussed and taught in their classes. At the end of the travels, students go back to the classroom and reflect on their travels, and high school students go back excited and happy they were able to use everything they learned in their years of taking a foreign language. High school students who are thinking about a career in education get exposure and reinforcement after completing this unit.

Our goal as educators is for our students to become life-long learners and to serve others; thus, when students serve their community, our goals are fulfilled. From the beginning to the end of this unit, students practice everything they have been taught throughout their K-12 school career.

**State Standards**

This project covers the following National Foreign Language Standards

Communication: 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3

Comparisons: 4.1 and 4.2

Cultures: 2.1 and 2.2

Communities: 5.1 and 5.2

Connections: 3.1 and 3.2

**Students**

In 2004-2005, 42 high school students (seniors, juniors and one sophomore) participated in this event. Three elementary schools attended the presentations (students K-3)
Being a Sand Detective (International Sand Lab)
Andrea Tsakrios, Mesa Verde Middle School
Business Partner: UC Hansen Trust
For grade levels 6-12
Curriculum Areas: Science/Geography

The Unit and Its Value:

Sand is sand is sand. People tend to think that the word “sand” means the same thing all over the world. All sand is alike. Then these people go to Bermuda and see pink sand. They visit Iceland and see black sand, and swim on the green sand beaches of Hawaii. By this time they start thinking that all sand is NOT alike.

In our international sand investigations unit, students discover the world’s sand. We explore the properties of sand and, using samples from all over the world, discover their origins, mineral content and relative age.

I was first introduced to the wonders of sand as a college student when, during a geology lab, we were asked to look at sand samples under a microscope. It was as if I’d opened a marvelous jewel box brimming with colors and exquisite gems. I was hooked, and have been collecting sand ever since from all over the world. I found that there were many other people in the world who were as interested as I in collecting sand; we are called “psamophiles”. My most recent contact is a woman in the Netherlands with whom I traded sand from my part of the world (California, Hawaii, Alaska) for sand from her part (Netherlands, Italy, Portugal). I was eager to share these experiences with my students as part of our Earth Science curriculum.

During our studies of Earth’s erosion and deposition, we suggest that not all beach sand is the same. In fact, though most beach sand originates from rivers and streams, it can also come from the weathering of rock formations and cliffs along the shore, as well as from the deterioration of corals, shells and underwater volcanic lava flows. Students are given the opportunity to analyze sand samples in terms of mineral content, particle size, crystal fragments and mineral source. From this analysis, students then determine the relative age of the sand. The unit takes four to five days including the final group presentation to the class.

We begin with some background information such as sources of sand, types of crystals or fragments, mineral compositions using a mineral guide, and other “clues” the students need to look for when evaluating their sand samples. On day 1 of the lab, students are then given 4 samples to observe using a hand lens. They record as much information as possible, trying to form a hypothesis for their observations. On day 2 of the lab, students break into groups and are given one particular sample. This may be one already observed on day 1, or it may be a completely different sample. Students observe this sample using a stereomicroscope. They will then try to identify minerals in their sample and determine what they might mean. For example, are the minerals continental- coming from mountains, or oceanic- coming from
underwater volcanoes? They will also evaluate for crystals or fragments, grain size and shape, and hypothesize as to the relative age of the sample; well-worn crystal grains suggest a very old sediment. The students are using higher-level skills to formulate the story of their mineral sample. At the end of each lab day, there are 2-3 questions to lead them into their conclusions.

On day 3, samples are projected through the video-microscope onto the TV monitor. As each group presents their sample to the class, they locate on a map where the sample comes from and see if their findings make sense. Why would coral sands be found in Jamaica and continental sands be found in Oregon? How do ocean currents, volcanoes and plate boundaries contribute to the story of their sand?

This unit can be adapted as part of Earth sciences, oceanography, geography, land resources/ ecology and art. The unit is part of our 6th grade science curriculum but can be adapted for grades 3 through high school, with the addition or subtraction of terminology and background information. Students with special needs can modify this lesson to only one or two samples including drawings of sand grains.

**State Standards**

National and California State Science Standards include:

- Interactions of energy and matter
- Populations, resources and environments (ecology)
- Shaping Earth’s Surface- topography, deposition of sediment
- Resources- sources of energy

**Students**

The International Sand Lab has been presented to all 6th grade students (300+) each year for the past 9 years. All students participate and are successful, though some need a bit of support by the teacher to get going. Once they start making the connections, all the students seem to get a better understanding of how the natural processes of erosion and deposition change the face of our earth. They also take ownership of their particular sand and can see the vast differences between the samples. The source and deposition of each unique type of sand begin to make sense to them. They become Sand Detectives.

**Facilities/Materials**

This lab requires microscopes, hand lens and as many different sand samples as possible. Students, friends and family can collect samples while on vacation or you might request sample starter kits from internet sources.

**Outside Resources**
There are many internet sites one can visit to get information about sand and sand collecting. There are also forums and websites where one can make contact with other “psamophiles” who collect sand just for fun. This would be a wonderful class or club project integrating technology, classification skills, geography and international relations.
Entering Business; Exploring Entrepreneurship; Experiencing Leadership

Ginger Brandenburg, Moorpark High School
Business Partner: Procter & Gamble
For grade levels 9 – 12
Curriculum Areas: Business

The Idea and Its Value:

Communication skills, teamwork, responsibility, and leadership are the significant learning aspects to this business unit. Although the project is conducted with seniors in a business academy class, aspects could be adapted to any class and any grade level as a career application of knowledge to better prepare our young people for achieving success in the real world. Giving students authentic learning experiences helps them make more-informed decisions about their academic and professional futures. This unit begins with a car dealership simulation that is the training ground for the entrepreneur project that follows to help our students enter business, explore entrepreneurship, and experience leadership.

The preparation activities for the dealership include students designing their resumes and filling out their job applications identifying their employment objective. All students in the class participate in practice mock interview sessions with local business volunteers who come to the classroom and meet in small groups to simulate the types of questions that they will experience during a job interview. The student resumes are also critiqued at this time by our business volunteers. Everyone in the class receives a position in the company (as listed below) and learns the value of teamwork and respecting their department manager. Those holding leadership roles learn the heavy weight of responsibility and the invaluable challenges of balancing the workload and avoiding contention within the ranks of their department as they plan and market the event. They learn to set the example as the hardest workers and learn to delegate without showing favoritism. In addition to the leadership opportunities afforded the department heads, we also form

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<td>General Sales Mgr</td>
<td>Parts Mgr/negotiator</td>
<td>F&amp;I Mgr</td>
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<td>Public Relations Rep.</td>
<td>Sales Consultant</td>
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committees. Every student serves on a committee and reports to a committee head such as decorations, facilities, signage, supplies, and yearbook to document our sales and marketing experience with pictures and mementos. Throughout this process, we meet as committees and departments on alternate days providing even more teamwork and leadership opportunities. There is considerable overlapping and coordinating that must take place. For example, the signage committee works under the direction of the Business Office Advertising Agent. The supplies and decorations committees are accountable to the Business Office Accounts Clerk. There are numerous opportunities for creativity and learning to listen to the ideas of others as students name their dealership, create their logo and advertising slogans. Once I have arranged for our business partner—our hosting dealership—and mentors to assist with interviews and training, my primary responsibility is that of a facilitator. Representatives from the dealership bring commercial energy to our classroom to train the students. We also take a field trip to the dealership to witness first-hand the various departments in action. When the big day finally arrives, the dealership brings four or five shiny new cars to the school. The students also arrange for additional cars to comprise the used car lot. Bright flags are flying as the campus quad is transformed to a buzz of students gawking at the bright red sports cars, hot white trucks, and sleek sedans with stereos blasting. Depending on our chosen theme, we might be displaying palm trees and surfboards or straw and western saddles. At lunch we sell hamburgers and hot dogs from the grill and homemade brownies. The proceeds pay for our advertising expenses. We arrange for a different class each period to experience the simulation as potential car owners. They are given scenarios to role play someone with a given annual income, family description, and credit rating. Our “customers” buy cars based on their family needs, visit the service department to receive maintenance instruction, the parts department for consideration of after-market accessories, and then the finance office where our consultants compute their monthly payments based on their credit rating—a valuable lesson in and of itself. The air pulses with excitement and compliments as my students clean up and boast of their success. Next-day evaluations highlight the value of responsibility, salesmanship, customer service, and teamwork.

With this valuable business activity behind them, my students are confident entrepreneurs who form their own companies modeled after the dealership. In groups of five or six, students develop a business plan for the company they launch based on a product or service of their creation. I especially enjoy observing the problem solving and negotiating that takes place as students debate over forming a restaurant that sells healthy dishes or a drive-in grocery store. Students frequently compromise in order to come to a consensus. The entire project is set up so that the workload is balanced. Considerable creativity is demonstrated from the inception of the company to the complaint letters from potential customers. Students collaborate on the marketing plan including creation of a TV advertisement. Business partners return to offer feedback on the
company presentations of their completed business plans and advertising campaigns, culminating their journey to explore their entrepreneurial and leadership potential.

**State Standards**

This interdisciplinary unit supports State Standards, SCANS (Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills), and the following Content and Technology Standards: *Technology, Problem-solving skills, Marketing 5.1, Ethics and Legal Responsibility*, in addition to academic skills: *Lang. Arts Listening/Speaking 1.1 Recognize strategies used by the media to inform, persuade; Writing 2.4: Write persuasive compositions that structure ideas.*

**Facilities/Materials**

The materials used include TV commercials, sample correspondence, sample car dealer contracts, and sample business plans.

**Outside Resources**

Outside resources include our dealership field trip, guest speakers, and business partners.
CARS – an innovative approach to language arts
Arla Crane, Rio Real School
Business Partner: Aera Energy LLC
For grade level Kindergarten
Curriculum Areas: Art, Language Arts, Mathematics

The Idea and Its Value:

CARS is an acronym for “Create And Record Stories.” Puppetry is its central component, yet it is not just an art project. Reading and writing are its focus, yet math is an essential ingredient to gain mastery of these skills. It moves freely between disciplines tapping into the creativity that exists in all children. Its use produced dramatic improvements in Standard-Based tests results over a three-year period – as much as 25% over pre-CARS years. The time has come to share this outstanding tool with fellow educators.

CARS is divided into 26 weekly units corresponding to the 26 letters in the English Alphabet. Since a daily session will last for only 45 minutes, it fits comfortably into either the Houghton-Mifflin or Open Court Pacing Calendars. Each unit begins with an art project – creating a puppet from five geometric shapes. As the circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, and ovals are assembled a character emerges which represents a letter in the alphabet. The character can be an animal or vegetable: a person or a thing. The student is now ready for phase two; the performance.

During the “Performance” the puppet takes center stage. Three or four students will go behind a curtain, while the remaining students sit in the audience. As the curtain rises, both teacher and students play the game “Twenty Questions”: What’s your name? What letter are you? Are you a boy or girl? What do you like to do? Each puppet is encouraged to answer in complete sentences. A “Character” quickly emerges. Many shy students blossom! The loquacious child becomes more introspective! The level of excitement generated focuses student interest and becomes a built-in behavior management technique. More importantly, it allows all students to succeed regardless of individual skill levels as they move to the final phase of CARS – The writing process!

CARS makes the writing process a joy and not a trial for both student and teacher. Students sit in groups of four at writing stations placed around the room. They discuss an “Event”– one thing that can happen to the puppets. The teacher moves freely between groups, encouraging students to think “out of the box”, or expand their “event” idea. One person from each group will share its event with the whole class. The teacher records the event in the class journal. Students are then asked to record their favorite event in their own personal journals. Students are encouraged to add to the story event they select. Through this CARS
process students experience a writer’s journey; “I see, I hear, and now I create and add. I write it down so I won’t forget my ideas.” CARS allows all students to own success. CARS is the vehicle. Mastery is the result!

**Standards**

Learning the twenty-six letter names and sounds in the English Language. Speak and write in a complete sentence. Create story plots.

**Students**

Kindergarten Students –easily adapted to any grade level
Decisions, Decisions
Robert Shapiro, Moorpark High School
Business Partner: VCEDA
For grade levels 7-12
Curriculum Areas: Business, Mathematics

The Idea and Its Value:

Decisions, Decisions is a four to six-week unit that explores equations of lines, graphs of lines, and linear programming, (an optimization technique using intersecting lines), used daily for decision-making by today’s high tech firms.

The instructional purpose of the unit is to expand these concepts and enlighten students to the “real world” applications of linear programming to maximize profit, minimize cost or otherwise utilize scarce resources--techniques used often in high tech careers. Though our focus was on photovoltaic solar energy, the technology that converts sunlight directly into electricity, some groups preferred to select such topics as Linear Programming in the Video Game Industry, American Airlines’ use of Linear Programming to Schedule Flight Crews and Procurement and Retiring of Navy Ships and Aircraft. Students learned that by considering constraints and limits of production, one could apply similar techniques to those we studied to make decisions.

Using their knowledge of linear equations acquired at the beginning of the unit as a springboard, student collaborative groups research a high tech firm or industry where linear equations are used to make resource allocation, sales or pricing strategy, product mix, design or other important decisions. Students write a research report and make a Power Point presentation to the class. Afterwards, to connect theory with application, we enjoyed a fascinating and instructional field trip to a “high tech,” robotically controlled, solar panel manufacturer who uses linear programming daily.

To stimulate ideas and generate interest in the unit, we read and discussed recent magazine and newspaper articles where high tech firms use linear programming to make decisions. Classroom discussions assist students in accessing their prior knowledge, provide instructional scaffolding, and generate student enthusiasm and ”buy-in.” With interest piqued, students formed four-member groups and chose a high tech firm or industry to research (such as solar or renewable energy, electric cars, software development, or animation) where linear equations are frequently used to make decisions. We end the unit with (1) a written paper, (2) an oral presentation and (3) a tour of a local solar panel manufacturer. The unit promotes positive student attitudes and behavior in several ways and allows students of differing abilities to be successful. Students enjoy using technology at the computer lab where they conduct research and perfect their Power
Point presentations. Presentations are informative and tie their industry’s decision-making directly to linear equations and the California State Standards. The activities provide students with a number of opportunities for decision-making, creative thinking, and personal expression. Groups are comprised of English Language Learners (ELL) with English Only students. Group members assign “roles” to one another such as Group Leader, Researcher, Typist, Proof Reader, Formula and New Vocabulary Specialist, Creative Designer, and Lead Oral Presenter. These roles incorporate auditory, logical/mathematical, spatial/visual and interpersonal/kinesthetic modalities of learning. This cognitively demanding unit encourages positive, student-student, oral and written communication.

The timeline for the unit is as follows: (1) 3 - 4 weeks: Students master linear equations and CA State Standards. (2) 1 - 2 days: We select groups and discuss linear programming decision-making in high tech industries. (3) 1 day: We discuss the grading rubric and expectations; groups select their topic. (4) 2 - 3 days: Groups research their selected firm at the computer lab/school library and design a Power Point presentation. The teacher provides recommended research sites and feedback. Students are able to contextualize the material, thereby enhancing their comprehension, with pictures, magazine articles, diagrams, and Internet graphics. (5) 1 - 2 days: Groups produce a rough draft for teacher and peer feedback. Students of varying abilities collaborate and apply critical thinking skills. The written and oral requirements ensure that students organize and synthesize their ideas and apply high level speculative, analytical and evaluative thought processes as they “flesh out” their reports and presentations. (6) 1 day: Students found the next phase to be one of their favorites. Each group reads two other groups’ rough drafts and, using a pre-printed task sheet, provides written feedback according to the grading rubric on the clarity of explanations, evidence of State Standards and overall depth of the material. Several students commented that they “got a lot out of” this peer revision activity. Students incorporate this feedback to improve their final projects. (7) 3 - 4 partial days: Student groups make oral presentations to the class. Students were amazed at the depth of knowledge and high interest level displayed by their classmates. (8) 1 partial day: As a follow up/final assessment, students answer the following: “What were the two most interesting topics and why? How could you ‘apply’ this knowledge in ‘real life’? How could you improve upon your presentations?” Students “recall” and “comprehend” information and “analyze” and “evaluate” presentations to improve their learning, thus incorporating various levels of cognitive and metacognitive thinking. (9) 1 day: The field trip was truly exciting for the students who saw firsthand the relevance of what they researched and learned to the “real world.” The students were “wowed” and “awed” by the solar panel manufacturing process (from silicon crystals to ingots to wafers to cells to modules/panels), and by the robotic production facilities. Students “saw” that the high tech careers of the future will indeed involve knowledge of linear equations to make decisions.
State Standards

As part of our Mathematics Curriculum, (CA State Standards 5.0; 6.0; 7.0; 9.0), students study linear equations and solve linear equation word problems by graphing, by substitution and by elimination.

Decisions, Decisions is an easily adaptable, inspiring, non-textbook driven unit that engages learners at all levels, supports the CA State Standards, and encourages the use of technology and collaborative group interactions.

Students

Over the past eight years Decisions, Decisions has been implemented in high school math classes including Algebra 1A, 1B, 2 and Geometry; and what better way to incorporate Career & Technical Education than to take a field trip after extensive study! I would ardently encourage seventh through twelfth-grade math, science, English, history, and business classes to adapt this cognitively demanding, student-driven unit as a “hands on” experience where the topics “come to life.”

Facilities/Materials

Magazine and newspaper articles on decision-making, marketing, and supply and demand in high tech fields to whet student appetites, and a list of resources and Internet sites to assist students in their research.

Outside Resources

Access to a computer lab/ school library for in-class, guided research is desirable as are Power Point tutorials. The District and parent volunteers provided transportation for our field trip.
Dia de los Muertos: Rituals of Mourning across Cultures
Terry Arena, Adolfo Camarillo High School
Business Partner: Southern California Edison
For grade levels K-12
Curriculum Areas: Visual Art, Spanish, Language Arts, History, & Humanities

The Unit and Its Value:

An aspect of the human experience is loss, and people of all ages encounter loss and grief at many levels. This two-week unit was inspired several years ago by a series of tragedies that profoundly affected the students and faculty on campus. Dia de los Muertos: Rituals of Mourning across Cultures is a visual art unit designed to investigate the folk art of paper cutting and to promote a sense of understanding and community in the classroom setting and beyond. The innovative element of the project is that rather than ascertaining information through typical didactic means, students learn about art and history through the unit's multi-faceted tangible processes.

The unit begins with a discussion on what the students already know about Day of the Dead practices followed by a video that encompasses all the stages of preparation for the three-day celebration. Students learn that the holiday is not merely about comical skeletons and sweets, but a lengthy ritual that honors those who have passed away, and allows for the living to process their grief. This tradition of celebration and remembrance becomes a positive and powerful asset in the grieving process. Through methods of visual mapping and discussion students compare and contrast Day of the Dead to Halloween and then delve into further introspection by sharing their own families' traditions in honoring the deceased. At this point, students complete a one-page writing sample describing, in detail, an influential figure in their life that they would like to honor. The figure could be living or deceased, and even an adored family pet. Students are then challenged to synthesize the written description into a symbolic visual image representative of their "hero or honored figure."

Paper art like that of calacas, papel amate, and papel picado are folk arts rich in tradition. Similarly, Asia and Europe have traditions in paper art used for mourning, celebration, portraiture, and pattern making. To further this connection to other cultures, students investigate the European "silhouette" and Chinese "window grille" and note the various purposes of these art forms. Many students recall their youth and tell stories such as having their own silhouette made by an elementary teacher. During this time the method of paper cutting (papel picado) is learned, as well as, bark painting (papel amate) and skeleton paper puppet (calacas).

At this point in the unit, the atmosphere of the classroom changes dramatically. Students share their own
family histories and practices and find they are part of a community who may have similar upbringings, travels, experiences, and traditions. Conversely, they realize and appreciate their differences and begin to question stereotypes. Due to the diversity of learning styles and methods of expression, students are then encouraged to choose one of the three art projects presented that is most complimentary to their artistic strengths and abilities. The culminating events are the students' individual presentation of the art piece honoring their significant figure, recitation of their writing sample, placement of an "offering" on the classroom memorial, and the sharing of a food from their own culture. As a result, students create a meaningful art piece, listen attentively to each others' histories, respect peers' opinions, and begin to act not as students in a classroom, but as active participants in their art studio community.

State Standards

This lesson is highly adaptable across the curriculum integrating reading, writing, and art. In addition, the development of paper cutting lends itself to the study of history and humanities as this art form began centuries ago in Asia, and over time found its way to the Americas.

Students

I have taught this lesson for several years to students in 9th through 12th grades totaling approximately 110 students per year. The lesson is easily adapted to various grade levels, content areas, and students of differing abilities. In using this lesson, a teacher can help students develop their creative expression, multicultural awareness, form a vested interest in their community, and begin to understand healthier grieving and coping mechanisms when faced with a loss.

Facilities/Materials

The setting can be as simple or elaborate as the teacher's needs dictate. Videos, books, and samples of the art forms are valuable. Basic supplies for the non-art classroom might include tissue paper, string, glue, and scissors. The art class might include more elaborate choices in projects and materials like bark, tag board, raffia, construction paper, paint, beads, wire, etc ...

Outside Resources

Ideally, the students would complete the unit with a visit to a local museum that celebrates Day of the Dead where they can appreciate the art forms, the people, and the festivities more completely. Two possible museums in Ventura County are the Carnegie Museum located in downtown Oxnard or the Ventura County Museum of Art and History in downtown Ventura.
A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes
Debbie Moore, Susan Ross – Camarillo Heights Elementary School
Business Partner: Ventura County Star
For grade levels 2 - 5
Curriculum Areas: Language Arts, Visual & Performing Arts, Problem Solving, Technology, Dance and Creative Writing

The Unit and Its Value:

A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes takes students into the world of fairy tales to explore and create personal versions of age-old tales. The culmination is a Fairy Tale Ball written and performed by the participating classes for the rest of the school and families.

To begin "The Dream," 2nd and 3rd grade students are paired with 4th and 5th graders to read several fairy tales. Students discuss the elements of a fairy tale using the language of the discipline (vocabulary specific to fairy tales), multiple perspectives, trends and patterns as well as ethical and moral issues.

Focusing on the ethical and moral issues, higher level thinking skills are employed as the students explore multiple perspectives to understand why characters acted the way they did. With their younger partners the small groups devise a plan to "revise" the fairy tale to achieve a different outcome. Each group chooses a type of product to reveal their plan to the classes. It might be a model of a way to trap the evil character, power point presentation, a commercial, a song or rap, or short skit. Each member of the group participates at their academic level to add to the final project. Technology use is encouraged and classroom computers are made available.

Meanwhile, students are deciding on the themes for our culmination activity, The Fairy Tale Ball. Using our ideas about fairy tale revisions, a script is written to showcase student talent in music (piano, trumpet, and violin) singing, song writing, ballroom dancing, and acting within the fairytale genre. Each child has the opportunity to showcase talent in our fairy tale kingdom by writing it into the final script. Students work with piano teachers, volunteer musicians, and parents from the community to polish their parts.

A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes allows students to live their dream during their Fairy Tale Ball performance. Students are princes, princesses, knights, and dragons for the entire day. The whole world of fantasy is open and all children participate in the roll they have chosen and helped write. The essence is to have a student based show reflecting what has been discovered in their unit of Fairy Tale study. An added benefit is the bonding across the grade levels. Friendships are forged, talents are shared, and students are empowered.
Students in all grade levels and of varying academic level can be successful in this unit. You might not be a great pianist, violinist, singer, or actor, but maybe you are a great dancer! Learning new skills and developing a talent help develop social skills and self esteem. Self-selection of the fairy tale and project lead to the excitement of working in a group. Knowing that you get to be in the Fairy Tale Ball is an incentive to behave and encourage your group members. Students become friends with students from another class and also get to know their teacher. Upper grade students take seriously their role as models of academic behavior for the younger children.

_State Standards_

This unit blends the curricular requirements for 2\textsuperscript{nd} - 5\textsuperscript{th} graders by incorporating the language arts standards in critical analysis, comprehension and writing as well as giving students the opportunity to develop performing arts skills in acting, singing and musical composition.

_Students_

_A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes_ can be adapted for other grade levels. For the past 11 years students have had the opportunity to participate and share this unit with the other 450 students through their final performance. The addition of the technology of the projects and power point presentations was an inspiration from a GATE teacher who was using it with a pull-out program. When two of my students showed their GATE project to the class, the rest of the children wanted to learn how to do it and a student directed power point project was born! The goal for all teachers is to see learning take place. With this unit not only do we see our teaching take hold, we see students teaching and encouraging others.

_Facilities/materials_

Fairy tale books, access to computers for power point and research projects, an auditorium for the final production

_Outside Resources_

Community members and parents help with the production of The Fairy Tale Ball. A district band teacher, professional musicians, drama coach, and a costume designer donated their time to teach the children their specialties.
First Grade Philanthropists
Suzanne Smith, University Elementary
Business Partner: Blois Construction
For grade levels K-12
Curriculum Areas: Social Studies, Math, Writing, and Community Service

The Unit and Its Value:

Have you ever inherited a tradition and wondered, “Why are we doing this…is it of value?” It is a tradition in my district to teach an “Africa Unit,” filled with fun activities for the students. My desire for a fun and meaningful experience for my students set me on a quest to find a project for my students to give them an understanding of the difficulties facing much of Africa. I wanted them to have compassion in action. Through a newspaper article about relief work in Niger, Africa I learned my students could “buy” animals for families there by sending designated money to the Nomad Foundation.

I began the project by reading them The Plains of Kapiti, a folktale about the African drought, and its effect upon the animals. We then viewed the foundation’s website so they could see the living conditions of the people in Niger. My students were amazed at the sparse lifestyle of the children of Niger compared to their own. The children were immediately enthusiastic when I told them about the animal buying program and started bringing in coins to buy a goat for $35. Within 3 days they had enough coins to buy a goat! They just kept bringing in more coins and setting new goals for buying animals. Each contribution was applauded, regardless of the amount. For one week I made a deal with them to match any money they brought in that they had earned, explaining that I had to work for my money. Everyday we counted the coins brought in, skip counting by 25’s, 10’s, 5’s and 2’s. All the while they were learning the math standards in a real life setting.

By the beginning of November, they had purchased 3 animals and wanted to take on the challenge of buying a camel for $400! Setting goals of $50 at a time, we reached a $150 by mid November. By then it was time to broaden our resources so we could reach our goal. We settled on “The Popcorn Shop” as our business and revenue source. Each day we worked through a step in the process of setting up a retail business. One lesson was about how to set a fair price and still make a profit. I explained we would have to deduct the cost of the popcorn from what we charged. One budding philanthropist said, “Well, we could ask for donations so things won’t cost us so much. I’ve got popcorn at home.” Using our “animal money” as seed money for purchases and donations of supplies we were one step closer to opening our shop.

I then posed the question, “How will we tell people about our popcorn sale?” Our advertising venture began. Each student made 2’ x 3’ sign, which we posted around the school. Another lesson was yet to be
learned. On our “grand opening” of The Popcorn Shop we ran out of popcorn in the first 15 minutes, 
underestimating the demand. The day ended with some angry, vocal customers but also with customers who 
gave us money for our cause without wanting anything in return. Needless to say, the next day’s lesson was 
on the law of supply and demand! We opened shop again with a better supply, happier customers, and good 
results. I was especially proud to watch my 1st graders give out accurate change. When we closed the shop 
for the holidays we had enough money to buy not only the camel, but also another sheep to add to our 
purchase of a goat, a donkey, and the first sheep.

Upon returning from the holidays, our highlight was presenting Ms. Clark of the Nomad Foundation with 
the money for the animals. Each child read Ms. Clark a page from our book about how we earned the 
money to buy the animals. After learning about a new school that started in Niger, the students have turned 
their attention to raising money for school supplies. As of this writing we have raised $120, enough for 3 
children’s school supplies for a whole year. My students’ compassion and enthusiasm keeps building, so it 
looks like The Popcorn Shop will be opening its doors once again!

**State Standards**

- State Math standards for first grade were addressed and extended.

- The Social Studies standard “Demonstrate an understanding of the world in which he/she lives by 
  studying people, families, and stories from many cultures now and long ago.” was addressed and extended.

- The personal narrative writing standard was practiced.

**Students:**

20 1st Graders of varying academic levels and ethnicities participated.

**Facilities:**

This unit uses basic classroom supplies and popcorn. A popcorn machine was borrowed from our PTA.

**Outside Resources:**

http://www.nomadgal.com/foundation/index.html; guest speaker, Leslie Clark of the Nomad Foundation; 
African folktales
Forward to the Past
Sandra Hayes, Bev Rueckert, Carol Pinto – Los Altos Middle School
Business Partner: VCEDA
For grade levels 3-5
Curriculum Areas: Humanities, Science and Technology

The Idea and Its Value:

Students become time travelers going “forward to the past” revisiting the 20th century in America using a variety of materials, seeking to understand how that century impacts their present 21st century daily life.

As students enter the classroom through a brilliantly lit “Arch Through Time,” they pull a research topic card, i.e., “1917 George Gershwin,” from a Time Traveler bag of 200 or more names and events of the 20th century. Time Traveler journals are used to write “What I know, what I need to know, and sources I will use to find out.” They soon realize that living in the early 1900’s was quite different from life in the 1990’s. They are reminded that TV, computers, plastics, airplanes, sound movies and space travel all emerged during that hundred years. Parents and extended family become important interview sources to validate what was available in their lives in the 1900’s as compared to the amenities and necessities needed in today’s times.

Additionally, one wall of the classroom is devoted to building a display of words coined and accepted into common use during the 20th century. As the words build up and are grouped, they look for the prefixes, suffixes, and bases that add meaning to our lives, such as mini, tele, and micro. They also include words from foreign languages that have worked their way into our daily English language, such as déjà vu, luau and pizza. Homework assignments include interviewing older family members and collecting idioms and foreign words used by their families.

Another classroom wall awaits a giant timeline that will be completed by students to resemble an art gallery, with each piece of the century awarded a place. As students research the topics on their cards, they must decide the value of each of these and create an “award” illustrating the value and worthiness of the person or topic to be displayed. Using Dr. Sandra Kaplan’s Areas of Depth and Complexity, which provides learners with ways to explore topics beyond the mere locating of facts, students search for Patterns, Trends, Unanswered Questions, and Multiple Perspectives about their topics.

Research findings are also visually catalogued more in depth in our “Walk Through Time Shoe Gallery” where each student-created shoe tells its own story or contribution to the period. Each shoe teaches the student’s topic and its value in words, art and design. The styles of the shoes vary as much as the stories.
Because computers were not in use until the end of the 20th century, students begin by using materials such as *Life* and *Look* magazines, as well as sets of encyclopedias gathered from the library. Biographies and books featuring 20th century newsmakers, music, art prints, and artifacts are available for hands-on inspection. A facsimile of a 1902 Sears and Roebuck catalog and actual relics of the 20th century such as huge ice tongs fascinate the students as they try to guess what they were used for.

Enthusiasm for scavenging through the materials for answers leads to a high amount of camaraderie. As computers are added as a means of research, trends, patterns, and connections are made, and soon interest in others’ projects flourishes. The discovery by one student that only the richest people could afford to pay $0.50 for 100 squares of toilet paper in New York at the turn of the century, while others had to be satisfied to cut up and use old newspapers, stops everyone working while that thought is contemplated. Similar research dramas occur as more areas are investigated.

The culminating celebration is held in the form of “wax museum” tableaus of history recreated by the students on their topics. Families, other students, and staff activate each student statue, which comes alive and tells a story. Statues hold shoes to use as teaching aids and are dressed in symbols of their place in history.

As a result of this unit of study, our students are asking harder questions and having higher-level discussions involving critical thinking that climbs the ladder of Bloom’s Taxonomy from Knowledge to Evaluation. Unanswered questions such as “Is global warming the direct effect of plastics and aerosol cans of the 1950’s?” are being asked. 21st century landfills are overflowing with plastics, a major discovery of the 20th century, and sea life is struggling to detect the difference between its natural food and Styrofoam and other plastic byproducts. Our learners are fascinated about the connections between the solutions to 20th century problems and the more complex problems that have been created that will need to be solved in the 21st century. This unit of study has taken students “back” to the 20th century in order to go “forward” to the 21st.

**State Standards**

Standards from the curricular areas of Language Arts, Social Studies, and Visual and Performing Arts are addressed in each activity in which students participate. As an example, from the History and Social Sciences: Chronological and Spatial Events:

1. *Students place key events and people of the historical era they are studying in a chronological sequence and within a spatial context:* they interpret time lines.

2. *Students correctly apply terms related to time, including past, present, future, decade, century, and generation.*
3. Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.

The use of all learning modalities of sources and technologies is inclusive. The more time that is spent, the more interwoven and elaborate the use of standards.

Students

We piloted this unit for the first time this year using 3rd to 5th graders in a GATE pull out program, with students coming to the GATE classroom from different schools throughout the district. We have over 300 students in a wide range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds. While we purposely decided not to focus on an area of history already studied at the regular school, the idea could be adapted to other areas of study such as the California Gold Rush by using the same format and materials.

Facilities/Materials

A packet of worksheets and a list of the topics will be available to other interested teachers making this unit readily accessible. Other possibilities for study are field trips to the local museums and older guest speakers. Besides preparing for the wax museum and making a representative shoe, students may choose to make Power Point presentation of each decade of the century, or, according to its category, daily culture, science and technology, arts and music, and historical events. These layers will add depth to the curriculum.
Grammar Gadabout!

*Turning Turned-Off Students into Tuned-In Teachers (and Learners)*!

Lucia Lemieux, Moorpark High School

Business Partner: Procter & Gamble

For grade levels 9-10 (could be adapted for middle school)

Curriculum Areas: Language Arts

**The Unit and Its Value:**

I was faced with a dilemma. We had just returned from Winter Break, finals were less than three weeks away, and I realized that, even though I constantly modeled proper language usage and strong academic vocabulary in class, I hadn't completely covered the 9th and 10th grade grammar standards on which my students would be tested. At our school, English finals are largely "departmentalized," meaning that one final fits all. And, on that final is grammar-lots of it-from sentence fragments, parts of speech and prepositional phrases in the 9th grade to independent and subordinate clauses, compound-complex sentences and the dreaded appositive in the 10th grade. In addition, while most English teachers love to delve into the beauty of descriptive language and character through great works of literature, few truly enjoy the subtle nuances of gerunds and participles!

**Grammar Gadabout** is a hands-on approach to higher-level thinking in oral and written language conventions. It promotes positive student attitudes and behavior through self-reliance and self-esteem. During this project students become "roving grammar mongers," working in groups to navigate several research sources, formulating lessons and tests on selected grammar topics, and "teaching" those lessons to their classmates through the use of various technologies.

Using **Grammar Gadabout**: Separate grammar tasks requiring coverage into related sections, so that all groups receive one lower-level topic and one higher-level topic (ex: the easier nouns and conjunctions with the more challenging participial phrases).

Then, designate groups according to multiple intelligences (ensure that one technically-oriented, one artistic, one linguistically skilled and one interpersonally strong member is present in each group). Allow eight to nine days for the project (depending on number of students). Give students one day in groups with a textbook or grammar book to divide tasks and conduct basic research, two days in the computer lab to add to their research (with a suggested list of Internet sites), one day to reconvene to organize materials, one day to practice presentation, and three to four days to present (allowing 2 presentations/day). As facilitator, the teacher intervenes in groups only to answer questions or to ensure that all students are sharing in the work...
equally; the teacher intervenes in presentations only to clarify, ask questions to help presenters clarify, or assist in re-phrasing difficult concepts.

Students either created PowerPoint presentations or both overheads and posters to "teach" their lessons. Students were encouraged to figure out how to coordinate work. A rubric with a peer evaluation and self-evaluation was designed to prevent one student from doing all the work alone. Several students emailed each other with pages and learned how to work with students with whom they would not normally associate. In addition to the presentations, students were required to create a 10-question, well-written multiple-choice "quiz" on their topics to serve as a take-home study sheet for all students to utilize.

Presentations were 60% PowerPoint, 40% overhead/posters. All students were rated individually on oral presentation and based on teacher-peer evaluation. The group as a whole received a grade on the physical portion of the presentation and the test. At the conclusion of the project, student comments were overwhelmingly positive. In an essay written to describe their favorite activities in English during the first semester, 80% of my students cited Grammar Gadabout as one of their favorite projects! In fact, one AVID teacher approached me and asked what I had done with grammar. She was impressed how several of her AVID students who had me for English seemed to know their grammar better than other students!

I am very proud of this project. It demonstrates that students can learn challenging concepts well through carefully facilitated exploration, rather than direct teaching. Grammar Gadabout created a great deal of positive noise among my students (and the English Department), and improved social interaction and self-esteem. Grammar Gadabout started as a creative solution to a desperate situation—and ended up becoming a positive learning experience for all students, one that I will use again. I wish I had additional pages to show you the student results!

**State Standards**

Grammar and Mechanics of Writing: 1.1 Identify and correctly use clauses, phrases, and mechanics of punctuation. 1.2 Understand sentence construction and proper English usage.

Writing: Research and Technology1.5: Synthesize information from multiple sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information and the different perspectives found in each medium.

Listening and Speaking: 1.7 Use props, visual aids, graphs, and electronic media to enhance the appeal and accuracy of presentations.

**Students**

105 9th and 10th grade students

**Facilities/Materials**
Classroom, Computer Lab or Library with computers, a laptop or computer for presentations, projector, overhead, transparencies, pens, butcher paper, markers, books, Internet access.
Writing is a Snap-ple

Debbie Maulhardt, Christa McAuliffe Elementary School

Business Partners: Ventura Commerce & Education Foundation and Procter & Gamble

For grade levels 2-3

Curriculum Areas: Art, History, Language Arts, P.E., and Science

The Idea and Its Value:

This 2nd/3rd grade integrated unit focuses and motivates students to research and write about a historical or scientific topic of their preference. Sometimes the hardest part about writing is coming up with an idea to write about. Snapple cap facts make topics easy and focused.

This four week unit teaches second graders the writing process by using facts on the back of Snapple bottle caps as a springboard for research and expository writings which are then published into a class book and entered into the school's book faire. Each day 30 minutes is devoted to a step of the writing process, so each week the students produce an essay. The first week I model the process and we do a whole group essay. The second week many are ready to work on their own. I work with the rest who still need guided practice in researching and writing. By the third week the one or two at-risk students who still needed help were placed with a peer helper on a shared topic.

- **Brainstorming:** Students are given time to read many Snapple bottle caps containing historical and scientific facts. Then they choose the one fact they are curious about investigating. Students write a topic of research.

- **Pre-write:** Students identify key words from the Snapple fact and look them up on a map, in the dictionary, in a children's encyclopedia, or in the indexes of their history and science books. As they learn about the topic they list the facts, rewriting them in their own words. While researching, other key words may pop up for investigation.

- **First draft:** Students use the information they have listed and the bottle top fact to write an essay that has interrogative, declarative and exclamatory sentences. It is based on this model:

  Topic/title

  (Topic sentence) Write a question to the reader about the title. (Details) Answer the question. Write several more interesting things about the topic. (Conclusion) Write your heartfelt opinion about the topic and give a reason why you feel that way.
• **Editing/Final Draft:** Beyond the basic editing of making sure the essay looks and sounds correct, our class strives to make it better by using a thesaurus to replace repeated words or weak words.

• **Illustration:** Before the essay can be published it needs to have an illustration. Students return to the resource books to come up with an appropriate representation of their topic. It may be a map, picture, diagram, etc.

**State Standards**

2nd Grade Writing: 1.1 Connects related ideas and maintains consistent focus. 1.3 Understands the purposes of various reference materials. 2.1 Writes brief essays that follow logical sequence and contain details. 2.1 Revises drafts to improve sequence, purpose, or descriptive details.

**Students**

Students feel very empowered when they are given the independence to choose a topic, research it, write about it, and see it published in a book. My class was a busy buzz as the students exercised their skills of inquiry and examination. They felt so smart and mature like 3rd graders. The unit was very motivating!

**Facilities/Materials**

Classroom/School Library with reference materials that are published for beginners. A collection of recycled Snapple Bottle caps.
Super Sentences: the Building Blocks of Superior Writing

Tiffany Armas, Karen Davis, Christine Elliott, Stephanie Grabow, Christie Kyriacou, Susie Mier, Tanya Narasaki – La Mariposa Elementary School

Business Partner: PSI Bearings

For grade levels 1-3

Curriculum Areas: Language Arts

The Idea and Its Value:

Writing well is one of the most difficult Language Arts Standards to teach. Numerous programs offer a magic bullet, and we attended workshops and studied many, but none were specific or comprehensive enough to produce the results we wanted. Our team, serving 140 neighborhood school first graders a year, has evolved a sequence of instruction and practice activities that produce exciting and expressive student writing. We focus on the characteristics of powerful sentences.

Our year-long study has four main components: Word Study, which includes grammar, synonyms, onomatopoeia, and spelling; Genre Study, month-long, in-depth reading of fiction and nonfiction on selected topics to build background knowledge and vocabulary; Writing, multiple, motivating and varied writing tasks wherein students gain mass practice in the skills being taught; and Editing for correctness.

Word Study is exciting, especially when teachers are excited about words. The basics of sentences, subjects and verbs, we teach through songs, action, and illustration. In reading good literature aloud, authors we admire use awesome adjectives and vivid verbs, not just ordinary words. We collect these powerful words on charts and post the charts in our rooms. We add to the charts and refer to them constantly. Next, we introduce prepositional phrases. We create lists of where things happen. If our genre study is spooky stories in October, we think of all the places scary things might happen. When we study penguins in January, we add phrases that tell where penguins might be. Finally, we create a list of when things happen. Lists guide creation of varied and descriptive super sentences and flip-page booklets, and support writing in all content areas throughout the day.

We study synonyms. For homework, children research synonyms for a given word. On Fridays, we record all words on sentence strips, discuss them, and rank them by intensity. For "hot" last week, one class ranked words from "tepid" and "warm" to "scorching" and "torrid." After much class discussion, students selected two words from opposite ends of the list and used them in sentences that illustrated their meanings. For example, "The baby's bath water was tepid." and "It was a torrid day in the desert in August." We mount these ranked lists in the room for easy reference. It is thrilling to see students study these lists to make unique word choices when speaking and writing.
Onomatopoeia is a big word. That alone makes it fascinating. Spelling splat or whooooo adds to the fascination. October spooky stories are full of examples, and once you know this class of words you find them everywhere. We start a list in October and add to it all year long. Children love to use these words in their writing and do so spontaneously once the door is open.

Genre Study involves a deep, month-long focus on a topic in teacher read-alouds, guided and independent reading. This in-depth thematic focus builds vocabulary and background knowledge. Students develop ownership of the topic and confidence to write about it. We build our writing practice activities around these monthly themes, making words meaningful, clear, and accessible to students.

Writing activities include super sentences. We create sequenced grammar worksheets to guide practice. Sentence structures become more complex as students' grammar knowledge grows. Sentence structures vary, just as the sentences in good books do. After mastery, children create varied descriptive sentences that become flipbooks where parts of different sentences can be "mixed up" for fun.

Most exciting are thematic mini books (pumpkins in October, penguins in January) created to provide sentence frames in which students add missing grammar elements on each of eight pages then illustrate each page to support the written text. Sometimes the missing words are awesome adjectives, sometimes prepositional phrases, or vivid verbs. Twice a month students brainstorm appropriate words, make choices, and carefully "publish" these books to take home and share with their families.

Each week students complete a directed drawing of their choice, then write an informative piece or a story about the drawing. We challenge students to use a specific grammatical element in their writing. Teachers model, support, and guide student writing. Students share their writing with peers and highlight targeted words in yellow. They help each other edit for spelling and mechanics.

Another practice opportunity asks students to sequence four pictures that suggest a story, then write a story inspired by the pictures. Again, we challenge students to incorporate awesome adjectives, vivid verbs, onomatopoeia, and prepositional phrases in their writing. We may go back and ask students to count how many vivid verbs or awesome adjectives they used in their pieces and celebrate word choices. Through teacher modeling, children learn to edit and revise their own work, adding forgotten words, phrases, and awesome adjectives or prepositional phrases they may have overlooked in the first draft. Students also learn to edit for mechanics and the spelling of high frequency words.

By limiting our instructional focus to super sentences, the grammar and word choice of exciting and evocative sentences, we have found an effective way to unlock the unique voices of all our young writers. Second language learners and children from limited language backgrounds have understanding and useful tools, where before they floundered as writers. Once children have ownership of grammar and the range of
vocabulary choices they can make as writers, they write fluently, vividly and with great confidence. Children transfer this confidence to writing in math and science where they explain their thinking, label, compare and contrast using descriptive language. Children choose to "write books" for free-choice activity. Perhaps that is the greatest testimony of all. They see themselves as writers.
Thunder Pals

Mimi McGilvray, El Descanso Special Day Class

Business Partner: Grether Farming

For grade levels Kindergarten through 5th grade

Curriculum Areas: Adaptive P.E., Special Education, English Language Arts, Mathematics, and History/Social Science

The Unit and its Value:

General Education children participating in a peer tutor program, where they engage in learning activities with students who have special needs; in an atmosphere which fosters an acceptance of differences in others; Thunder Pals is the melding of a school community to meet the needs of all learners regardless of disabilities.

Our school has an innovative approach of integrating special education students with the general education population by matching students by personality traits, so that they can access the curriculum in both grade levels as learners and students.

The value of the Thunder Pals program in part involves instilling a sense of accomplishment as students become aware of and sensitive to the differing abilities of children. General education peers are engaged in a leadership role in both academic and social situations. In return, children with special needs receive appropriate modeling for activities with the general education population.

Thunder Pals are required to use higher level thinking skills in order to accommodate the needs of their young partners in social play situations such as playing basketball, learning to ride a bike, ball skills, and taking turns; as well as academic literacy such as alphabet pages, letter of the week, reciting poems, reading stories, and also sharing literacy skills practiced in their grade level.

Children learn best from other children. Not only are special needs students developing increased social interactive skills, but general education peers are learning acceptance of other children’s unique needs. At times general education peers will see their partners engage in disruptive behavior. Special day class teachers focus on positive behavioral management which general education peers see. This gives them an opportunity to learn how negative behavior can be redirected into something positive. Thunder Pals can take these newly learned skills into their own family situation and apply them when there are disagreements with their own brothers, and/or sisters.

The Thunder Pals program is implemented at the beginning of the school year in order to help the students in my class become an integral part of the school campus. In September I went into the 3rd through
5th grade classrooms and shared with them about the children in my class. An explanation of the Thunder Pals program was given with a chance for questions and answers. The students were then given the opportunity to sign up. The response was overwhelming, thus our Thunder Pals program began.

The Thunder Pals program is implemented on a daily basis during the upper grade classes morning and lunch time recess. The unit begins the first week of school and continues throughout their elementary school years.

Success of the Thunder Pals program can be measured in many ways. A perfect example of Thunder Pals success can be summed up by Zack’s experience. Zack is a 7 year old boy with autism; he lacks social interaction skills, thus he rarely acts appropriately in social situations, likes to be by himself, and at times has disruptive behavior. Children with autism are often times locked in a world of their own. Since the Thunder Pals program began last year, Zack is becoming a member of the school. Francisco is the Thunder Pal who took a liking to Zack from day one; he is quiet, calm, and has a heart of gold. Watching his interactions with Zack is heart warming. He talks to him as a friend, plays on the playground with him and walks him back to class. One morning as Zack was walking to class with his mom, Francisco saw him and called out “Hi Zack,” at which Zack turned to Francisco and replied “Hi Francisco.” A moment like this as seen through the eyes of a mom and teacher, proves the success of the Thunder Pals program is one hundred fold for everyone involved!! It may sound like a baby step, but it was a huge accomplishment for Zack.

Not only does Thunder Pals address the needs of special students, it serves to educate the staff members, parents, and the 550 students who attend school with us, by continuing interaction and role modeling; all students are setting examples of appropriate behavior with others.

Other teachers could adapt the Thunder Pal program as it fosters an atmosphere of acceptance, increases awareness of unique needs, and promotes ideas that children are children first regardless of disabilities. A sense of pride and accomplishment is the ultimate outcome.

State Standards

Meets Health/Social Science Level 1 Curriculum. This curriculum area focuses on rules for fair play, and consequences for breaking rules along with turn taking.

Students

The Thunder Pals program involves Kindergarten through 5th grade students. The students in my room are Kindergarten through 2nd grade students who have severe disabilities; the Thunder Pal students are 3rd through 5th grade students. Adaptations for student work and social play situations are made to meet
individual student needs. This program is adaptable for any school campus where there are students with special needs. The program is a win-win situation for all students involved.

Facilities and Materials

Thunder Pals is student based and is used throughout a student’s elementary school years.
Wheels On The Go!
Karen Nakaba, Adele Sears, Trudy Yeates – Santa Rosa School
Business Partner: Ventura County Star
For grade level Kindergarten
Curriculum Areas: Art, Language Arts

The Idea and Its Value:

Each student uses craft materials to create a small vehicle as well as written and drawn descriptions of their vehicle, and then become “docents” at our museum as they display and explain their vehicle.

Kindergarteners are always “on the go,” so what better way to get those little motors revved-up than with a technology-integrated unit on transportation? Our vehicle museum supports, extends and personalizes our Houghton-Mifflin language arts unit, “Wheels Go Around.” To begin our project we introduce the unit literature, Wheels Around, by Shelley Rotner, The Wheels on the Bus, by Maryann Kovalski, and Vroom, Chugga, Vroom-Vroom, by Anne Miranda. We brainstorm uses for wheels and how they are helpful in everyday life.

The students are given an assignment to create a vehicle at home. Parents are encouraged to assist with the project, but to let the ideas come from the child’s own imagination. Before the project begins we discuss questions that will help stimulate higher-thinking skills and begin the creative process, such as: what does your vehicle look like? How many wheels does it have? What is its purpose? After the vehicles are brought to school, the students are guided through a writing exercise wherein they use these kinds of questions to describe their vehicles. They do a first draft using phonetically spelled words, high frequency words and proper sentence structure. The teacher may make minor corrections, without changing the flavor of the child’s writing. A final copy is then created, along with a crayon-drawn illustration of the vehicle. On subsequent days, the children create a computer-generated drawing of the vehicle using the draw and shapes features of the KidPix computer program. The book Vroom, Chugga, Vroom-Vroom is about a stock car race.

In a fun unit extension, a stock care racer is invited to come talk with the students. He brings a video, his racing suit, helmet and pictures to show how he modifies and races the car. The children ask questions and are fully engaged in this discussion.

Excitement builds for museum day. Older grades are invited to visit the museum. Student’s final writing and pictures are displayed on a stand-up (open file) folder, and each Kindergartener stands next to his/her completed folder and vehicle, ready to explain the vehicle and to be interviewed by older students. Their sense of achievement and a connectedness to the student-body is evident during these sharing times.

State Standards
This project covers a period of three weeks, toward the spring when writing skills are in place, and supports the following Language Arts Standards: 1.1 Distinguish fantasy from realistic text, 2.3 Connect the information and events in texts to life experiences, 2.5 Ask and answer questions about essential elements of text, 3.1 Concepts of Print, 3.2 Phonemic Awareness, 3.4 Describe common objects and events, 4.1 Use letters and phonetically-spelled words to write about objects, 4.4 Participate in teacher-led prewriting activities (brainstorming, drawing, discussing), 5.2 Begin to recognize ending punctuation, 5.3 Distinguish between upper and lower case letters, 5.4 Write first and last name, 6.2 [Orally] share information and ideas.

**Students**

Sixty students participated in this unit during the 2004-2005 school year. This unit is adaptable for students of all levels. Parent helpers are on hand to assist those with special needs. Each child is able to complete the assignment, participate in the museum and feel successful. With advanced literature choices, this unit would be appropriate for older grades.