

A Kid's Walking Tour of Historic Ojai An Ojai Serve-Learning Project

Contact Information

"All Around Downtown A Kid's Walking Tour of Historic Ojai"

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Introduction and Description of the Lesson

Third grade students created a brochure called "All Around Downtown-A Historical Walking Tour of Ojai For Kids". The idea came about while reviewing the third grade Content Standards for social studies. The students realized there were no "kid friendly" materials about the historical buildings of Ojai. They researched historical landmarks in Ojai and listened to guest speakers. One of the guest speakers showed the classes a walking tour for adults and the students got excited about creating one for kids. The students decided to include photographs from the past and present to create a "Then and Now" look to the brochure. This lesson involved one combination class of second - third graders and three third grade classes (about eighty students in all). This lesson covered the academic content areas of history and language arts.

Instructional Process

Preparation

Based on their study of the community of Ojai and listening to guest speakers, the students identified the need for an historical informational brochure for kids.

Community members were instrumental during the development of the brochure. They included parents, storeowners, museum director, librarian, Living Treasures, City of Ojai Historical Preservation Commission, City of Ojai Transportation Department, and Ojai Valley News.

The civic responsibility outcomes for students were: a desire to continue to help the community, understanding that we all must make sacrifices in order for us to progress as a community, and a realization that it is through their self focused work and learning that the project was completed.

The students' prior knowledge must be identified. In our case, the students' prior knowledge was identified through the green mapping of Ojai and brainstorming activities. We made a list of historical places in Ojai that were on many of the students' maps as well as other places in Ojai that they did not include. Through class discussions it became apparent that the level of historical knowledge about their community was limited.

Prior to beginning the lessons, the teacher and students should consider research materials such as books, maps and knowledgeable people, modes of transportation, disposable cameras and film developing costs, availability of computers, a scanner, technological support for the creation of the brochure template, and printing costs for the brochure. They should also consider how to identify possible places in the community to include in the brochure.

Students and community partners will know that students are expected to know about different locations in our community through photographs and text. Students will also be expected to be able to create a map including a map key, symbols, and layout (title, location of street names and landmarks). Students will be expected to use writing strategies such as writing sentences that develop a central idea and that consider a target audience. Students will be able to locate reference resources, for example books and community members. Students will also be expected to write personal letters, formal letters, and thank you notes. Students will be able to take photographs of different historical landmarks in the community. Students will be expected to assist others in locating historical places in the brochure and will be able to describe each location.

California Academic Content Standards

History/ Social Science-Grade 3: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

Language Arts-Grade 3

Reading 1.0, 2.1, 2.5, 2.6

Writing Strategies 1.0, 1.1

Research and Technology 1.3, 1.4

Letter Writing 2.3

Writing 2.2

Listening and Speaking 1.1, 1.2

Written and Oral English Conventions 1.0-1.8

Action

To ensure that the end product will be a quality document, it is necessary to do some preliminary lessons. Start by inviting a photographer to instruct students on the basics of taking a good picture. Here are some tips we found helpful: watch to make sure students hold the camera steady; check that lenses are not covered by students' fingers; be aware of things passing in front of the camera while taking pictures (i.e., people and cars); and center the image in the view finder. Do not have students in photographs if confidentiality is an issue. Mini-lessons for this project may include map making, paragraph writing, and writing friendly letters. It is also necessary to review note-taking skills.

Supervision on field trips required the teacher and at least one parent to accompany the class. It was a must to have a very knowledgeable computer technician on our staff to help us with the brochure layout.

This project was self-motivating in the following ways: much of the learning was acquired through field trips, use of cameras, and the fact that the brochure would be available to the public. Prior planning, organization, activities, and frequent review/reflection culminating in the final product addressed the Content Standards.

Students identified civic/social and personal responsibility by having a sense of ownership of what would become the final product. They had a personal desire to inspire others to get out into the community and discover the history of the place where they live while being accurate in the information in the brochure.

History/Social Studies Activities

Students drew individual maps of what they thought were important places in their community. As a whole group they generated a list of places that they wanted to include in the final project. Some additional places that were not thought of before came out of this discussion and were added to the master list. In order to make an accurate map, the students decided that they should investigate how to produce a map layout by looking at and studying reference materials (e.g., map making books). A simple black line master of the streets on which each historical landmark was located was produced for each student. Using an overhead projector, the students participated in a discussion of where each landmark symbol should be placed. Each student designed their own symbol for each landmark keeping in mind that the symbol needed to be a simple visual representation of the spot. Next, each student added their symbol to their copy of the map and

map key. Maps were displayed and symbols were voted on for inclusion in the brochure. Lastly, students drew each symbol on an index card in order for it to be scanned into the template for the brochure.

Students wrote letters and made phone calls to schedule local historians to speak to the class. (Check with your local Chamber of Commerce and library to locate knowledgeable speakers.) We found that once we contacted one person, they had additional suggestions for people to invite. Each speaker was videotaped to serve as a historical record to share with others. We had class discussions at the beginning of the project that made students aware of all the elements that field trips entail. Before each field trip, students decided on the date and time, mode of transportation, what needed to be taken on the trip, and filled out permission slips. They also wrote letters to the parents to explain the purpose of the trip and ask for volunteers to accompany us. Students brought clipboards with notes from their research. Clipboards facilitated recording information during each field trip. We focused on local historical structures in the downtown section of our community. Students took various photographs of places we visited to give a wide range of choices for the final project.

Language Arts Activities

Throughout the project, various writing strategies were taught and implemented. Students were required to write clear, coherent sentences. The students were instructed on the basics of paragraph writing (e.g., topic sentence, supporting sentences, and conclusion) in order to develop a central idea while keeping in mind their audience and purpose. These strategies were then expanded into letter writing. The students got many chances to practice this skill by writing formal and informal letters to parents, organizations, and volunteers. The next step in the project was to have the students use their photographs and notes to write historical paragraphs about each location. Then the students formed groups based on personal preference to rewrite a final, polished paragraph to accompany each photograph in the brochure.

Reflection

Students had a chance to reflect through note taking and journal writing while researching each location in their community. After the completion of the brochure, each student made a memory book consisting of their photographs and paragraphs about the different locations. Their writings contained factual historical information and personal feelings about each site.

Much of the reflection concerning service to the community was done through class discussions. The students always had a strong desire to ensure that the end product was going to be accurate and beneficial to others. Another common reflection of the students was how exciting it was to have the community express their gratitude and enthusiasm about the project. This project seemed to have a “contagious” feeling to it.

A survey was completed at the end of the year to help students’ express their individual likes and dislikes about the process of making the brochure. It included questions about their understanding of service learning, ways they would improve the project if they did it again, and ideas for future projects.

Student Assessment

Students were assessed through informal observations during class time and on field trips. Student notes and journals were reviewed periodically to ascertain their level of understanding. Understanding was also checked through the content and structure of descriptive paragraphs. Formal assessment was used to insure students’ mastery of Content Standards in the areas of Social Studies/History and Language Arts.

Project Evaluation and Expansion

The brochure was completed and printed at the end of the school year. When it was distributed to the Chamber of Commerce, the community’s visitor center, the library, the Board of Education, and the City Council it was met with positive reactions. This gave the students a sense of accomplishment and pride in a job well done. Further evaluation was accomplished through an end of the year survey.

Completing a separate pamphlet on the local cemetery could expand this project to connect knowledge of community founders with historical buildings. Students could research the cemetery’s history and the people buried there in relation to the historical buildings. They could then take this information and create an informational brochure about the community’s history and the cemetery including a map of the cemetery.

To further expand the current project, it would be beneficial to create a website that could have additional historical sites and more information along with the original historical sites in the current brochure. The children drew many more pictures and wrote longer paragraphs that could not be

included in the brochure due to space constraints. The website should be linked with the school's site so it could reach a greater audience.

Celebration and Public Recognition

A district-wide celebration in honor of Cesar Chavez was held in the spring of 2004. Our students made poster-sized drawings and wrote short paragraphs to describe their project. These were used to make short presentations to other school children and teachers at the gathering.

Students celebrated the completion of the project by inviting the mayor and superintendent of the school district to an event at our school. A copy of the brochure, accompanied by a letter written by the students, was sent home to their parents. Many parents responded with how impressed and proud they were with the final product.

A copy of the brochure is available at the Chamber of Commerce, the community's visitor center, and the library. The Chamber of Commerce felt that this brochure was so beneficial to the community that they will fund future reprinting.

Materials and Staff Development Needs

Project Needs:

- books
- maps
- knowledgeable people
- modes of transportation
- disposable cameras
- film developing costs
- availability of computers
- a scanner
- technological support for the creation of the brochure template
- printing costs for the brochure
- clipboards
- construction paper
- decorations such as stickers for memory books
- scissors
- glue
- felt pens

Staff Development Needs/Knowledge

-knowledge of computers

Funding, Resource Support, and Sustainability

Funding for this project provided by our District's Cal Serve Service-Learning grant. Some supplies such as paper, pencils, printer cartridges, etc., were provided through our regular school budget and through parent donation. Many of our books and reference materials were borrowed from the library. The map-making books that were read to the class were bought through funding for classroom libraries. Printing of the color brochure is the major expense for this project and was provided by the district's Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning grant. When copies of the brochure run out, we hope the Chamber of Commerce will fund an additional printing.