

Cool Places for Cool Kids: A Brochure An Ojai Service-Learning Project

Grade Level: Third to fourth grade

Service Areas: Civics, History

Academic Area: English Language Arts, History, and Social Science

Duration of Service: Short term

Degree of complexity: Medium

Contact Information

Submitted by: Chris Smithers, csmithers@ojai.k12.ca.us

Ojai Unified School District

Author: Tracey Anderson, Tanderson@ojai.k12.ca.us

Author: Linda Bell, Lbell@ojai.k12.ca.us

Topa Topa Elementary School

916 Mountain View Avenue

Ojai, CA 93023

Telephone (805) 640-4366

Fax (805) 640-4369

Web site: <http://www.ojai.k12.ca.us/schools/topatopa/Home.htm>

Introduction and Description of the Lesson

Topa Topa Elementary is located in the small town of Ojai, just north of Ventura. The school has an enrollment of 510 students with approximately 35 percent classified as non-white. The students from two third grade classes were prompted to create a community resource map and brochure for the Ojai Trolley called “Cool Places for Cool Kids in the Ojai Valley” after using the Ojai Trolley for numerous field trips to local landmarks.

The development of the brochure came about when the students realized how important the trolley’s brochure was to getting around Ojai and when they also recognized there were no materials for teachers, kids, and visitors about the community of Ojai. This project focused on the history-social science academic content standards by directing students to contact multiple resources to understand local history. In addition, the use of mapmaking writing strategies satisfied various language arts standards.

Instructional Process

Preparation

The students’ limited knowledge about their community became apparent after in-class discussions. The students identified the need for an informational brochure for kids as a result of their study of the community and landmarks in Ojai.

Before beginning the lessons, the teachers and students considered how to select possible places in the community for inclusion in the brochure. This was accomplished through the “green mapping” (see <http://www.greenmap.org/ymaps/ymindex.html> .) of

Ojai and brainstorming activities to identify and list all the possible places in the community that could be included in the brochure.

Community members were instrumental during the development of the brochure. The community members included parents, storeowners, the museum director, librarian, Ojai Valley Land Conservancy staff, City of Ojai Historical Preservation Commission, City of Ojai Transportation Department, and the master gardener for the Ojai Demonstration Garden.

One necessary element to ensure the quality of the end product was for the students to learn how to take photographs. A photographer instructed the students on the basics of taking good pictures. Some helpful tips are listed below:

- Watch to make sure students hold the camera steady.
- Check that students' fingers do not cover lenses.
- Be aware of things passing in front of the camera while taking pictures (e.g., people and cars) and center the image in the viewfinder.

Do not have students in photographs if confidentiality is an issue. (Editor's note:

If any student is to be included in a picture, make sure parental notification and consent forms are sent home, signed, and returned). Mini-lessons for this project may include mapmaking, paragraph structure, and letter writing. It is also necessary to review note-taking skills.

By the end of the project, students and community partners should be familiar about different locations in the community through photographs and text. Students were expected to be able to create a map, including a map key, symbols, and layout (title, location of street names, and landmarks). Students should be knowledgeable in writing strategies, such as writing sentences that develop a central idea and considering a target audience. Students should be skilled enough to find reference resources, locate community members, and write personal letters, formal letters, and thank you notes. Students should be able to take photographs of different landmarks in the community. Students were expected to help others in locating places in the brochure and to be able to describe each location.

California State Academic Content Standards

Third grade history/social science: Continuity and Change 3.0

Third grade language arts: Writing Strategies 1.0, Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics) 2.3

Action

This project was primarily self-motivating because most of the learning was acquired through field trips, use of cameras, and the knowledge that the brochure would be available to the public. Engaging students in the planning and organizing activities, and frequent review and reflection that culminated in the final product, addressed the content standards. Students developed civic, social, and personal responsibility through a sense of place in their community and the desire to provide accurate information about their community for the final project. The third graders had a personal desire to inspire others to get out into the community and discover the special characteristics of the place in which they live.

Lesson 1: Mapmaking

To make an accurate map, the students decided that they should investigate how to produce a map layout and reviewed mapmaking books. Through class discussions, the students generated a master list of landmarks they felt were important to the community. A simple black-line master layout of the streets where each landmark was located was produced for each student and, by using an overhead projector, the students participated in a discussion of where each landmark symbol should be placed. Following this discussion, students used their black-lined layout and designed a symbol for each landmark. The students were reminded that the symbol needed to be a simple visual representation of the landmark. The map symbols were displayed and by a vote the students chose which symbols to include in the brochure. Finally, each symbol was drawn on an index card to be scanned into the template for the brochure.

Lesson 2: Local History

The lesson focused on learning about the people who were instrumental in the founding of the community. These people included persons who had streets named after them, persons who had owned long-standing family businesses, the local Native American tribe (Chumash), and people with colorful life stories. In our community the Chamber of Commerce and the library were good sources for finding knowledgeable speakers. In addition, visiting the local cemetery where the original settlers and founders are buried proved to be a fascinating way to study Ojai's history. The California Historical Society was another useful resource for city and county information. The California Historical Society Web site is available at: <http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/>.

Students wrote letters, made telephone calls to local historians, and invited the historians to speak to the class. The students noticed that the speakers or historians often had additional suggestions of additional people to invite. Each speaker was videotaped to serve as a historical record to share with others. In the library, students researched the cemetery and discovered interesting stories and legends about the lives of the people who influenced their community. The next step was to take the students on a field trip to visit the cemetery; we had class discussions that made the students aware of all the elements that field trips entail. Before each trip, students decided on the date and time, mode of transportation, and what items needed to be taken. The students also filled out individual permission slips, wrote letters to the parents to explain the purpose of the trip, and invited volunteers to accompany us.

The daughter of a Native American Chumash elder accompanied the class on the trip to the cemetery. At one Chumash elder's gravesite, the daughter told personal accounts of his life, sang, and played Chumash songs on a flute. Students brought clipboards with notes from their research and took various photographs (e.g., signs at entrances, store fronts, or other visual representations of sites) of places we visited to give a wide range of photographic choices for the final project. After each trip, the students wrote thank-you notes.

Lesson 3: Writing Strategies

Throughout the project, teachers taught and implemented various writing strategies. Teachers instructed the students on the basics of paragraph writing (e.g., topic sentence, supporting sentences, and conclusion) to develop a central idea while keeping in mind their audience and purpose. These strategies then expanded into letter writing. The students received many chances to practice this skill by writing formal and informal letters to parents, organizations, and volunteers. The next step in the project had the students use their photographs and notes to write paragraphs about each location. The students then formed groups to rewrite a final, polished paragraph to accompany each photograph in the brochure. The students completed and printed the brochure at the end of the school year.

A copy of the brochure is available to the public at the Chamber of Commerce, the community's visitor center, and the library.

Reflection

Students reflected through notetaking and journal writing while researching each location in their community. After the completion of the brochure, each student made a memory book that contained their photographs and paragraphs about the different locations. Their writings included factual information and personal feelings about each site.

The students reflected on their service to the community through class discussions. They exhibited a strong desire to ensure that the end product was going to be accurate and beneficial to others. The students were also excited about the community's expressions of gratitude and enthusiasm about the project.

The students expressed their individual likes and dislikes about the project in a survey completed at the end of the year, including questions about their understanding of service-learning, the ways they would improve the project if they did it again, and their ideas for future projects.

Student Assessment

Students were assessed on the content of academic standards 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 ensure students' mastery of the content standards in the areas of history-social science and language arts.

Project Evaluation and Expansion

Evaluation was accomplished through the end-of-the-year service-learning survey. Doing a more in-depth section or separate pamphlet on the cemetery's history and the people interred there could expand this project. Students could also conduct more

extensive research to create an informational brochure about the community's history and include a map of the cemetery.

Celebration and Public Recognition

This project gave the students a sense of accomplishment and pride in a job well done. Students were recognized for their work on their brochure at the district's Cesar Chavez Day Celebration. Students created a display board with photographs of Ojai, hand-drawn pictures, and quotations from Cesar Chavez relating to their project. Students celebrated the completion of the project by sharing the brochure with the other third grade classes at the school. A copy of the brochure, accompanied by a letter written by the students, was sent home to their parents.

Educators, parents, and the Chamber of Commerce expressed a positive reaction toward the brochure. Many parents commented about how impressed and proud they were with the final product. The Chamber of Commerce felt that this brochure was so beneficial to the community they will fund future reprinting.

Materials and Staff Development Needs

Materials Needed

Books, Maps, Disposable cameras, Scanner, Clipboards, Construction paper, Stickers for memory books, Scissors, Glue, Felt pens, Computers for Internet access (<http://www.greenmap.com/ymaps/ymindex.html>)

Staff Development Needs/Knowledge

- Knowledge of computers
- Other Considerations
- Modes of transportation
 - Film developing costs
 - Technological support for the creation of the brochure template
 - Printing costs for the brochure

Funding and Resource Support and Sustainability

Funding for this project was provided by our districts CalServe Service-Learning grant. Some supplies, such as paper, pencils, printer cartridges, and so forth, were provided through our regular school budget and through parent donations. Many of the books and reference materials were borrowed from the library. The mapmaking books that were read to the class were bought through funding for classroom libraries. Printing of the color brochure was the major expense for this project and was provided by the district's Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning grant. The Ojai Chamber of Commerce volunteered to continue funds for reprinting costs.