Elementary Lesson Plan: Our Classroom Encyclopedia

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Recommended for Grades 4-6

Rationale

Using the Oregon Encyclopedia as a guide, fourth- through sixth-grade students will write encyclopedia entries about topics of interest to them in their community. Incorporating geography, history, and literacy, this curriculum allows students to guide themselves through the processes of research, writing, and editing. Students will interact with the community though conducting interviews, exploring the library, and collecting information through different media. In this intentionally loosely designed unit, students will explore the OE, identify a topic, write and edit an entry, and then publish their entries online in a class encyclopedia (e.g., on Wikispaces). The unit connects to Oregon standards in language arts and social sciences.

Assessment

Formative assessment will take place through examining graphic organizers, writing drafts, peer-editing, and observing. Students will also be given participation points for completing daily assignments.

Summative assessment will occur through the evaluation of students' final work, which will be accessed on the class wiki page.

Unit Goals

- Explore the Oregon Encyclopedia
- Brainstorm research topics and choose a topic of interest
- Research topic for classroom encyclopedia
- Write and edit entry for classroom encyclopedia

Lesson 1

Goal:

Explore the Oregon Encyclopedia

Learning Objective(s):

Students will identify key features of the Oregon Encyclopedia website

Curriculum Standard(s):

EL.06.RE.03 Listen to, read, and understand a wide variety of informational and narrative text, including classic and contemporary literature, poetry, magazines, newspapers, reference materials, and online information.

Materials Needed:

- Computer for each student and Internet access
- Graphic organizer

Procedures:

- Students are introduced to the Oregon Encyclopedia (www.oregonencyclopedia. org), its purpose, processes, website, and its site navigation.
- Students will receive a graphic organizer to record the concepts that they notice

while the teacher browses the website. Students record the key features of the site on their graphic organizers. They can shout out topics to look for on the site as the teacher navigates.

- Teacher shows the students how to use the sidebar, and they navigate the site by themselves.
- Class discusses the goal of the project and questions that students have about navigating the site.
- Students go to the computer lab and explore the site. Students continue to fill out their graphic organizers while in the lab. Teacher walks around to help the students while in the lab.

Differentiation/Accommodation:

Students will receive graphic organizers that will help them to organize the information in a way that is helpful to them.

Lesson 2

Unit Goal:

Brainstorm possible research topics and choose a topic of interest

Learning Objective(s):

- Students will use various strategies (brainstorming, outlining, etc.) to prepare for writing.
- Students will identify central ideas and categories.
- Students will narrow topics down to manageable size for research.

Curriculum Standard(s):

EL.06.WR.01 Use a variety of strategies to prepare for writing, such as brainstorming, making lists, mapping, outlining, grouping related ideas, using graphic organizers, and taking notes.

Materials Needed:

- Dry erase board or document camera
- Graphic organizers

Procedures:

- Review the previous lesson. Students share their ideas about what they thought was interesting, appealing, and exciting about the OE.
- Begin a brainstorming session with students. Ask them: If we were to create a website as a class, what would you want to include? What aspects of the community are most important to you? What things do you find interesting about your classroom, school, neighborhood, and town?
- Take ideas from the class and write them on the board. If similar categories come up, guide students into combining and creating umbrella categories.
- After accumulating many ideas from students, begin to narrow the categories and topics. Finalize the categories to a maximum of 5.
- As homework, students will think about and solidify a topic to write about for the classroom encyclopedia. They will need to have chosen a final topic by the beginning of the next lesson.

Differentiation/Accommodation:

All students will have the opportunity to brainstorm ideas and discuss them during class. Providing this space for open discussion will allow each student to discover connections and interests among classmates and to bring their own interests into the project. Graphic organizers will be provided for those who want them.

Lesson 3

Unit Goal:

Research topic for classroom encyclopedia

Learning Objective(s):

Students will establish criteria for determining the credibility of online resources.

Curriculum Standard(s):

SS.08.SA.02 Gather, interpret, use, and document information from multiple sources, distinguishing facts from opinions and recognizing points of view.

Materials Needed:

- Pencil and paper for each student
- Computer
- Projector
- Projector screen
- Document camera
- One good resource for each of five chosen classroom encyclopedia categories

Procedures:

- Students will quick-write about their topic: why they chose it, what's important about it, and where they might find information about it.
- Students share their quick-write in small groups.
- Students share ideas about where to find information about their topic in whole-class discussion.
- Using a computer or document camera, the teacher shares one or more good resources for each classroom encyclopedia category and explains why the resource is of high quality. Together, the class creates a list of criteria for determining a site's credibility (e.g., the differences between .org, .com, and .edu at the end of a URL)
- Closure/formative assessment: Exit slip. Students write one method they can use to determine if an online source might be credible.

Lesson 4

Goal:

Research topic for classroom encyclopedia

Learning Objective(s):

Students will research their topic in the computer lab.

Curriculum Standard(s):

EL.06.WR.30 Use a variety of resource materials to gather information for research topics (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, schedules, journals, phone directories, web resources).

Materials Needed:

- Computer for each student and Internet access
- Graphic organizer

Procedures:

- Students go to the computer lab to research the topic they chose.
- Teacher puts a list of guidelines on the board that the students can follow:
- Find at least 3 solid sources.
- Take notes on the sources using a graphic organizer.
- Focus on finding the types of information that students noted on the graphic organizer during the first lesson.
- Students find enough information to write their encyclopedia entries
- Teacher models taking notes from a website and refers to guidelines on board.
- Closure: Formative Assessment. Students identify 3 interesting facts they learned about their topic during their online session.

Differentiation/Accommodation:

Differentiation for this lesson takes the universal design approach. Students who need a challenge can go deep into the research, and students who are emerging learners can go as far as they can. Students who speak another language can change the computer settings to accommodate them. ELL students and students on IEPs can get more help from the teacher and volunteers while in the lab.

Lesson 5

Unit Goal:

Research topic for classroom encyclopedia

Learning Objective(s):

Students will identify hard-copy resources to use for research.

Curriculum Standard(s):

SS.05.SA.02 Gather, use, and document information from multiple sources (e.g., print, electronic, human, primary, secondary).

EL.06.WR.28 Use organizational features of electronic text (e.g., bulletin boards, databases, keyword searches, e-mail addresses) to locate information.

Materials Needed:

- Field trip plan and permission slips
- Librarian
- Research tools (paper, pencils, etc.)

Procedures:

- Explain to students that while a majority of their research has been online, there are many ways to research their topics, including the library.
- Take a field trip to the city library to gather information from multiple sources.
- Allow time for librarian to review how to look up books, use the computers, answer questions, etc.
- Provide guidelines on what students should be looking for (at least 2 sources). Tell students to write down any information that is helpful or interesting, along with the sources they used.
- Send students off to research.
- Closure/Formative Assessment: Exit slip. Students will write down the names of 2 sources they found and why they believe the sources are credible resources for their research.

Differentiation/Accommodation:

Students will be allowed to work in pairs or groups if desired. For emerging learners who might have trouble reading or writing, they will have the option to collaborate with other students in the same category.

Lesson 6

Unit Goal:

Write and edit entry for classroom encyclopedia

Learning Objective(s):

- Students will learn to collect various resources.
- Students will begin writing their classroom encyclopedia entry of at most 250 words.

Curriculum Standard(s):

SS.08.SA.02 Gather, interpret, use, and document information from multiple sources, distinguishing facts from opinions and recognizing points of view.

EL.06.WR.28 Use organizational features of electronic text (e.g., bulletin boards, databases, keyword searches, e-mail addresses) to locate information.

EL.06.WR.25 Write research reports: Pose relevant questions that are focused enough to be thoroughly answered in the report. Identify credible sources. Support the main idea or ideas with facts, details, examples, and explanations from multiple authoritative sources, such as speakers, newspapers and magazines, reference books, and online information searches. Include references used.

Materials:

- Resources collected from research
- Computer lab

Procedures:

- Teacher explains that students will start to write their classroom encyclopedia entries. They are to compile all information gathered to piece together an entry on their topic.
- Teacher will model how to organize materials and take information off a graphic organizer to convert into prose writing. Students work in computer lab to write a rough draft of their entry.
- Students work for several periods until their rough draft is finished.

Closure/Formative Assessment:

At the end of each work session, students will identify where they are in the writing process and what they plan to accomplish in tomorrow's session. At the beginning of each session, students will review the goal they set for the current session.

Differentiation/Accommodation:

Length and complexity of entries can be differentiated as well as the option of visual/graphic entries, depending on the individual student needs.

Lesson 7

Unit Goal:

Write and edit entry for classroom encyclopedia

Learning Objective(s):

- Students will edit a peer's encyclopedia entry.
- Students will edit their own writing.

Curriculum Standard(s):

EL.06.WR.09 Edit and proofread one's own writing, as well as that of others, using the writing conventions, and, for example, an editing checklist or list of rules with specific examples of corrections of specific errors.

Materials Needed:

Draft of encyclopedia entry.

Procedures:

- Teacher reviews the guidelines for peer editing and passes out checklist (found at go.hrw.com/resources/go_ss/teacher99/toolkit/TOOLKT17.pdf).
- Teacher numbers off students to put them in pairs. Each pair works to edit each other's entry. After student partner edits, he or she gives the partner the checklist to help them make the changes and corrections.
- As a group finishes editing, they find another group to peer edit with. The more peers who edit their paper, the better.
- Papers are collected for an edit by teacher before final entries are written.

Differentiation/Accommodation:

If needed, students can be paired with a partner who speaks their native language. Students will get a checklist that will help them know what questions to ask and what to look for in their partner's paper. Students get a copy of the checklist on their entries to help them make the corrections needed.

Lesson 8

Unit Goal:

Write and edit entry for classroom encyclopedia

Learning Objective(s):

Students will use guidelines and peer revisions and teacher edits to revise and finalize writing.

Curriculum Standard(s):

EL.06.WR.08 Revise drafts to improve the organization and consistency of ideas within and between paragraphs.

Materials Needed:

- Peer-editing guidelines
- Computer lab

Procedures:

- Pass out previously (printed) peer-edited writing. Allow students to talk about the edits made, and answer any questions they might have.
- Review common mistakes and model correct ways to solve writing errors.
- Tell students to revise their entries as a new document.
- Students will have a final entry by the end of the class period.

Differentiation/Accommodation:

Individual work time is emphasized in this lesson. Emerging learners will have the opportunity to work closely with the teacher or other students who have completed the assignment early. Students who finish early will be allowed to spend time finding media (pictures, videos, etc.) supporting their topic.

*Teacher homework: Put together finalized class encyclopedia for the next lesson.

Lesson 9

Learning Objective(s):

Students will use their final entries to teach the class about their topics.

Curriculum Standard(s):

EL.06.RE.01 Read aloud grade-level narrative text and informational text fluently and accurately with effective pacing, intonation, and expression.

Materials Needed:

- Final version of class encyclopedia
- Document camera
- Celebration materials!

Procedures:

- Congratulate students on a job well done!
- Show students the final product on the ELMO.
- Have each student read and explain their entry to the class.
- Celebrate!

Differentiation/Accommodation:

Throughout this unit, all students had the opportunity to research a topic of their own choosing and discover information that was meaningful and relevant to them personally, creating and supporting a diverse learning environment.

About The Authors

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This lesson plan was developed during a class (summer 2010) with Professor Barbara Ruben, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Education, Portland State University.