

The Story of a Project

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A project is an in-depth study of a real world topic. Projects can be said to develop through an introductory phase, a research phase and a review phase. This three phase temporal structure helps the teacher to organize and guide the progression of the study in ways which accord with the development of the children's interests and personal involvement.

Preliminary Planning

First the teacher selects the topic of study based on the children's interests, the curriculum goals, and the availability of local resources. The teacher also brainstorms his or her own experience, knowledge and ideas, representing them in a topic web. This web can be added to throughout the project and can continue to be useful for planning and recording the progress of the project.

Phase 1

The teacher discusses the topic with the children to find out about the experiences they have had and what they already know. The children represent their experiences in a variety of ways and show how well they understand the concepts involved in explaining their observations. The teacher helps the children ask questions about what they would be interested in investigating. Communication is sent home to parents about the study to invite them to talk with their children about the topic and to see if anyone can offer special expertise.

Phase 2

The teacher arranges opportunities for the children to do field work and speak to experts. Resources are provided to help the children with their investigations; real objects, books and other research materials. The teacher suggests ways for children to carry out a variety of investigations. Each child is involved in representing what they are learning and each child can work at his or her own level in terms of basic skills, drawing, music, construction, and dramatic play. The teacher enables the children to be aware of all the different work being done through class or group discussion and display. The topic web designed earlier provides a shorthand means of documenting the progress of the project.

Phase 3

The teacher arranges a culminating event for the children to share what they have learned. They can be helped to tell the story of their project to others. They can feature its highlights for another class, the principal, and/or the parents. The teacher helps the children to select material to share and in so doing involves them purposefully in reviewing and evaluating the whole project. The teacher also offers the children imaginative ways of personalizing their new knowledge through art, stories and drama. Finally the teacher uses children's ideas and interests to make a meaningful transition between the project being concluded and the topic of study in the next project.

Resources:

PROJECTS web site: <http://www.project-approach.com>

Chard S.C. (1998) *The Project Approach: Making Curriculum Come Alive*. Scholastic

Chard S.C. (1998) *The Project Approach: Managing Successful Projects*. Scholastic

Katz, L.G. & Chard, S.C. (2000) *Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach*. (Edn.2) Ablex.

Chard, S.C. (2001) *The Project Approach: Taking a Closer Look*. CDROM; Prospect CDs.