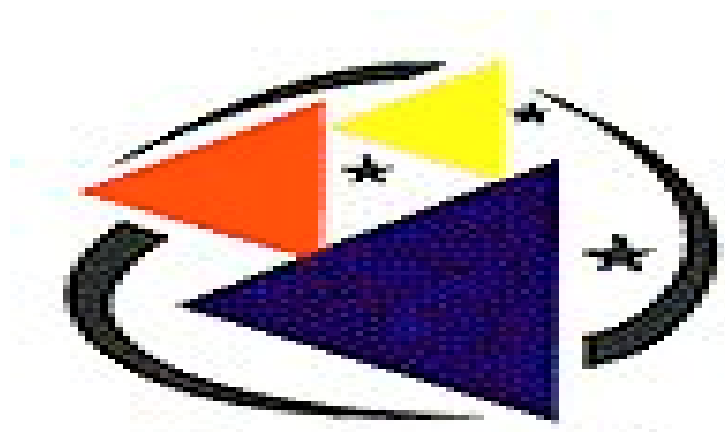


Project-Based Classroom Activities
based on
Equipped for the Future Standards



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Introduction

To Project-Based Classroom Activities Based on Equipped for the Future Standards

Project-based learning activities and Equipped For the Future (EFF) standards are a perfect match for Adult ESOL. The largely unconscious learning, which occurs as students are engaged in a meaningful project, is an ideal way to attain EFF standards. The value of project-based learning as an effective tool for Adult ESOL teachers became clear in a presentation made by Carol Van Duzer from the Center for Applied Linguistics at the National Symposium on Adult ESL Research held in September of 2001. Subsequently, review of the 1998 National Center for ESL Literacy (NCLE) ERIC Digest by Van Duzer and Donna Moss cemented the principles of project-based learning.

Definition

Project-based learning is a collaborative approach to teaching in which learners are placed in situations where they must use authentic language to accomplish whatever is needed to complete the project objectives. The best projects are those which have an impact outside of the classroom so students feel they are part of an effort that will make a difference for others. Many of the twelve projects contained in this compilation have such an impact. Students were especially pleased to be part of an effort, which would make things easier for the next class of ESOL students. These projects fit nicely into the Equipped For the Future (EFF) “Citizen/Community Member Role Map”. Often the projects were designed or refined based on needs, issues or questions identified by learners.

Benefits of Project-based Learning

As a natural part of the process learners plan, work on complex tasks, negotiate work details, volunteer or are assigned duties and assess their performance and progress. Learners can conduct all aspects of project planning and implementation with the teacher acting as a facilitator and resource. The sense of accomplishment felt by all who participate in a meaningful project has a real impact on self-esteem. Many of the teachers who contributed projects noted that students frequently told them that they were surprised, pleased and proud of themselves by what they were able to accomplish.

Equipped For the Future (EFF)

Most of you know that Equipped For the Future (EFF) is a curriculum reform effort designed by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) to change the focus of basic education in the United States from one centered on student deficiencies in basic skills to one which supports adults as they function in their everyday lives as workers, citizens and parents/family members. Basic skills/language competencies are not ignored in EFF project-based units but the point of departure becomes engagement in an authentic activity. For each of the project-based units contained here, the writer identified applicable EFF Content Standards as well as Florida Curriculum Frameworks Performance Standards for Adult ESOL. These units address a student's need to be engaged in meaningful activity while providing teachers and funding agencies with the ability to document attainment of performance standards. EFF Content Standards embedded in project-based activities provide the newest members of our society with experience on what it means to be an American by helping them to acquire those skills naturally.

Performance Standards

The EFF Content Standards along with the Worker, Citizen and Parent/Family Member Role Maps correlate nicely with Florida's Curriculum Frameworks for Adult ESOL. EL Civics instructional activities are specifically supported by the EFF Role Maps. Project-based units are an effective framework for students to attain both state and federal performance standards.

Class Time

It is suggested that project activities be scheduled for two or three one-hour periods a week. Regular ESOL class activities are scheduled for the remainder of the time. Experience has shown that in most cases students make an effort to be in class when project time is scheduled to be certain that they complete assigned tasks. Project teachers reported that once the projects got started students began working on them out of class often completing tasks that could not be finished during "project time." Most of the projects lasted from 4 to 6 weeks meaning that about 12 to 18 hours of class time was used.

Getting Started

General Procedures for the conduct of project-based learning activities have been developed to assist teachers who are making a first attempt at infusing project activities into the classroom. These guidelines are designed as a starting point. Many of the writers for this project for example changed titles for team members to reflect more accurately the job they were doing. It is important however to have real “teams” that function for most of the project and not just “groups” of students chosen randomly. Team assignments will help avoid the normal complaints heard about “group learning activities”. When each team member has a role to fill, expectations are fixed and “Type A” students cannot take over and dominate the work of the team. On the other hand it is also obvious when students do not fulfill duties specifically assigned to them. The General procedures follow:

General Procedures for Project-Based Lessons Using Equipped For the Future For Adult ESOL

1. General Introduction of Project-Based Lessons:

- **Discuss need to gain experience using English to accomplish a real goal.**
- **Explain that the class will be divided into “teams” for the project.**
- **Emphasize that teams are borrowed from corporate America where they are known as “Quality Work Teams”.**
- **Introduce EFF Adult Roles Model to help students understand that skills learned as they complete project activities transfer to everyday life.**
- **Discuss several possible class projects with the class. Together choose a project that is likely to produce a tangible benefit for the class members or society. They must “buy in” to the project.**
- **Projects that are very involved such as the planning of a center-wide event can involve the whole class with “teams” taking on what was once known as committee work.**

2. Developing Teams:

- **4 or 5 members on each team works best.**
- **Each member should have a role such as: 1) Chair or Leader, 2) Co-chair or Assistant Leader, 3) Recorder, 4) Inventory/materials Manager and if 5) Evaluator.**
- **Each student will be held accountable for individual responsibilities as well as attainment of success as a team.**

3. Monitoring Teams:

- **Chairs and Co-chairs keep the group on task, manage conflict and report to the whole class when necessary.**
- **The Recorder keeps records of all work and or products.**
- **Inventory Managers make sure necessary materials are on hand when needed.**
- **The Evaluator ends each meeting with an assessment of where the group is relative to timely completion of the project.**

4. Starting Off:

- **Class is divided into “Teams” either randomly or by matching abilities or gender.**
- **Teams chose Committee or Project (Teacher may assign a particular project if appropriate).**
- **Team members choose or are assigned roles (Chair, Recorder etc.).**
- **Team decides what needs to be done to complete project.**
- **Action plan is developed to include: 1) Task to be accomplished, 2) Who is responsible, and 3) Deadline dates.**
- **Evaluator agrees that activities are likely to result in success.**
- **Future meeting(s) are scheduled along with agreement on assignments to be completed according to Action Plan.**

Ground Rules include: “Everybody Works” (including chair), English only during teamwork, activities include interaction with native speakers of English.

5. Between Meeting Actions:

- **Inventory manager checks to be sure all required materials are ready for next meeting.**
- **Evaluator checks to be sure assigned duties are on track and notifies chair if a difficulty is discovered.**

6. Follow-up Meetings:

- **Groups meet to report progress and revise plans.**
- **Teacher helps where necessary and is a resource for all teams.**

7. Evaluation:

- **Teacher schedules whole class weekly reports on progress.**
- **Final Team Report includes an evaluation of the contributions of each member's efforts and effectiveness.**
- **Teacher will evaluate the "Teamwork" of each group member.**
- **Overall project evaluation is completed.**

Wrap-up

The twelve project-based units, which follow, are intended as a guide for ESOL teachers who would like to energize their class with meaningful activity. Many ESOL instructors, especially those who are part-time, would like to implement new strategies but have little or no planning time. These units were developed to help them get started. Those teachers can look at the plans, tweak them a bit, make copies and go.