

Equipped for the Future

My School in Action

Project writer

Edward Schiffer

“The students built a sense of teamwork and problem solving and helping each other. This project also exposed students to a different approach in learning; using English for a communicative purpose as opposed to simple “learning” experience. Group work required in this project placed a new focus on student responsibility.”

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Project Based Lesson Plan XI - 140

Project Title: My School in Action

ESOL Language Focus: Reading Writing
 Speaking Listening **Level(s): Beginning**

Florida Adult ESOL Course Competencies:

15.06 Recognize, state, read and write vocabulary for personal information
 16.02 Use common verbs in yes/no questions
 16.02 Use information questions

EFF Standards and Roles:

Cooperate with Others Plan
 Observe Critically Guide Others
 Listen Actively
 Speak so Others Can Understand

Classroom Activities/Procedures (Project includes attachments)

Part One - Building Background

Brainstorm "SCHOOL" Build a list of vocabulary (you will constantly build on this list during the project)
 Take school tour - Tell students to look for more vocabulary - Debrief students by adding to list
 Introduce Project vocabulary - Take another school tour - Tell students to find examples of the actions.
 Debrief students by taking responses and converting them into statements
 Venn Diagram - differences and similarities between our school and schools in our countries - student presentations

Part Two - Empowerment

Ask students where we can find examples of our action vocabulary.
 Ask how we can find out more information.
 Students will develop a questionnaire to interview people around the school using the vocabulary

Part Three - Action

Students go out and interview (groups may be assigned to interview the different roles that make up the school)

Part Four - Reflection

Debrief the students (groups) on their findings and organize the findings
 Revisit the original lists and ask for comments or additions.
 Students write a report on the differences between our school and a school in their country.
 Debrief the students on the group process

***Vocabulary:**

identify understand
 describe recognize
 conduct leave
 develop utilize
 react
 compare
 locate
 practice
 interpret
 compose *Taken from FL
 write Workforce/Work-
 wear place Readiness

Resources:

School Employees
 Other Students in Other
 Classes
 Neighbors
 Co-workers
 Family Members

Out of Class Assignment(s):

Use the questionnaire to interview relatives, neighbors, other people on the job.

Materials Needed:

Clipboards Chart Paper
 Paper Markers
 Pencils
 Computers (optional for formalizing questionnaire)

Summary

I did this project with a Foundations group. It was difficult and I would advise doing this project in a high beginning or low intermediate group. The going was slowed by having to stop and explain. I unfortunately fell into Spanish at some points because the students did not have the language to understand the nuances of organization and task. Once they understood, they jumped right in to work. It was wonderful to watch them take control. I felt, however, that I could have achieved more and given more control to the students if they could have negotiated more in the process; and the whole purpose is to negotiate in English.

Many times, I had to stop and go over things like the concepts of forming yes/no questions. This broke up the focus of the purpose of the project; to get out and meet people and report. Grammar is not a goal in this project but we needed to do grammar. We achieved the goal but it was a jerky process that should have taken a couple of weeks. It ended up taking four weeks. Again, this is why I feel that it is perhaps more appropriate for a group that has more notions of English vocabulary and structure. (Though the grammar chopped up our process, I feel that it was viewed in a purposeful content by the students.)

Schedule of Events

Session	Description of Activities	Approximate Time
1	Brainstorm "School" - Create chart of vocabulary/clarify.	1 hour
2	Group formation and explanation of school tour.	1 hour
3	School tour to bring back and report on new words	1 hour
4	Continue vocabulary clarification - Classification of the vocabulary (people, building, actions).	1 hour
5	Graphic representation of the vocabulary, by groups	1 hour
6	Vocabulary Fair - Groups rotated to view graphic representations and to take notes on the vocabulary	1 hour
7	Venn diagram/contrast our school with another. Students begin to build individual list of school at home.	1 hour
8	Students collect action words from group charts. Beginning of question-making explanation	1 hour
9	Continuation of question-making lessons	1 hour
10	Practice making original questions. Students focus on actions observed around the school.	1 hour
11	Groups formally form questionnaire for interviews Practice asking the questions/Role play	1 hour
12	Groups use questionnaires to interview a designated person in the school	1 hour

13	Group debriefing/discussion.	1 hour
14	Group writing - Comparison and Contrast of two individuals interviewed	1 hour
15	Group readings of Comparison and Contrast writings Modeling for Comparison and Contrast writing on our school and a school at home. Assignment of writing. Students use lists begun in Session 7	1 hour
		15 hours in total

Suggestions:

Have a lot of different graphic organizers ready.

Let the students develop the vocabulary for the project. The vocabulary listed in the project is only a suggestion if the students do not identify their own vocabulary.

It is important to practice the interview questions. Though the students at this level only did yes/no questions, the questions had to end differently for the person to be interviewed. For example, questions for another student would be "Do you read in the class?" while questions for an administrator would be "Do you read on your job?"

Also, set up the interviews beforehand.

For class reports, it is necessary to have some kind of a chart on which to place the group findings. I used a semantic features map.

I used VENN diagrams and a framed paragraph to set up the comparison/contrast writings.

Framed Paragraph

_____ and _____ are alike in
several ways. They both are _____. They both have

_____.

Finally, they both _____.

However, _____ and _____ are also different.

_____ is _____, while _____

is _____. _____ has,

_____ but _____ has _____.

Lastly, they also differ in that _____

and _____.

_____ and _____ though alike

in many ways, are also quite different.

Semantic Feature Analysis

My School in Action

+ = yes

-- = no

0 = somewhat

Final Teacher Report

EFF Project-Based Classroom Project

Name: Edward Schiffer

Institution: Fienberg/Fisher Adult Education Center

Topic: My School in Action

1. Explain how the project improved your students' English language acquisition? Which activities were most helpful?

This project was carried out in a very low level class (Foundations). However, many were more advanced than what is thought of as a traditional Foundations class. This project gave my class an opportunity to mix skills so students could react together and share prior knowledge. More advanced students explained to the less proficient students. The students built a sense of teamwork and problem solving and helping each other.

This project also exposed students to a different approach in learning; using English for a communicative purpose as opposed to simple "learning" experience. The students had to solve problems and decide how to do the interviews outside the classroom.

The school tours and the interviews to which they led up were the most exciting for the students. The students addressed many types of roles in the school; from administrators to security guards to other students. All groups returned with their own impressions of the people they spoke to and they were eager to express them. (The group that went into the children's cafeteria returned pie-eyed.)

We ended the project with an individual writing project. The topic was to compare our present school with one in the student's country. I modeled with a framed paragraph. For most, this was their first opportunity to produce not only a writing in English, but in paragraph form (some were unable to produce a paragraph but they did write an original text in English!).

2. How was student attendance impacted by the project? Explain.

Group work required in this project placed a new focus on student responsibility. Not only was the student responsible for his/herself, the student was responsible for the group and its products. At Fienberg/Fisher Adult Education Center, we have a 15 minute break period. The custom is to dribble back to class at one's leisure. The project was developed after the break. At the beginning; a lot of time was wasted getting students organized into groups and on task. Students realized quickly that there was work to be done and that schmoozing and group responsibility did not mix. I took an active role in reuniting the class after break, but it was easy because we had a clear agenda and the students had a strong sense of purpose to get back to class. Tardiness after break soon became a non-issue.

3. Describe how the students organized to accomplish team goals.

There is always a core of students who are present every day. As we worked, not only did this core become more solid, it also organized to the point that students requested to have certain class members participate in their groups. The groups started to take on their own identity.

I kept control so that the weaker students were not left out of the process and that they had at least one mentor in their groups who could help them.

As a teacher, I feel the need to learn more about groups and grouping. It is an art that the students and I need to develop in order to establish more effective group work. The students did, however, seem to develop a sense of what they needed by themselves.

4. Would you initiate another project-based activity in your class? Why or Why not?

I would absolutely do another project! I feel that projects need to be scheduled so that the students do not lose the initiative they started with this one. I will be meeting with other teachers soon at our school to see if we can develop across-the-level projects on a school-wide basis.

This initiative is also important for me as a teacher because it changes my role to one of facilitator. I need to change, as do the students, in regard to my orientation towards traditional practices. All relationships change and more projects will set the stage for facilitating change and focusing on learning and the purpose of learning.