

Project Based Learning Proposal

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November 11, 2009

Overview

Title: Making and Enforcing Laws

Goal: The Goal of "Making and Enforcing Laws" is to provide fifth grade students at Fairview Elementary School the opportunity to learn about the process of creating a new law and the job that the police and court system have when enforcing laws and penalties when the laws are broken. Students will use projects and tasks to learn and create their own ideas about this important part of the government.

Objectives: Through completion of this project, the students will have knowledge of the process that a bill goes through on its journey to becoming a law. During this project, the students will master the following standard:

SS4CG3 – The student will describe the functions of government.

- a. Explain the process for making and enforcing laws.

Rationale

It is very important that students create a foundation for learning at the elementary school level. Failure in solidifying this basis of knowledge generates a difficulty for the student in the higher grades. As the minds of the elementary student is developing, project based learning becomes especially critical for creating meaning for these students. This aspect of our proposal is aimed towards fifth grade students at Fairview Elementary School in Henry County, Georgia. Our group has created a proposal in which the social studies class will operate as a mini-society, and "Making and Enforcing Laws" is merely one component of the unit.

Prerequisites

- Students will need access to a computer and internet.

- Students will need to be proficient in using *Comic Life*.
- Students will need to be proficient in using *Microsoft Publisher and Word*.

Resources

- One computer for each student, installed with *Windows XP* or *Vista*
- *Microsoft Office* 2003 or higher on each computer
 - Including *Microsoft Word* and *Microsoft Publisher*
- *Comic Life* software, to be already installed on each computer
 - A 30-day trial of *Comic Life* can be downloaded for free at the following website: <http://plasq.com/downloads>. However, licenses can be purchased for 25, 50, 250, or 1000 computers at a cost ranging from \$199 to \$999: <https://store3.esellerate.net/store/checkout/CustomLayout.aspx?s=STR7424382398&pc=&page=MultiCatalog.htm>
- Promethean Board or LCD Projector for teacher demonstration and viewing of videos
- Paper, pencil, social studies book, and notebook
- Internet access

Processes

Day 1: Students will begin their lessons by completing a journal reflecting on what would happen without laws or rules. After completion of the journal, the teacher will lead a discussion on how things would be different if there were no rules. They should be prompted to think of the many communities that they are members of, from their homes and schools to Georgia and the United States. The students can organize this information into a one-sided multi-flow Thinking Map showing the effects of having no laws or rules to guide the behavior of the community members.

Day 2: Students will begin today's lesson by viewing the *SchoolHouse Rock* video: "How a Bill Becomes a Law." This video can be found in most school media centers or on at the following link: <http://www.schoolhouserock.tv/Bill.html>. This website provides lyrics to the

song and a link to YouTube for access to the video. The teacher will lead discussion on the similarities of passing national laws to passing state laws. The following link provides a video created by Georgia Public Broadcasting on the process that a bill goes through to become a law in the state of Georgia:

<http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid9525047001?bctid=1417300664>. These videos can either be viewed as a class or individually. The class will create a Flow Map of the process that a bill goes through to be enacted as a law.

Day 3: The teacher will lead a discussion on what roles certain laws have – to maintain order, to create fairness for people, etc. Students will brainstorm on what “laws” that they would like to see enacted in their own classroom community. They will write their ideas down on paper using complete sentences, specifically stating what would or would not be allowed in their community. The teacher will collect these “bills” and sort them into the following categories: Education, Security, Ethics, Housing, and any other categories into which the bills may fall. The teacher may also have bills prepared to insert into the stack that the class may have neglected. The students will then be separated into Committees to review the bills, with there being an equal number of bill categories and Committees. The students will review and discuss the bills and vote within their Committee. Only those bills having a majority vote after discussion will move on to the next step. The teacher will collect those bills moving on and those to be discarded. (Of course, the teacher does have the final say in this activity – in order to maintain his or her classroom.)

Day 4: The class will start by being separated into two groups – the House and the Senate, with two students staying out to act as the presenters of the bills. The bills will be presented to each group, discussed, and then voted upon. After voting, if it has received a majority vote, the bill will move on to the next group. Only those bills receiving a majority vote in both groups will move to the teacher (aka: Governor/ President) for review. The teacher will review the laws and announce the community laws to the class. The teacher will assign a

small group of students one of the new laws to discuss and analyze. They will decide on an appropriate punishment for breaking this law.

Day 5: The teacher will lead a class discussion of their laws and the penalties assigned. The class will discuss how the national government (ie: principal and other administration) do have a certain hold and control over the local government. This reinforces to the students how their classroom community's laws, punishments, and penalties must fit into the scheme of the larger community – the school. The class will decide on which specific laws will be enacted into their classrooms and the penalties for breaking these laws. The students will work with their small groups from the end of Day 4 to type their law and the appropriate consequence, creating a poster using *Microsoft Publisher*. The students will work individually to create a *Comic Life* representation, using their own words to describe the process that a bill goes through when becoming a law. These documents will be posted in the classroom for students to view and refer to throughout the school year. The student will also write a three to four paragraph using *Microsoft Word* reflection on the process that a bill goes through. The student will need to address the following topics: difficulties experienced with the process, why it is important for citizens to understand this process, and what the student gained from completing this process. The student will print out a copy of their reflection, their poster, and their *Comic Life*.

Feedback

The student’s knowledge will be assessed by evaluating the reflection, poster, and *Comic Life* creation using the following rubric:

How a Bill Becomes a Law – <i>Comic Life</i>					
	4	3	2	1	Score
Content Accuracy	All content is accurate. There is no incorrect factual information.	Most of the content is accurate, but there is one piece of inaccurate information.	The content is generally accurate, but more than one piece of information is clearly flawed or inaccurate.	Content is typically confusing or contains more than two factual errors.	x2
Sequencing of Information	Information is organized in a clear, logical way.	Most information is organized in a clear, logical way. Incorrectly sequenced information does not affect comprehension.	Some information is organized in a clear, logical way. Incorrectly sequenced information begins to affect comprehension.	There is no clear plan for the organization of information.	x2
How a Bill Becomes a Law – <i>Microsoft Office</i> Reflection					
Thoughtfulness of Response	Reflection shows thoughtfulness and addresses each of the 3 topics in the prompt.	Reflection shows some thoughtfulness and addresses each of the 3 topics in the prompt.	Reflection shows minimal thoughtfulness and/or only 2 topics in the prompt.	Reflection shows little to no thoughtfulness and/or addresses only 1 topic in the prompt.	x2
Supporting Details	Reflection provides ample details or examples and response is well supported.	Reflection provides some details or examples and response is fairly well supported.	Reflection provides minimal details or examples and response is not well supported.	Reflection provides little to no details or examples and response is not well supported.	x2
How a Bill Becomes a Law – <i>Microsoft Publisher</i> poster					
Law	The law is clearly defined and uses precise language.	The law is fairly well defined and uses accurate language.	The law is minimally defined and is not supported through the language used.	The law is not defined.	x2
Consequence	The consequence is well defined and uses precise language.	The consequence is fairly well defined and uses accurate language.	The consequence is minimally defined and is not supported through the language used.	The consequence is not defined.	x2
How a Bill Becomes a Law – Spelling and Grammar					
Spelling and Grammar	Presentation has 1-2 misspellings or grammatical errors.	Presentation has 2-3 misspellings, but no grammatical errors.	Presentation has 2-3 grammatical errors but no misspellings.	Presentation has more than 4 grammatical and/or spelling errors.	x1
Total Score (out of 25)					

Expertise



Erica Boswell is currently in her sixth year of teaching math at Winder-Barrow Middle School in Barrow County, Georgia. Mrs. Boswell has served on The Techy Teachers, a task force responsible for the creation and implementation of workshops focused on the use of blogs, *Comic Life*, *VoiceThread*, and *Digital Storytelling* in the classrooms. She served as project manager for "Storytelling: It's Digital!" Mrs. Boswell is a first-year student at the University of West Georgia, working towards her Specialist Degree in Instructional Technology. She completed her Bachelors (2003) and Masters (2004) Degrees in Middle Grades Education at the University of Georgia. In addition to teaching eighth grade math and language arts, she serves as the grade level and school wide math chairperson, sits on the leadership team, and coaches track.