Poll: Have You Ever Done Project Work?

Topics for Today

- Identify Phases and Key Features
- Project versus Theme
- Project Approach & Diverse Learners
- Analyze Teacher’s Role
- Review Resources
WHAT IS THE PROJECT APPROACH?

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- An approach to teaching
- Facilitates in-depth study of high interest topic
  - Children investigate first-hand
  - Children are researchers and collect data
- Capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity

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What is motivating these children?
Knowledge

- Strengthens children's interest in learning
- Children learn how their world works
- Children develop confidence in their own ability to figure things out

Skills

- Many opportunities for children to apply skills
- Opportunities to use strengths to benefit the group

Dispositions

- Children learn to work collaboratively with peers
- Children develop confidence in their abilities
- Strengthens disposition to persist
- Strengthens intellectual dispositions
Feelings

- Project work allows children to use their strengths
- There is something for everyone to do in project work
- Children feel pride in their accomplishments
- Children feel a sense of belonging
Consider the potential impact of the Project Approach on a teacher’s ability to teach children with disabilities?

Fidelity of Implementation

- Fidelity of implementation is defined as "the implementation of a practice or program as intended by the researchers or developers" (The IRIS Center, 2014, p. 1).
How Can I Learn the Project Approach?

**What is the Implementation Checklist?**

- 52-item list of strategies to assist with implementing the Project Approach
- Divided into Phases I, II, and III

**How Do I Use the Implementation Checklist?**

- In-depth explanation of each item is in *The Project Approach for All Learners: A Hands-On guide for Early Childhood Classrooms*
- Sequence of items on guide corresponds to content of chapters 3, 4, and 5
Who Can Use the Implementation Guide?

• If you are new to the Project Approach:
  – Read the book and follow along on with the Implementation Guide

• If you are a veteran project implementer:
  – Review select sections to refresh your memory

Use the Checklist for Your Own Professional Development

• Source of ideas for implementation
• Basis for discussion with colleagues
• Basis for discussion with a mentor or coach

How Closely Do I Have to Follow the Checklist?

• Every strategy on the checklist is not used in every project

• Rule of thumb:
  – The more Implementation Guide items that are implemented, the more successful the project
How Was the Checklist Developed?

• Collective wisdom of:
  – Authors
  – Veteran project implementers
  – Colleagues who have coached others on the Project Approach
• Feedback from numerous others was used to revise and refine the guide

Where Do I Find the Implementation Checklist?

• At the end of Chapter 1
• In the Online Resources linked to the book

• WEBSITE
Selecting Topics for Projects

### Topics: Thematic vs. Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Unit</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract – a concept</td>
<td>Concrete - a thing or group of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not tangible</td>
<td>Tangible - can be touched, measured, drawn, acted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preplanned - Themes often develop sequentially</td>
<td>Emerges from child’s experiences and interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Identifying a Good Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Unit</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>Bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Boats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manners</td>
<td>Restaurants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Do I Pull a Topic From a Theme?

• Look for aspects that can be:
  – Touched
  – Counted
  – Measured
  – Discussed
  – Researched
  – Represented in a variety of ways (e.g., dramatic play, drawing, and/or construction)

Consider Children’s Interests

• Children are motivated to learn about interesting topics
• Consider topics of casual teacher/child conversation
• Actively observe, listen to, and reflect on child/child conversation
• Talk with or survey family members

Twelve Criteria for Topic Selection
Directly Observable

Within Most Student’s Experience
It Is Interesting to the Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is compost? - 5/3/16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel - &quot;food, &quot;mayonnaise&quot;,&quot;I don't know&quot;; &quot;it needs air, &quot;stir it up so it gets lots of air&quot;; &quot;radish&quot;; &quot;leaves and dirt&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah - &quot;garbage&quot;, &quot;paper&quot;, &quot;toys&quot;, &quot;metal&quot;, &quot;plastic&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler A - &quot;rotten potatoes&quot;, &quot;rotten tomatoes because they mold&quot;, &quot;mold means they green&quot;; &quot;it's hairy&quot;, &quot;you don't want to eat it&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian - &quot;rotten bananas&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rilynn - &quot;like grass&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO WANT TO COME TO OUR GARDEN PROJECT</th>
<th>9:30 AM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROTECT</td>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>web</td>
<td>1:00 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>children standing around a board</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Let’s Apply the Criteria!

- Shopping
- Valentines Day
- Rules
- Dogs
- My Dog
- Shrek
- Bicycles
- Nutrition

The Younger the Child...

- Select topic close to child’s immediate environment
- Topic that child can observe again and again
- Consider topics in classroom, on school grounds, within short walking distance
Topic Selection for Children with Limited Language Abilities

- Observe play behaviors
- Families of DLLs can help identify topics related to home culture
- Families can program topic-related vocabulary into Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices so child can participate in discussion
- Scaffold discussion

Do All the Children Have to Be Interested in the Topic?

- The more children who are interested, the better
  - Can support discussions
  - Children spark each other’s interest
- Every child does not have to be interested in the project at the same time

How Do I Sustain Interest in the Topic?

- Provide new experiences
- Plan experiences that satisfy children’s curiosity
- Listen—One question leads to another!
Is there a difference between knowing and understanding?

Knowledge Versus Understanding

• Children who learn facts in isolation may:
  – Memorize and soon forget
  – Lack interest in further learning
  – Not connect facts with prior learning
Building Understanding

Project Work & Understanding

- Children who do project work
  - Understand how things work
  - Understand the implications of new information
  - Make connections with prior learning
  - Want to learn more
  - Know some strategies for learning more information
  - Know some strategies for analyzing new information
Creating a Web

VIDEO CLIP

Project Teachers Believe Children...

• Can make good decisions
• Are able researchers
• Have an innate drive to learn
• Are more likely to learn when they are motivated and engaged

Writing Questions for Guest Expert
Guest Expert Visits

Group Constructions

Implement project-based learning in inclusive early classrooms

Includes a complete package of training and implementation materials:
- Project Approach Implementation Checklist
- 38 video clips
- 22 PowerPoint presentations
- 6 sets of training materials

Learn more and order:
Summer Institute on
The Project Approach
This active, in-depth training supports the participant’s ability to
effectively implement the Project Approach in inclusive classrooms.
July 15 – 19. For more information:
https://illinoisearlylearning.org/pa/institute/

Thanks for Joining Us!

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