

Definitions of Terms Used in the Project Approach

Artifact

An object or item collected by the participants that is related to the project topic (e.g., a sling or stethoscope in a hospital project).

Culminating Activities

A variety of planned activities during the final phase of a project. For example, children may include a presentation to parents or to other classes describing the project in which they share their findings and documentation, or they may create a final representation or construction for public display.

Dispositions

Habits of mind as distinguished, or distinct from, knowledge and skills, which may include such intellectual dispositions as the disposition to make sense of experience; to theorize, analyze, hypothesize, predict, persist in seeking and sharing information and solutions to problems; and to speculate about cause-effect relationships.

Documentation

Processes of keeping records and samples of children's work at different stages of completion that reveal children's experiences during the project and indicate their experiences during the project, and their increasing competence and learning. Samples of children's work used to document their experiences during the project and their growth are also referred to as documentation and may include observations made by the participants, children's self-reflections, individual or group products, portfolio items, or narratives.

Expert

A person knowledgeable about the topic of the project who can be interviewed by the children.

Interview

Questions about the topic generated by the children to help them obtain answers to the questions that are the basis of their investigation. Interviews are conducted by the children, and interviewees might be visiting experts, parents, or others whose views are needed to answer the children's questions.

Observational Sketches

Drawings and sketches based on firsthand observations of actual objects or locations under investigation that serve as representations or data related to the topic being studied.

Phase 1

The first phase of a project that includes coming to agreement on the general topic to be investigated; summarizing, representing, or recording what the children know or think about the topic; revisiting their past experiences related to the topic; formulating the questions to be answered; and making predictions of what the answers might be and where the necessary information can be obtained.

Phase 2

The period when the children are collecting the data they need to answer the questions developed in Phase 1. It includes site visits, interviewing relevant experts, conducting surveys, distributing questionnaires, and other ways of gathering and representing

Selecting a Topic

When considering a topic for your next project, consider the statements on Selecting a Topic found in John's training booklet, "Implementing the Project Approach ."

This project is worthwhile and "place based education". Ways children will learn about their world through this project might be . . .

This project is concrete. Hands on experiences the children will have might be . . .

This project is of interest to the children. We believe this project is of interest because . . .

This project is local. Within walking distance, children would be able to explore . . .

Resources for this project are readily available. Places we might contact or visit as resources for this project include . . .

pertinent data. A variety of media are often used by children to represent and report their growing knowledge and understandings of the topic through art, model making, music, play, and verbal expression.

Phase 3

The final phase of a project, during which the children and teachers examine and reflect upon what they have found out from their investigation, and plan and conduct reports of the project for others to hear about and examine. A culminating event is often the conclusion of Phase 3.

Problem Solving

A process of discovering or deducing new relationships among things observed or sensed employed by all people at all levels of maturity. A method involving clearly defining the problem confronted, hypothesizing solutions, and testing of the hypotheses, until evidence warrants rejection or acceptance of the solution. For example, problem solving can include overcoming difficulties that children encounter when creating representations of what they have observed.

Project

An extended, firsthand, in-depth investigation of a topic undertaken by a class, a group of children, or an individual child in an early childhood classroom or at home. Projects involve young children in conducting child-initiated research on phenomena and events worth learning about in their own environments.

Project Approach

The Project Approach is a method of teaching in which an in-depth study of a particular topic is conducted by a child or a group of children. The Project Approach is incorporated into the curriculum but does not always constitute the entire curriculum.

Project Display and Documentation

A shelf, table, or section of the room where objects, books, and other resources related to the project topic and significant events in their joint investigation are made accessible for children to study. Ideally, the displays reflect the story of the project.

Project History Book

A book that tells the story of children's in-depth exploration of the project topic. It often includes a narrative of the project, photos, children's work, and both children's and teachers' reflections. The book may be designed to inform a variety of audiences, including the children themselves.

Site Visits

Planned visits to sites that can be sources of information to answer the questions guiding the investigation.

Topic Web

A graphic representation of a topic and related subtopics. A web may be made by a teacher to anticipate what can be learned about the topic and used in planning the project (anticipatory web). A web may also be made in discussion with the children. This web can include what they already know or think about the topic as well as what they want to investigate.

DEVELOPING and SUSTAINING PROJECT

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Shared benefits of Project Approach

- More engaged children
- Children talking more to each other and to adults
- Parents more involved
- Children notice little things, pay more attention to detail – art work
- More meaningful to children “Place Based Education”
- Teachers are learning with children
- School and community building / networking
- Children have a sense of pride
- Children are more focused

Project Approach Implementation Issues:




Obtaining visiting experts

- Using the word visitor is less intimidating
- If you are uncomfortable, ask someone to help
- Recruit the right person to contact visitor
- Interview potential visitors
- Be specific with what you want the visitors to share - keep it simple
 - read a story
 - share an art piece, music, song
 - share jewelry, clothing, object
 - share a memory
- Personal contact is important
- Have a parent who has been a visitor share at a parent meeting
- Chart questions so visitor can see them and be able to understand what children are asking
- Send thank you notes
- If staff is absent, give visitor a heads up and maybe reschedule

Visiting experts not showing up

- Follow-up invitation with a reminder (maybe have children give a message)
- Discuss children’s disappointment (things happen, use as a teaching moment)

Encouraging children to ask questions

- Model asking questions. Make it clear to children that you are going to model.
- Intentional Teaching
 -  What questions could we ask about a ____?
 -  Have a share day and have each child ask sharer one question
 -  Have children find an object to share. (Look in the classroom. Bring one from home.) Put the object in a paper bag and have the children ask questions to guess what might be inside.

AM and PM have different topics

- Make sure there is space to have classroom investigations and dramatic play for both topics
- Best is topics are related
- When discussing possible topics, have the children write letters back and forth between classes to see if can reach a consensus.
- Provoke (stimulate) interest by maybe introducing project to class

Involving parents

- Letters – Dear Family and Friends,
- Be specific when requesting help or donations
- Smaller display panels
- Move parent board so panels can be displayed at front of room
- Engage parents in creating a web at a parent meeting
- Check in verbally with every parents (interview each parent to see how they could help)
- Use post-it notes to request items needed for donation.

Field trips

- Be sure project lends itself to walking field trips. For in-depth studies places may be visited multiple times.
- Pre-visit place. Check for bathrooms and possible safety concerns.
- Video tape the field trip if the place can’t be revisited or for children unable to attend
- Go in small groups. If the large group needs to attend, divide into smaller groups once at the site.

Lack of space to display project work

- Be selective of display work
- Where you place panels is crucial. (Parent boards don’t have to be at the front door.)
- Use display stands, photo albums, class books
- Photo copy the original color copy in display stand to give to parents as a mini-newsletter.
- Place panels on easel outside of classroom

Teacher not into the topic

- If topic is just OK with the teacher, the likelihood of it being a successful topic decreases
- You don’t have to know a lot about the topic, but you must be enthusiastic

Gathering Information from the Children

As you begin thinking of project topics, here is an activity which will help you gather information about your children's interests.

Have your classroom take a walk around the school and have children look for something they want to learn about and come back to the classroom and list all the ideas. Examples could be: roads, the school, trees, house, plants, pipes, etc. Remember a topic must be concrete, specific, and local, of interest to the children and resources readily available. Topics should be selected that allow children to investigate questions like....

- How do things work?
- What do people do?
- What's involved?
- Who does what and why?
- Do they wear special clothes or use special tools?
- How do things happen?
- What are the parts?
- What are things made of?
- How do things get where they are?
- What happens behind the scenes?

Projects unpack the familiar and deepen children's understanding. Remember there are also different levels of project topics:

- Level 1: a specific place or thing
 - The 76 Gas Station
 - Our School
 - The Taco Bell Project
- Level 2: a category of place or things:
 - Cars
 - Flowers
 - Wheels
 - Paint
- Level 3: a concept:
 - Shadows
 - Friendship
 - self

It is just some ideas as you prepare for your project meetings.

PROJECT APPROACH

A project is an in-depth study of a topic that is of interest to the children.

The theme approach lasts one to two weeks. Projects may last two to three months or longer.

Lilian Katz says, "The key feature of a project is that it is an research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic posed either by the children, the teacher, or the teacher working with the children. The goal of a project is to learn more about the topic rather than to seek right answers to questions posed by the teacher (or children)."

In project work the children ask questions that guide the investigations and make decisions about the activities to be undertaken. Unlike themes, the topic of a project is a real phenomenon that children can investigate directly.

Projects develop the child's :

- knowledge facts and information (abc's, vocabulary, numbers)
- skills processes (reading)
- dispositions attitude and habits of the mind and heart (love to read)
- feelings how child sees themselves – self concept (I am a reader.)

A project topic should be:

- concrete – something children can touch
- specific
- local
- of interest to the child
- supported by readily available resources



The process for implementing a project

GETTING STARTED

- Decide on a topic
- Make a web
- Have an opening event
- Make an action plan

FIELD WORK or DIRECT INVESTIGATION

- Field Study – observational drawings, surveys
- Visiting Experts - interviews
- Classroom Investigation - constructing models, observing closely and recording findings, exploring, predicting, discussing and demonstrating new understandings

CLOSING EVENTS



PROYECTE ENFOQUE

Un proyecto es un estudio exhaustivo de un tema que es del interés a los niños.

El enfoque del tema dura uno a dos semanas. Los proyectos pueden durar dos a tres meses o más largo.

Lilian Katz dice, "La característica clave de un proyecto es que es un esfuerzo de investigación deliberadamente enfocado en encontrar las respuestas a preguntas acerca de un tema colocaron o por los niños, el maestro, o el maestro que trabaja con los niños. La meta de un proyecto es de aprender más acerca del tema antes que buscar respuestas correctas a preguntas colocadas por el maestro (o los niños)."

El proyecto trabaja a los niños hacen preguntas que indican las investigaciones y hacen las decisiones acerca de las actividades para ser emprendidas. A diferencia de temas, el tema de un proyecto es un fenómeno verdadero que niños pueden investigar directamente.

Los proyectos desarrollan el niño:

- os hechos del conocimiento y la información (abc, el vocabulario, los números)
- los procesos de habilidades (leyendo)
- la actitud de disposiciones y hábitos de la mente y el corazón (el amor para leer)
- los sentimientos cómo niño ve a sí mismo – auto concepto (soy un lector).



Un tema del proyecto debe ser:

- concreto – algo niños pueden tocar
- específico
- local
- del interés al niño
- sostenido por recursos fácilmente disponibles

El proceso para aplicar un proyecto

QUE EMPIEZA

- Decide en un tema
- Hace una telaraña
- Tiene un acontecimiento de apertura
- Hace un TRABAJO SOBRE EL TERRENO del plan de la acción

O DIRIGE LA INVESTIGACION

- Estudio de campo – los dibujos de observational, las inspecciones
- Visitando a Expertos - entrevistas
- la Investigación de Aula - construyendo los modelos, observando de cerca y para registrar conclusiones, explorar, predecir, discutir y demostrando nuevas comprensiones que

CIERRAN LOS ACONTECIMIENTOS

