

The Library Project

A Project by Kindergarten Students

at Cherry Tree Elementary and Orchard Park Elementary, Carmel, Indiana

Length of Project: 3 weeks Teacher: Candy Ganzel, Jan Stuglik

Phase One

Beginning the Project

We decided on the library as a project for two reasons: (1) we taught in the same school district but in different buildings and wanted to do a project together with our classes that would have easy access to fieldwork; and (2) we had a new library in our community that many of the children visited and were excited about. We started by having many discussions in our respective classrooms about the library. We also had the children draw about their library experiences. Each class then made a web about the library. From this web, the children decided what they would investigate, and the teachers helped each classroom divide themselves into groups. Our next step was to meet at the library. The areas the children decided to investigate were check-out and check-in, furniture, coffee shop, gift shop, kinds of books, parts of a book, computers, people in the library, and the building.

Phase Two

Developing the Project

For the beginning of phase two, the two kindergarten classes met at the library and divided into small topic groups. The library had plenty of space for us to meet and work in our small groups. In these groups were children from both schools. The children formulated the questions they would like to ask the librarians, and a librarian took them around the library to answer their questions. They also had plenty of time to sketch.

Once the children had their questions answered, they came back to the gathering area and discussed the information they had learned. We had one adult to help facilitate each group. The children also had time to process the information and discuss how they might represent what they had learned.

The next week, the children traveled to Jan's classroom to work together for the entire day. The children first got back into their groups to discuss the information, view the pictures they had drawn, and look at the photographs that had been taken. The children then decided how they would represent what they had learned.

Our next goal was to help them gather the materials they needed and to give them most of the rest of the day to work. The children decided to represent what they had learned by building a conveyor belt, making bookshelves and a computer, and drawing the library building. They also made a book about what types of books are in the library; posters of the check-out counter, gift shop items, parts of a book, and the coffee shop; and models of the furniture. Some of the projects were displayed at Orchard Park and some at Cherry Tree.

Phase Three

Concluding the Project

Because two schools were involved, we decided that the culminating event needed to be in a neutral place so all parents would feel comfortable attending. We decided to hold the culmination in our school district's main office.

We set up a museum-style event. The project was set up around the room with typewritten explanations of what was happening in the pictures and in the displays. The children dictated most of these explanations. The parents and children came after school to view the projects. We made a tour brochure with open-ended questions for the parents to ask their child. These questions helped the children to know what was important to tell their parents about the projects. The parents and children were very excited to see their work and the work of others.

Comments

Doing a project with children who were not in the same classroom and school was a wonderful experience. It was great to see how well the children worked together even though they had never met. It was really good to see that the children knew how to do project work and were able to carry out the project with others whom they had just met.

One of our biggest surprises was how well the final products turned out. The children only had one day to decide upon and complete their final product. The children's high-quality work was really well thought out by all of the groups.

One of the challenges of this project was trying to coordinate two schools and their schedules.

