

The Bird Project

A Project by 5- and 6-Year-Old Kindergarten Children
at Towne Meadow Elementary School, Carmel, Indiana
Length of Project: 5 weeks
Teacher: **Candy Ganzel**

Phase One

Beginning the Project

The topic of our first project of the school year was birds. I chose the topic because, as part of a Lilly Endowment Grant I had won, I had visited Waterton/Glacier National Parks and developed an interest in birds and photographing them. I was required as part of the grant to incorporate what I had learned into my classroom. I brought my scrapbooks and photo albums into the classroom for the children to view. They were excited at the many bird photos I had taken, and they spent much time looking at them. We then had many discussions during morning circle about what the children already knew about birds and their experiences with birds. We also took many walks around our school to see what birds we could find and identify. During this phase of the project, we also made many drawings of what the children thought they knew about birds and what they thought birds looked like. After many days of drawing and discussions, we made our web, and the children divided themselves into groups by interest.

Phase Two

Developing the Project

As the children wrote their questions and after more discussions, they started bringing in all types of objects associated with birds—books, binoculars (for bird watching), calendars, statues, and many, many nests. This bird center turned into a wonderful learning center. The children worked in their small group to write questions (at their developmental level). We decided to do our fieldwork at our school by bird watching and having an expert come to visit. We were very lucky to have a park ranger from Glacier National Park, who lives in Indianapolis during her off-season, as our expert. Her specialty was birds! During her visit to our classroom, she shared many visuals along with answering all of our questions. The children were excited to see her in her uniform. Besides answering our questions, she also dispelled some of the myths. The children had thought for sure we had an eagle that flew over us every time we went bird watching. They quickly learned it was a hawk. After all of our investigation, the children came up with many ways to represent what they had learned. Some used clay, some made books, some made dioramas, and some made posters. Our projects were displayed in the classroom and hallway for all to see.

Phase Three

Concluding the Project

The groups of children made presentations to the rest of the class about their part of the project, explaining questions they had asked and what they had learned. After the class presentations, the children invited their families to school to view their projects. We set up a museum-style event. The children were the tour guides and guided their families through the project. The parents had a brochure (made by me) that helped them know what questions to ask to gain the most knowledge from their child's experience. This brochure also gave the parents a list of standards covered during this project.

Comments

It was very exciting to see the children want to know more and more about the birds around them. It was also fun for me as a teacher to have a huge display of bird objects spontaneously develop in the classroom. The children really spent a lot of time looking at books, photos, feathers, and nests. They also spent time writing stories about birds. This project really carried over into everything the children did in the classroom. I saw a lot of their interest in birds show up in their daily journal writing. As a result of this project, the children quickly learned how to question, research, wonder, and work cooperatively in small groups. We also covered many of our Indiana State Standards. It is nice to be able to share with administration how many of the state standards can be met through doing projects!

