

Taking Action: Students as Global Citizens

Project flow chart

Motivation

Planning

Starting
PBL
process

Resources

Planning
solutions

Publishing
&
presenting

Reflection



1 MOTIVATION

What was your (teacher) motivation for joining the project?

It is my passion to provide students with positive learning experiences that empower them. I want them to embrace their lifelong learning journey, always reflect on their life privileges and build a desire to identify and help when and where needed. Each year, I try to create a project that allows for this. Normally I respond to a request from a student but this year, no requests were received. Personally, I want to help others make the world a better place so I thought this would be a learning opportunity that would suit my personal interests and philosophies and would be a positive experience for the students.

2 PLANNING

How did you (teacher) plan – for immersion, explicit teaching, etc.?

Once I had agreed to take part in the project, I started by immersing myself in topics and 'opening up' to events and people around me who could help, quickly discovering that finding information and resources was not going to be a problem. Completely swamped, I started to focus on my driver, 'The Rights Of The Child', and, with a time frame, narrowed down the relevant topics. Due to time constraints, many of the explicit teaching activities, such as, viewing, computing and designing sessions, happened prior to starting the project. The PBL overview was then used to create a more specific plan and once students had started to understand the complexity of the many issues, immersion activities were introduced to personalise the experience. Once students were ready to create their multimedia projects, we paralleled this with an additional project where students marketed, processed and sold tie-dyed t-shirts and bags as a means to raise money to assist in eliminating their focus issue. So, effectively, the multimedia was the mental action project and the tie-dye was the physical action project, together providing a real opportunity to make a difference. My major reporting focus was Geography but the Global Action project became the primary focus of all our study areas apart from Maths and Science. This focus encompassed our main novel and many of our other activities including reading, comprehension and speaking and listening assessments. Originally, five weeks were allowed for our Global Action project; however, it took nearly eight weeks to reach the point where the money raised had been allocated to the agreed recipients.

3 STARTING PBL PROCESS

Teacher/student negotiation around driving question/problem, student voice and choice

Students chose a topic from a range of suggestions: lack of adequate drinking water, lack of education, etc. Their decision was to make an 'infomercial' using whatever computer application they decided was appropriate. In addition to this multi-media element, we embarked on a tie-dying project to raise money. The students then researched which charities best fitted their criteria for the money and engaged in an active discussion to promote the attributes of each target charity. Following the discussion sessions, the students took a vote to decide where the funds would be allocated, using a preferential voting system similar to Australia's parliamentary voting policy. As the result was a close call, the students then discussed whether the funds should be split amongst the top rating charities or given to a single charity.

4 RESOURCES

Who and what (eg, guest speakers, One World or Taking Action booklets, use of 21st skills, etc.)?

The most significant resources for the project came from World Vision's Get Connected magazines. These were perfect for the age group and the activities allowed for a lot of discussion. Many of the simulations came from the One World Centre publications. A parent, who is a medical doctor, spoke to students about her experiences in Soweto, specifically in regards to neo-natal health. d'Arcy Lunn, a 'global citizen' who has worked on many projects around the world with large organisations including SCOOP (Supporting Children Out Of Poverty), spoke about her experiences assisting those in need in India.

5 PLANNING SOLUTIONS

Student innovation, creative problem-solving, etc.

Students began by learning about 'multimedia'. They then chose an area of interest and grouped accordingly to brainstorm that topic before individually designing a plan for their multimedia projects. They reunited to develop a group design. Whilst working in small groups to create multi-media productions, students collaborated extensively, sharing resources, critiquing, solving technical issues, researching data, etc. They trialed and experimented and then made changes to the group design based on peer critiques. The skill that emerged most clearly, and one that needs the most practice in my classroom, was persistence. The planning task was not a quick task and it required lots of discussion and problem solving through trial and error as well as re-working of, and patience with, the process. The outcome of the planning phase was that the students discussed and compared research and then prepared a class presentation on each charity's case to receive the raised funds.

6 PUBLISHING AND PRESENTING

Digital product and showcase presentation

The most difficult part of the process for the students was the publishing of their multimedia presentations because the filming process was extremely slow and the saving and uploading was time consuming. Also, editing was quite a challenge. However, the results were worth it as there was a wide range of multimedia presentation formats. Messages clearly profiled their chosen charity and requested action. The creative variety was sensational. Within the school, I created a large display inside and outside my classroom depicting our project's activities. Additionally, the tie-dye fundraiser really drew attention to what was happening in the classroom. The library exhibition provided an opportunity to document the project and display, in a visual sense, the PBL method.

7 REFLECTION

Teacher, student and community responses

The students have really engaged in the main focuses of the Global Action project and the learning areas covered have been significant. The hardest decision, and the part I liked least, was choosing who to invite to speak at the exhibition as I felt the selection reflected their involvement and performance and I wanted them ALL to feel that sense of pride in themselves. The vast majority of the students really wanted to share their experiences and thoughts about why it is important to take global action. This demonstrates just how successful this project was.

Other staff supported me in that they allowed me student time for tie-dying and putting flyers up in their classrooms. It was difficult for those teachers not directly involved in the project to understand the amount of time and organisation the project needed but all thought it a brilliant topic 'for the older children'. The principal supported me by providing me with some additional time to work on the PBL. The biggest response has been from the school community. The support has been massive and the feedback extremely positive. The parents recently enjoyed an afternoon tea where they watched the multimedia presentations, learned about the project and heard their children talk about their experiences. So it has helped continue to build our school - family connection. Additionally, many of the parents have shared their delight about hearing their child offer up information about what is happening at school and share at home what they have learnt. SCOOP, the charity the students chose, have approached us about their 'Adopt a Classroom' program so we hope to build on this experience and the relationship in years to come.

Personally, I felt the workload in sourcing and putting together simulations was very time consuming. If you were to have a different set of students each year, resources could be set aside ready for next time, which should make the project sustainable. Adding the physical tie-dying project so we would have a 'real' contribution moved this project from a 'what if' or 'what can we do' to 'what are we going to do', making the entire process far richer. However, the additional workload and stress for one teacher working alone was massive. Purchasing materials visited to many shops in my own time and being out of pocket financially to a large degree at one point. More than 150 t-shirts and bags required washing prior to dying (many loads). The creation of a payment tracking system and an order taking system, sorting out orders, overseeing the 'systems' the students created to fill orders, double checking, processing late orders, synchronising classes and coordinating students to assist younger children to tie dye, creating instruction labels, mixing dye, refilling and supervising all took time from 'other activities'. So, whilst incredibly rewarding, the process has left me exhausted. The parents would like to see the project repeated; however, time, commitment and assistance from others would be needed.