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Research Unit Plan featuring the Big 6

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**Background and Objectives**:

Currently, I teach grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. With each of the grades I like to complete a research component. In first and second grade for instructional research we complete animal research but it is as a whole group and then after the research we create animal trading cards. However, in 3rd through 5th grade we begin learning about the Big 6 research model and add on technology and research skills through each grade level. In 3rd grade students research dinosaurs because it is part of their social studies curriculum and I complete the lesson during library time because the teachers do not have time to include this component during their instructional time. My main objective in third grade is for students to develop research skills and create the end product of a power point presentation. This allows me to complete my technology objectives and help focus on the instructional research component. In 4th grade students research a famous person (biographies). In years passed I have geared this towards famous revolutionary war heroes because this is what they have been studying when I am able to teach this unit. During this unit the student’s research, create a power point (to review), learn how to scan pictures, and how to use photo story to create a presentation. In fifth grade we add all the research components by completing the research and then write a research paper using Microsoft Word that includes a bibliography and citations in the paper.

**Content Area and Resources:**

For all three grade levels I have students create a folder that includes four different color index cards and we place a heading on each of them. For the dinosaur research we include habitat, anatomy, diet, and interesting facts. Students must write five facts on each of these index cards. They are told not to write in complete sentences. Although, we discuss plagiarism and read “When Marion Copied” this process helps eliminate students copying sentences word for word. During this process I share with students how to use an encyclopedia. Most students have not ever used one before so it is a new concept. We also use books found in the library. During the first two days of the research I do not let them use the computer. I like them to see all the print resources that are available.

We then begin by discussing reliability of websites and what the best resources are. I share with them our county resources which include World Book Online and SIRS. I also share with them [www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com) because I like them to see a source that they always have access to. We then begin Google kids’ searches and they really enjoy this because they are evaluating the websites first.

**Timeline and End Product:**

The entire research project usually takes around a month with each grade level. I am fortunate from the instructional aspect that I have my students on weekly rotations. I will have one class work on research for five days in fifty minute blocks. Then I will not have them back for another month and then we begin the next part of our project which is the PowerPoint. For third grade the PowerPoint takes an entire week. I walk them through all the steps. This is where the index cards come in handy because they create five slides. They create an introduction page and then use each index card for a slide. This helps keep them organized and helps with my special needs students. When students have added all the research, we then begin learning all the bells and whistles of PowerPoint. In 4th grade, students need some review of PowerPoint and it usually still takes a full week but by 5th grade, they have it down and complete it in several days. This is the first year that I will actually have 5th graders that have done this since 3rd grade because this is my third year with this project. The 4th grade then completes a Photo Story and this takes a full week because they are learning the program for the first time. So my complete timeline for 3rd is two months, 4th grade is three months, and 5th grade is four months. In 5th grade we begin this project after Christmas break because of the amount of time that it takes. When teaching them to write a research paper with some classes it takes about two weeks.

**Assessment Level:**

Each assigned grade begins each project with a PowerPoint explaining the Big 6 Research Model and my expectations. These are graded assignments and the classroom teacher uses them as reading or other content area grades. 3rd grade never has enough grades for Science so they depend on this grade for the 3rd marking term. Students receive the first grade for their research folder and they get five points for each fact because they should have five facts under each index card. I also give them two bonus points for decorating their folder with a picture of what they are studying. As far as the multi-media projects students are given a rubric for the PowerPoint and Photo Story and are graded using that. The 5th grade research paper counts as a writing grade.