

Action Research Plan
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Abstract:

There were two areas that we wanted to know about:

- 1) How much do these students use the Internet and what do they know about it?
- 2) How can we enable middle school students to use the Internet to locate, evaluate, and record information on sites pertaining to current conflicts in the Middle East with a final product that answers the question "How does religion play a role in the conflict(s) affecting your region."

Background:

I worked with one sixth grade social studies class. The teacher, Jeanitta Tobin, teaches one sixth grade social studies class in addition to her sixth grade science classes.

The sixth grade social studies curriculum exposes students to different cultures around the world. This particular unit was the Middle East. The students studied the countries and religions of that area. This is approximately a 12-week study. My searching instruction was a small part of the total unit.

The sixth grade social studies class I am worked with had students of varying abilities. There were several aides to assist students who had trouble focusing on the project at hand. The students had not used the Internet before with this teacher.

From the Internet usage survey, we learned that about 90% of the students have home access to the Internet. They use it for chat rooms, games, talk to friends from camp website, websites for animals and sports, and many other activities. They feel they "know how" to search and why are we teaching this.

The Study / The Plan:

The students read articles and did map work about the countries. These readings were taken from their textbook Eastern Hemisphere: Geography, History, Culture by Prentice Hall. The final product for the countries was a group poster. As the students prepared for this group project, note cards were prepared and evaluated by Mrs. Tobin. The group gave an oral presentation. This presentation was graded using a cooperative learning group performance rubric that has a rating scale of three to one with three outstanding and one needs improvement. This rubric has a copyright by Incentive Publications, Inc. The poster was graded separately using the "Middle Eastern Countries Project" rubric. (See assessment section) Some poster examples are included in the photo folder. (See Middle Eastern Countries Project). There were two written quizzes relating to the country study.

The religions were studied in the same way – handouts given about each religion and class discussions. The handouts were taken from individual books on religions, e.g. The Here & Now Reproducible Book of What is Islam Who are Muslims? by Carole March. The project for this was an out-of-class project relating to the Five Pillars of Islam. This was an individual effort with a possible 100 points. Some examples of this project are included in the photo folder. (See Five Pillars of Islam Project in assessment section)

The next step was the discussion of current events in the Middle East. This is where I worked with the students to search for sites to find out what was happening. I had them try a planned search on their own and then gave them sites that I had found that were beneficial. (See 6th gr class M E student example). This lesson was actually taught while they were working on the group oral presentation and poster.

These were the steps I took to work with the students their first day of searching:

1. Students will identify and list key words from the question list.
2. Students will record some suggested search terms.

3. The class will discuss some of their ideas for search headings.
4. Students will be introduced to using “ ” marks and + and - in their searches.
5. Students will each get a laptop and log on to the district home page and go to Internet Search.
6. Students will select a search engine from the list available on the home page.
7. Students will enter one of their search headings.
8. Students will begin to take notes to answer the questions.
9. Students, who have trouble finding a good site, will be directed to use some of the sites listed on their sheet.
10. Students will share good sites as they find them.

The students had a background about the countries and the religions and then investigated current events in a given country and discussed how the religious beliefs affected how the people view the political events. The students took notes then each “country group” led the discussion for the events that were occurring in their country. The class contributed on religious beliefs that would affect the views. This was also included in the group presentation about their poster.

Assessment:

The students took two quizzes during the unit. These were related to the countries and religions they are studied. The two quizzes were prepared on test maker software by the classroom teacher. I was not given soft copies of those items.

The final evaluation was a unit test which covered countries and religions with geography included. The test was prepared on test maker software by the classroom teacher. I was not given soft copies of those items.

An example of a rubric that was used for assessment is “Middle Eastern Countries Project” rubric below:

Middle Eastern Countries Project																									
Key Information					Presentation:					Visual:					Individual Performance (within the group)										
Comprehensive (Covered all required points):					Coordination of Script & Graphics:					Organization & Creativity:					Actively Participated:										
5 4 3 2 1					5 4 3 2 1					5 4 3 2 1					5 4 3 2 1										
Interesting & Informative:					Clarity & Delivery Oral Presentation:					Followed Guidelines:					Respectful of Group Members & Team Focus:										
5 4 3 2 1					5 4 3 2 1					5 4 3 2 1					5 4 3 2 1										
Effort Points:																									
5 - Exemplary					4 – Commendable					3 – Adequate					2 – Limited					1 – Minimal					

See examples of posters in photo file [Picture 3](#) and [Picture 4](#)

Results:

Area #1 Internet assessment:

I did a survey of the class before I started working with them. There were several reasons we wanted to do the survey.

- 1) to find out how many students were familiar with Internet

- 2) to find out if students used the district home page
- 3) to find out if students would like homework assignments put on the district home page
- 4) to find out if students would read the textbook, if it were online
(the teacher I worked with taught science and the new curriculum can be available online)

The following is the Internet Survey we used. I have listed the results on the survey.

NAME _____ Color/Class _____

Internet Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions:

1. Do you have access to Internet at home? 97% Yes 3% No
2. How often do you use the Internet? 76% Daily 17% Weekly 7% Never
3. What places do you visit on the Internet?

Disney Channel, Animal Planet, Variety of sports teams, Zoo Disney, Chat,
(Answers listed in order of popularity from survey)

4. What search engines do you use?

Google, Yahoo, Ask Jeeves, Dogpile
(Answers listed in order of popularity from survey)

5. What have you found to be the best way to search for information?

Many students left this one blank.
Use keyword searchers, type in a question
(Answers listed in order of popularity from survey)

6. Do you use the district home page? 26% Yes 74% No
7. Would you like to access homework assignments through the district home page?

69% Yes 31% No

8. If the textbook were available online, would you use it for your reading assignments?
73% Yes 27% No

This survey gave me some important information – 74% of the four sixth grade classes surveyed did not use the district home page. I was surprised and disappointed by this information.

The district home page <http://www.lfelem.lfc.edu> is designed with the students in mind. The technology staff is willing to put the websites I find on this site so that students can do research at home.

Here is how students can use the home page:

- 1) to do a search, click on Internet Search. There are five search engines that come up (Alta Vista, Google, Ask Jeeves!, Dogpile, Northern Light) just type in your search term and hit return.
- 2) to find websites that are of value for your class assignment – click on Resources and then go to the subject you are looking for and click on the topic or teacher's name. (I just found the sites for 5th Grade Critters Resources this fall and just finished reevaluating 5th Grade Biomes Study, which will be used in January).
- 3) to see what I use when teaching website evaluation – click on Resources; on the Right side click on General Resources; click on student website evaluation; if you go to Teacher page there are sites listed that can be used to practice the evaluation.

As you can see this is an easy resource for students. When I introduce a list of sites to the students, I always have them go through the district home page. The modeling of that has not aided in students using it. This is an area that I will talk with other staff and see what we can do to have students use it more. One thing I did notice on the survey was that the students said they would go to the home page if homework assignments were listed there. That might be a good way to have students get used to going there.

Area #2 Searching

These are the materials I gave the students as we worked on search strategy. I filled the sheet in with one student's work.

Name _____ Date _____ Class / Color _____

SW Asia Unit (Chapters 22 & 23)

What's Going On in the Middle East?

Today we are going to *cruise the net* in search of information about conflicts in the Middle East. Some questions to guide you on this quest are listed below.

1. What are the primary causes and issues that contribute to the Middle Eastern (SW Asian) conflict(s)?
2. What role does religion play in the conflict(s) affecting this region?
3. What part does terrorism play in these issues?
4. What role has the global community (in particular the U.S.) play in this region?

STOP!

Before you access the Internet and try to find information relating to these questions, develop your search plan below.

What key words (main ideas) can you identify in the questions above??

Asia _____

Terrorism in SW Asia _____

Middle East _____

Conflict in the Middle East _____

Petroleum sites _____

religions _____

Southwest Asia _____

Muslims _____

When you go to one of the search engines, what will you type in to do a search?

I gave them a page that had these headings for them to use to take notes.

Name _____ Date _____ Class/Color _____

Search Notes:

Key Points or Ideas:

Information:

2. Terrorism in Southwest Asia
1. Petroleum in the Middle East
3. Conflicts in Asia

The searching using key word was hard for some of the students. It was a lifesaver to have sites for them to go to.

There were several students that lost their computer privileges the second day of searching. This class had several students with short attention spans and this assignment became too difficult for them. They were given handouts to read with their aide and then to list key points.

The searching was a very small part of a big unit of study. I did not feel that it had the importance to the students, which I would have liked. The time spent preparing the lesson and locating the sites was not appropriate for the small amount of time the students used the information.

This was the assignment sheet and rubric used for evaluation of the individual religion project:

FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The five pillars of Islam are rituals/traditions that Muslims must abide by in order to be considered faithful Muslims. These pillars strengthen and support the Islamic way of life.

Name the 5 pillars below:

Meaning:

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |

Individual/Out-of-Class Project:

To help us remember the 5 pillars and meaning, you will be displaying these pillars on a poster board. On your poster board you should **write the name of each pillar and explain each pillar in YOUR OWN WORDS!!** We do not want to copy directly from the book (that would be plagiarism!!). You must provide your own materials and poster board.

RUBRIC (project grade):

- | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|
| _____/40 | 5 Pillars listed on poster board |
| _____/40 | 5 Pillars explained on poster board |
| _____/20 | Creativity and Neatness |
| _____ | |

_____/100 points

Examples of these projects are found in Photo folder [Picture 1](#) and [Picture 2](#).

Findings:

The Internet Survey instrument confirmed my feeling that many students had home access to the Internet. The surprise came from the low use of the home page to do searches or to utilize resources that are listed for the students to use.

The searching experience made me realize how important my pre-searching was for the students. I was able to guide them to keywords that would work and also provided them with websites to go to when they became frustrated with the information they were finding on their own.

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