

Tired of the Same Old Assessments



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Website for the presentation:
<http://funassessments.weebly.com/>

Elizabeth and Becky met in 2009 while teaching at St. Agnes Academy-St. Dominic School. SAA-SDS has a 1 to 1 mac laptop program. Becky and Elizabeth both have experience in private as well as public school systems. Together they bring a wealth of content knowledge and experiences teaching with technology. Between the two of them, they have 23 years of experience teaching middle school. We hope you will find the ideas in this handout helpful. They have also made a Weebly website that contains this information as well as the documents for the assignments. Enjoy and feel free to contact them if you have any questions about these projects.

ALTERNATIVE TO SCIENCE FAIR/HISTORY DAY

The sheer mention of a Science Fair or History Day project sends a parent into hysterics. Calm their nerves while still achieving the same research goals, but in a FUN way. While there are no presentation boards, your students will learn more than you can imagine and present it in a way that makes it enjoyable for all.

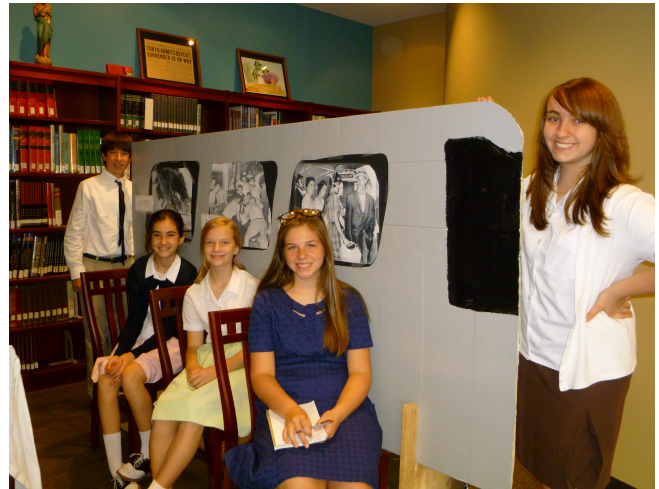
Night at the Museum

Students are assigned (or choose) a person from a topic you are studying. They research the person and what their life was like during the time. They gather photos, videos (if available), primary sources, and basic information about their historical figure. Once they know that person really well, they are put in groups that connect the characters together to an event or subtopic of the museum.

For example: 1920s Museum

Exhibit: Jazz Musicians

Participants: Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington



Students then write their script, decide on costumes and props, and practice.

When the museum opens, tour guides lead the groups around to each site where they act out their skit that tells about the historical figures and their participation in that topic.

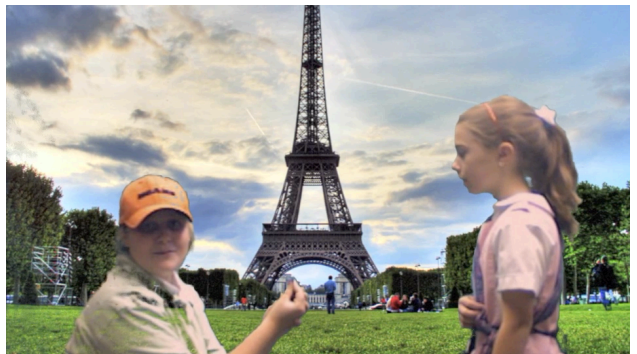
I have done this project with the Civil Rights Movement, the 1920s, and Immigration through the Ages. So it's do-able with most topics. It makes a great event for parents and the younger students to visit.

Get-Mart* Commercial

The purpose of this Project Based Learning (PBL) assignment was to have the students use all the parts of the Scientific Method in a real-life and meaningful way. The driving question for this project was "Which consumer products are most reliable?" Students in groups of three or four decided on a product that they would like to test. They were required to purchase a name brand and store brand version of that product. They then created a testing procedure that measured at least three qualities or aspects of that product. Each group tested their own product and then another group ran the same test to determine validity of the testing protocol.

Once all the testing was complete each group completed a lab report with data analysis and a conclusion about whether or not the store brand or name brand version of their product was the most successful. They recorded their information on our class wiki site and then created a commercial for the "winning" product using [primarypad](#) to create their story board and script. They recorded their commercial using iMovie with green screen functions.

Links to all of the documents for this assignment and copies of example projects can be found on our website.



ALTERNATIVE TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

They hate writing it, you hate reading it - so quit torturing both of you. Let them display their work in a way from which you can all benefit with nings, scrapbooks, and wikis.

Historical Scrapbooking

Most would assume that the boys would rebel at the concept of having to scrapbook anything, but if it's a topic they are interested in - like WAR, and it's connected to their family, it actually works.



This is one of my favorite projects. We have done this on WWII. The students choose a person on which to base their scrapbook, either a family member (dead or alive), a historical figure, or a made up character based on a topic that interests them. They have to research the topic and include primary sources, authentic photographs, artifacts, a timeline, and three creative writing letters based on the content they researched in their secondary sources.

Many students and families have shared with me how much this project has meant to them. They learned more about a loved one or shared a conversation with a grandparent who survived the Holocaust. Stories that have been waiting to be told have had a tremendous impact on their view of history and have connected them in a positive way to older family members. They learned much more than a research paper ever could have told them. Plus they still have to cite everything, so the research is proven to be sound.

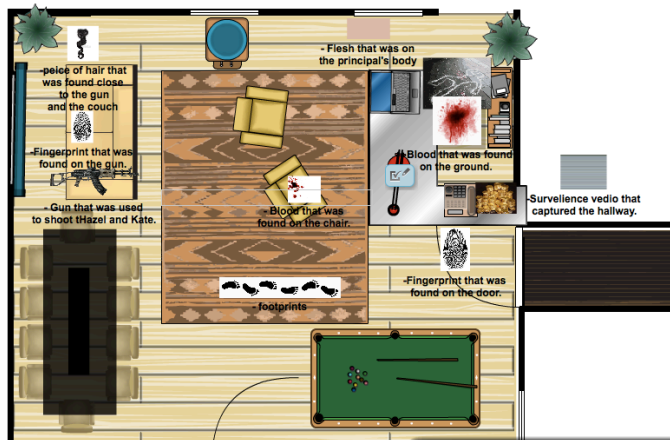
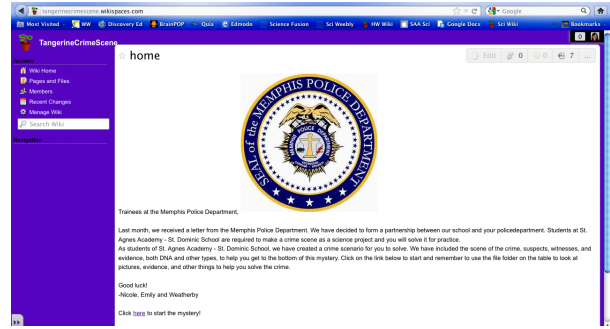
Not all websites are created equal...

In this project the students were to investigate all of the issues on an assigned candidate so they could look at each others webpages to make an "educated decision" on who to choose in the Presidential Primaries. Each class section had a different candidate and were assigned various topics to research and report on as a group each day. The groups changed daily. All websites were created on Weebly.com. I continue to monitor the stats for the website and it is unreal how many people look at them daily. *Links to all five webpages can be found on the website for this presentation.*

A collage of three website screenshots. The left screenshot shows a page for Mitt Romney's 2012 campaign with a navigation bar and a video player. The middle screenshot shows a page titled 'Newt 2012 Home' with a large star graphic and a video player. The right screenshot shows a page titled 'Political Speaking Engagements' with a list of events and a video player. The bottom right corner of the collage shows a video player with a play button and the text 'THE FLORIDA REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE'.

DNA Detective Website

In this PBL (*project based learning*) assignment, students were trying to answer the driving question "What role does DNA play in making you who you are?" Students were placed in groups of three or four and their objective was to create a "crime" scene scenario for our local Memphis Police Department's new crime scene investigators to use during their training sessions. Students created a Wikispaces site to display their project as well as a "case file" to house the "evidence". They were required to create a storyboard and script for the characters in their scenario. For their project to be successful they had to become experts in DNA analysis (DNA structure, DNA replication, DNA translation, production of mRNA and protein synthesis).



Each class came in on Crime Scene day and had a "case file" on their table. Each group worked it's way through another groups project assessing this project as they tried to solve the crime and determine who the true criminal really was. Talk about being engaged in learning, this project assesses so many different aspects of learning all at once (LA- spelling, grammar, writing; literature- setting, plot, audience consideration; putting items in a logical order; tech- building a website with multiple layers of information and navigation).

ALTERNATIVE TO THE POSTER PROJECT

Have your students share the content they have learned in a creative way that will WOW parents and administrators when you display it.

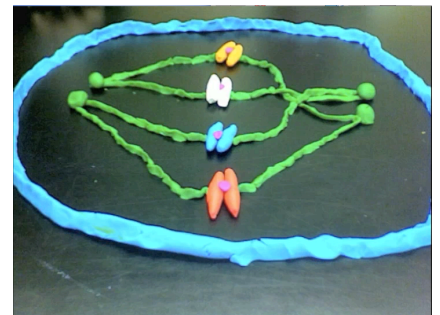
Feeling Crafty? Make a Quilt

I must say I have no idea how to sew, yet this project always seems to work (with some crafty parent volunteers). Of course there was that year we did it on paper because no one volunteered. ;-) Still it turned out great, though. After teaching the students about a topic, have them come up with a symbol for the content, one image that helps them to visualize what it was about.



Cell Cycle Claymation

Students were placed in groups of three or four and given the challenge to illustrate the steps of the cell cycle/mitosis in a claymation format. Students put the play-doh on the table and took pictures for each movement of the clay they made. The rubric explains that there were at least 30 pictures needed for each stage of the cycle. Once all pictures were taken the students imported the pictures into iMovie and changed the length of time each picture showed to 0.1 sec and selected the show full picture feature. Students then added titles and iMovie music to their project. The best claymations in each class were uploaded to YouTube.

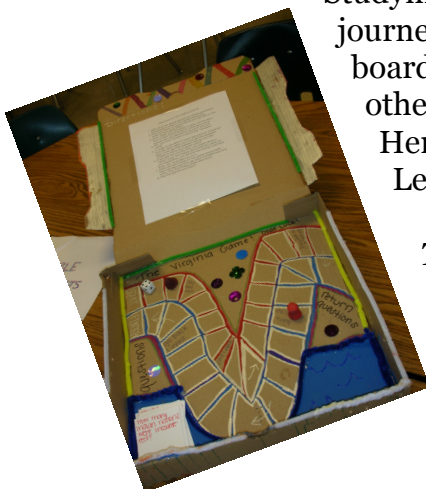


Games with no batteries? - Make a board game.

Studying a journey? Let the students display their knowledge of the journey and roadblocks and challenges of those involved by making a board game. The students will love getting to play (and grade) each other's games.

Here are some examples from my students on the journey's of Lewis and Clark.

The local pizza restaurants were kind enough to donate boxes for the students to use as both box and board.



Green Human Project

Students were placed in groups of three or four and were asked this driving question: "Why can't humans make food from sunlight?". The basis of this project was to have



students fictionally create a human that is capable of performing photosynthesis. Students had to examine what structures and functions humans have and what structures and functions plants have to perform photosynthesis. They had to figure out a way for the human body to be modified in such a way that it could start to perform photosynthesis just like plants. We discussed the entry event and content rubric so the students would know the requirements of the project. All groups

learned how to use [Prezi](#) as the presentation format and they used [primarypad](#) for researching information and for creating the project storyboard. On presentation day, each group orally presented their Green Human Project idea to the rest of the class with the aid of the Prezi.

<http://prezi.com/iougygxfxji3/green-human-fern-project/>

Pages or Microsoft Publisher

Who needs to buy posters when your students can type a document and make it look professionally done? Programs like Mac's Pages and Microsoft Publisher provide students with ways to present the content on regular paper while including more types of media.

In this example, a student is telling about William Blount, a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. They have images of the delegate, the convention, and the documents he wrote. They have content, citations, images, and it looks pretty!

And it is still a project that can be done with a laptop cart or in a computer lab.

A student-created poster for William Blount. The poster features a historical painting of the Constitutional Convention at the top left, a portrait of William Blount at the top right, and a central title "William Blount" in large yellow font. Below the title, there is a list of his roles: "Politician, Public Security Interests, Planter, Merchant, Real Estate and Land Speculation, Educator" and "North Carolina delegate, age 38 at the time." A "Brief Biography" section follows, detailing his life and military service. A "Works Cited" section is at the bottom. The poster also includes several small images, including a document and a portrait of Blount.

ALTERNATIVE TO THE TRADITIONAL TEST

Looking back on the semester of teaching we thought, “What did they learn about learning? Did they really make the connection with the content?” Taking a multiple choice test on scantron wasn’t going to tell us that. They would memorize the content, take the test, and forget it tomorrow. So how could we assess what they learned without killing us with grading in the process?

Here are some ideas we came up with.

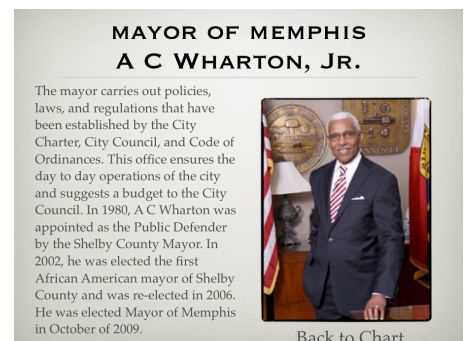
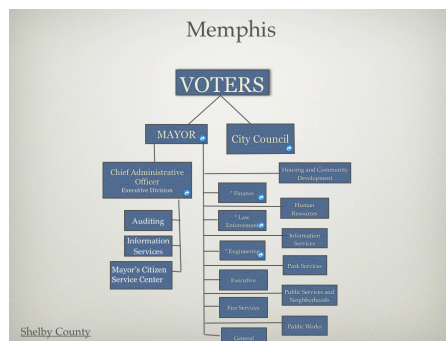
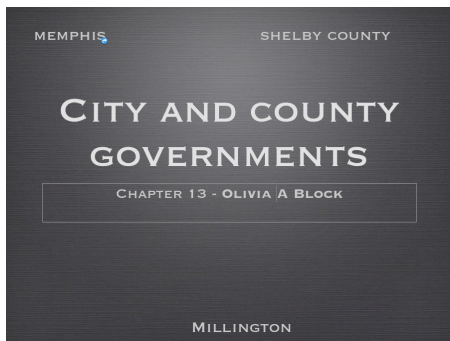
Time Capsule

After studying the post-Civil War era, my students had covered a lot of ground, so rather than a 200 question test, they had to create a time capsule with an artifact representing each decade from 1910 -1980. There had to be 3 political symbols, 3 social symbols, and 2 economic symbols. Each item had to have a paper attached to the artifact explaining what type of symbol, the decade, and why it represented that decade and category.

The students loved the assignment. It was a great relief for them not to have to study mindlessly for content we had been over that semester. Instead, they got to review the content and then reflect on what stood out to them. Afterward, I had them do an evaluation of the project, and most said they preferred this to taking a traditional exam.

City Government Keynote

In this assignment, the students had to research the governments of the City of Memphis, Shelby County and the surrounding municipalities. They were to compile all of their research and display what they learned. The students researched the content on the local government websites. They were given a template, but had to include hyperlinks to various pages to make it more like a website.



Portfolio of all of the assessments of the semester

Portfolios are certainly nothing new to teachers of the last 20 years, but using it as an exam may be a new idea. It makes students reflect on the content they learned while doing an assignment from earlier in the semester, but also it has them reflect on the process of doing the assignment as well - a critical skill to learn. "Why didn't you do well? What would you have done differently? What would have made the assignment better for you? What skills were you supposed to learn in the process?" They end up thinking about so much more than just the content they learned.

I organized the portfolio exam by having one alternative assignment per chapter. Then at the end of the semester, those were the assignments in their portfolio. They had to keep up with the assignments or place them in their classroom folder (so they wouldn't get lost). They were given the objective for each assignment, but it was their job to write a rationale (what do you think was the purpose for the assignment? - What do you think you were supposed to learn?). That sometimes included time management, how to use a particular computer program and group work skills, in addition to the content. Then the student had to include the corrected assignment as their artifact to prove they achieved the objective. Finally, they had to do a reflection. What did you think of the assignment? Did you learn what the objective said you should? This gives them a chance to actually think about their learning process.

GENETICS PORTFOLIO

Due: Feb 14th

Portfolio Purpose:
A portfolio is a collection of evidence of what you have learned during a given project. The portfolio of your learning will include an objective, an artifact, evidence and a reflection.

Objective: states the purpose of the assignment.

Rationale: is a statement that explains why I was required to do the assignment to (the unit of study).

Evidence: the completed, graded assignment.

Reflection: a statement that clearly explains what I learned from doing this assignment.

Assignment List:
Assignment #1: The Inheritance Site of Forensic and Law
Assignment #2: Metabolic Review Lab
Assignment #3: Dragon Heirloom Web Lab
Assignment #4: Blood Bottom Genetics Incorporated Interview
Assignment #5: Identical Twins, Too? Project

ORDER OF CONTENT FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT PORTFOLIO PAGE:

- Title, List assignment name and number
- Objective of assignment
- Rationale or 3 sentences explaining what you think the purpose of the assignment was, what was you expected to learn, explain the content by using the appropriate vocabulary
- Evidence: the completed and graded assignment with correction attached
- Reflection: one or two paragraphs (at least 3 sentences) based on the rationale, explain what you learned by completing this assignment (think about those brain cells!)

Be sure to include your Genetics Portfolio Rubric with your Portfolio.

What is the What. DO NOT wait till the night before. The reflection takes time and serious thought! Good news is you don't have a Chapter 3 Test! This assignment has been created to make you THINK, so fire up those brain cells!

I know the portfolio sounds like a ton of reading to grade, but most of it can be skimmed, and it really isn't so bad. So here is the breakdown for each assignment:

Objective - Given to the student by the teacher (1 sentence)

Rationale - What do they think was the purpose of the assignment? What were they supposed to learn? (2 or 3 sentences)

Artifact - The corrected assignment itself

Reflection - Did you learn what you were supposed to? Why or why not? (1 paragraph)