

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES HIGH SCHOOL

Curriculum ideas have been included to provide school staff with concrete ideas for implementing career education and guidance strategies with students. The following classroom activities are taken from the list of Connections 2002 Award of Distinction winners. Connections is a conference devoted to developing and disseminating activities innovations throughout the State of Illinois. These activities have been provided as examples of experiences that can meet career development needs of learners in the following levels:

Create Your Own Business

Herscher High School
501 N. Main St.
Herscher, IL 60941

ABSTRACT

As many first-year teachers might proclaim, a first-year English teacher at Herscher High School suggested that she felt like she had been “thrown into the fire” during that first couple of months. As a recent college graduate, she had no trouble keeping advanced students engaged and actively learning; however, the “regular” classes were much more of a challenge. To solve the problem, the educator created an innovative new course titled “Create Your Own Business Project.” After two years, the project makes a sometimes challenging group of students something to look forward to during the day, rather than something to dread. The nine-week project requires students to look at local community businesses analytically, and then, through writing and technology, use what they have learned to “create their own business.” The project is initiated each year with visits from business leaders in the community (from car body repair shop owners to construction contractors). These business leaders provide students with firsthand knowledge about owning and operating a small business in the community. Next, the students write business letters and evaluate their personal strengths and interests using a variety of inventories. Then they create a business proposal for the business they want to create. After examining businesses in their own communities, students design logos, slogans, advertising, classified ads, business cards, and signs for their own businesses. The culminating event of the project is the job fair where students create an interactive booth for their businesses and answer questions of “prospective employees” (usually a class of younger students who bring their resumes with them).

Students gain a sense of accomplishment and understanding from this interactive, hands-on project that they could never get from a traditional textbook or worksheet. The project empowers them and forces them to examine the realities of life after high school.

“Inlet Swamp” Living History Preservation

Amboy High School
11 E. Hawley St.
Amboy, IL 61310

ABSTRACT

The “Inlet Swamp” Living History Preservation project was created as a final activity for students enrolled in speech classes at Amboy High School. Named after an original local geographic area, the Inlet Swamp, a 12-by-14-square-mile area, was drained in the late 1800s to create more usable farmland. To initiate the project, teachers read a fictitious story about a large corporation that has plans to purchase the Inlet Swamp and restore the land to its original condition. In the story, the corporation plans to create buildings that will house naturalists, environmentalists, guides and others who serve people coming to see what this part of Illinois was like in the middle 1800s. The fictitious corporation also plans to incorporate barge rides and other entertainment options available in keeping with the time period. Obviously, this new enterprise in the area will require a great number of new employees. The primary purpose of the project is to allow students the opportunity to examine the myriad of career opportunities that might be associated with a new development, such as the one outlined above.

As the research/career search project begins, the school’s media director assists students as they search through print as well as Internet sources to provide the necessary background material for the career of their choice. Students create a resume that profiles their skills related to one of the career opportunities associated with the fictitious venture. “Personnel directors” are matched with each student’s career choices. Once students are assigned a personnel director, they see them to get an application for the job. After completing the application, students return with their application and resume, schedule an appointment for their interview. Personnel directors interview applicants and fill out an evaluation form on each candidate. Students are provided feedback to find out how they performed during the interview session and, perhaps, why they were not hired. Resumes are then converted to be current for their age and experience so they can begin to use them in a current job quest.

Students learn to conduct research related to a career, create a resume and correctly fill out an application, how to dress and conduct themselves effectively in the interview setting, and how to use nonverbal communication to the best of their advantage. Students find out about a career they may choose to pursue in the future and are better prepared to seek jobs.

Mass Media Project

Martinsville Community Unit School District C-3
215 W. Vine
Martinsville, IL 62442

ABSTRACT

The Mass Media Program at Martinsville Community Unit School District was designed to expose students to career opportunities in the television news industry. Through a partnership between a local television news company (WTWO Channel 2 News) and the high school technology education program, the Mass Media Program blends the disciplinary areas of technology and mass media to integrate academic subject matter with news studio workplace skills.

To gain competencies in the use of technology, students learned basic editing techniques, proper lighting techniques, videotaping, studio construction and sound effects in their technology education classes. Meanwhile, volunteers at WTWO provided expertise in the area of filming, editing and producing a newscast. WTWO also provided participating students with tours of the studio – where students learned about the professional techniques used to film, edit and produce a high-quality television program. With a shared partnership with WTWO experts, real-life workplace skills including communication, decision-making and problem-solving were emphasized to the students.

In addition to the lessons related to mass communications, students also developed skills necessary to construct a news desk at the school, prepare the studio according to industry guidelines, as well as constructing lighting and sound systems. These additional experiences provided the students with a behind-the-scenes look at all of the engineering, logistics and overlapping responsibilities involved in producing a television program. Students had an opportunity to take pride in their assigned jobs and have exhibited remarkable growth in their understanding of the areas of the mass communications.

In addition to providing students with valuable on-the-job experience, the program provided an opportunity to work cooperatively with one another, as well as experience what a future career in this vocation would be like. One faculty member summed up the program by stating that the "...program not only helped our students learn valuable work skills, but provided thousands of television viewers to witness, firsthand, what teens today can achieve at Martinsville Community Unit School District."

Once Upon A Time...

Williamsfield CUSD 210
325 W. Kentucky Ave.
Williamsfield, IL 61489

ABSTRACT

The Family and Consumer Science Department, the Media Department, and the Biology Department at Williamsfield High School have developed a cross-curricular integrated program that encourages the selection of books for children from birth to age six. The basic tenant of the Once Upon A Time Project is to promote the importance of early childhood literacy and reading in the community. Through the program, high school students work with parents and children to explore and understand the importance of reading during early childhood. Although the benefits to parents and children are obvious, the benefits to high school students are numerous. Participating high school students learn the key components of storytelling, how to read aloud to children and what characteristics to look for in quality children's literature.

To prepare for meeting parents and reading to children, the participating high school students were encouraged to conduct research related to children's literature, conduct book evaluation, develop literature displays, conduct advertising, use First Search and other web tools, and ultimately conduct seminars involving parents within the community as a service project. In the service project, students presented parents with the methods and resources necessary to enable them to make their children literacy-ready when they enroll in kindergarten.

Students, parents, the Williamsfield Community Library, and District 210 students explored learning styles, workplace skills, integrated curriculum and careers while encouraging a community early reading project.

Infusing Pop Culture into Classical Literature

Neuqua Valley High School
2360 95th St.
Naperville, IL 60564

ABSTRACT

What do flirtatious females, fratricidal fathers and fornicating friars have in common? No, they are not the latest guests of *The Jerry Springer Show*: they are representatives from some of the most celebrated pieces of classical literature brought together to make thematic and moral connections between past and present societies. In this highly engaging activity created at Neuqua Valley High School, students create and present a talk show featuring characters from works, including *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Paradise Lost* and *Hamlet*.

Through the "Infusing Pop Culture into Classical Literature" program, students have the chance to apply what they have learned about characterization and theme as they design and develop the entire activity. After choosing whether they want to be writers, producers or featured guests, students decide the premise for the show, such as "Morality vs. Mayhem in Modern Society." Producers work behind the scenes to develop and run the show. First they decide the order in which the characters will enter. Then they write the questions for the host and devise the surprise guests for our featured characters, which utilizes their critical thinking skills. Characters review "themselves" in the texts and wrote a personality/appearance analysis in order to prepare for their roles. Next, they put together costumes and props to enhance their performances.

Because "guests" are not informed of the questions they may encounter during the program or the surprise guests they may meet before the show, featured characters must have a thorough understanding of the personality and actions of their characters, and their projected reactions to other characters from several pieces of literature. Not only do they respond to the host's questions, but they also respond to one another which is a great exercise in improvisation.

At the end of the 50-minute "show," all characters sit before the audience for a discussion of the themes addressed during the program. This is followed by a question and answer period and a final thought from the host.