

The Community Worker Project

A Project by Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Students
at Donald C. Parker Early Education Center, Machesney Park, Illinois
Length of Project: 3 months Teachers: Susan Andrews, Lynn Wade, Karen Johnson

Phase One

Beginning the Project

The project started while our classroom was doing a thematic unit on dinosaurs. We were learning about the various job duties of a paleontologist, and this discussion sparked further discussion as to what many of the children wanted to be when they grew up. Many of the children showed interest in jobs that were closely related to our community. We webbed as a large group and came up with a list of questions about community workers. We used this list of questions as a guide to assist us in our investigation. Small groups were formed by interest. Each group interviewed one community worker expert. As phase one drew to a close, these small groups presented their new-found knowledge to each other.

Phase Two

Developing the Project

We added to our web all new knowledge gathered from our community worker interviews. Our “experts,” who were interviewed on site, consisted of a fireman, policeman, airplane pilot, weatherman, paramedic, newspaper journalist, school nurse, and school principal.

Next, the children voted on the one community worker they wanted to investigate in depth. The policeman was chosen, and a field site visit to our local police station was scheduled. The children prepared for their fieldwork by participating in small group discussions and webbing. The children dictated questions to the teachers and illustrated these questions for their field site visit.

During the field visit, the children made sketches and took many photographs. These drawings and photographs were used to plan construction. The children represented their learning by creating their own police station. Construction included a fingerprinting station, computer 911 station, a variety of police tools, lockers to store police tools, a police car, and a police evidence van. Dramatic play continued in the police station until our school year ended.

Parents were involved throughout the project by participating in the interviewing process, attending the field site visits, and assisting with the construction of our police station.

Phase Three

Concluding the Project

We concluded the project by presenting our police station to one of the local police officers. It was a joy to see the pleasure the students received when they presented their part of the police station to the officer.

This project helped the children expand their ability to speak in a large group situation, listen, solve problems, and work cooperatively. It provided the children an opportunity to experience a focused investigation and represent their learning in many ways.

Comments

This project was our first multiage project, and it was awesome. We learned that, with the support of parents and staff, it is possible to do a successful project combining two classes of different age levels. It took many people to make this project successful, and we thank them all! The topic was great, and there was a high interest level throughout our investigation. It was extremely rewarding to see the children take the initiative in influencing the direction of their work.



The children interview Officer Jones.



Officer Jones checks out the police car.



Construction on the police station begins.



Children work on the evidence camera.