

Projects

(for Young Learners Teachers Site)

What is a project?

In the primary school classroom, a project is the work leading to the production of a poster, letter, birthday card, booklet, magazine, play, sketch, puppet show, radio recording, video etc. It may be the work of one learner, but more frequently is the collaborative work of a number of learners.

One key element of all projects is the 'theme' – the basic idea. Whether the learners are working individually or in groups they are all concerned with the same basic theme.

The characteristic of a project is that the learning comes from the 'process' – the work which leads to the result rather than the results itself. Most frequently the learners will use a wide range of language, a variety of language skills and often knowledge which may have come from different parts of the curriculum.

Because the learners are combining so many different skills and areas of knowledge, it is sometimes difficult to say exactly what the children are learning. In any project they may be learning many different things:

- ❖ How to work with other people.
- ❖ How to share work.
- ❖ How to delegate work.
- ❖ How to appreciate the work of others.
- ❖ How to work alone.
- ❖ How to take responsibility for a task.

These are all social skills, but they may also be learning to use scissors, to design a neat page, to speak clearly or how to operate a piece of machinery.

The teacher does not 'control' every stage of the process in a project. The teacher may suggest the original idea, assist in the planning process, and may provide advice or guidance in the actual work, but the project is essentially the work of the children.

Typical Themes

The earliest projects are often just collections of illustrated words. When completed and displayed they become a 'wall dictionary' which children will refer to during lessons.

COLOUR POSTERS

Make large blank posters for the colours: red, blue, green, yellow, black, orange, purple, brown and pink. Pupils collect pictures or do drawings, label them "A blue button" and stick them on the appropriate poster.

LETTER POSTERS

Make large blank posters for letters like B, C, P or S. Children collect pictures or do drawings of objects, people or actions which begin with that letter, label them, and stick them on the appropriate poster.

NUMBER POSTERS

Children produce an illustrated 'numbers' poster, illustrating statements like:

I've got one nose.

I've got two legs.

I've got three brothers.

I've got four toy cars.

I've got five fingers.

My house is number six.

My lucky number is seven.

I am eight.

My sister is nine.

I've got ten toes.

MY JOURNEY TO SCHOOL

Children draw a 'snake-like' road starting from home and arriving at the school. On this road they illustrate things and people which they see every day on their journey to school. These posters can be used as a stimulus for talking about this journey. At a later stage, the story of this same journey can also be presented in the form of a little book with each page showing a stage of the journey.

I leave home at seven o'clock.

I wait for the bus by the baker's shop.

I sit at the front of the bus. etc.

MY FAMILY'S HANDS

Children trace and colour a hand of each member of their family. They collect and label these pictures on a 'family tree'.

OUR TOWN

Children make a poster about their town with postcards, tourist brochures maps, drawings etc. Each item is labelled or has a sentence written underneath.

MADE IN ...

Children read packets and labels at home and make lists of things and places they come from. A simple world map is illustrated with drawings, short texts or real labels showing where things come from.

Later, when children have more language they can produce more sophisticated projects.

BE NICE NOT HORRIBLE

Children in groups of 3 or 4 choose a theme such as road safety, kindness to animals, protection of the environment etc, and produce a poster displaying 'nice' and 'horrible' actions.

WHAT'S THE TIME?

Individually or in groups children make posters with pictures of themselves doing various activities (eating, watch TV, etc) and display the activities as a clock showing the time they do each one.

ANIMALS

Six large posters for mammals, insects, reptiles, birds, fish, amphibians. Children illustrate and label pictures to be stuck on to the posters.

MAKE A HOUSE POSTER

Draw the outline of the cross section of a house leaving space for the garden. Divide the class into five groups: bathroom, bedroom, living room, kitchen and garden. Each group collects pictures to 'furnish' and label their room or area.

COUNTRIES AND CAPITALS

Children stick the names of countries and capitals they know on to a large world map. If they can also find pictures, these can be displayed around the map and linked to the place by wool.

FESTIVALS IN OUR COUNTRY

Use a calendar naming the months of the year and make an illustrated poster showing activities or festivals in each month.

THINGS WITH WINGS

Make a class poster illustrating things with wings — butterfly, ladybird, bee, parrot, owl, plane, angel, plane, etc.

I DON'T LIKE ...

Individuals make illustrated and labelled posters collecting things which they don't like (ghosts, spiders, tall buildings, pineapples etc.). The posters are a good stimulus for writing and speaking. They also help children to control their fears by listing them.

Why good projects work

In good projects children benefit from the 'process' of preparing them, and they become a stimulus for speaking and writing. They are also a record of individual work for display in class or at home.

In *New Parade* and *New English Parade* children make story books. At the start, these are just picture books, which children use to 'tell' the story.

Children have a strong **emotional** investment in the best projects. They are personally interested in the topic and proud of what they have achieved.

The language value

It is very likely that children will use their mother tongue while working on their projects. This does not matter if the 'product' of their work is in English.

Projects are a very good way of giving young learners 'ownership' of the English language.