Biography Project: Research and Class Presentation
Grades: 6-8
Less Plan Type: Unit
Estimated Time: Nine 50-min. sessions

Student Objectives:

-Learn to ask relevant questions before beginning a research project

-Learn to take notes and categorize information as they create graphic organizers

-Improve comprehension as they read and skim text for main ideas and details

-Develop research skills (book and internet) with purpose of teaching the class what they have learned

-Think critically as they use rubrics and written feedback to evaluate their classmates and themselves.

SESSION 1 Before Reading:

1.   Prior to beginning lecture review schoolwide expectations and classroom rules for appropriate behavior specific to large group instruction (what does paying attention look like/not look like; appropriate ways of asking for help/asking a question) and reviewing/reminding the incentive strategies used during that time. Plan strategies for ensuring large group instruction of appropriate behavior and incentive/reinforcement strategies used include specific strategies aligned with student needs identified in IEPs (e.g., Review self-monitoring procedures, signals to begin/end self-monitoring procedures, and has necessary materials).

2.   Ask students what a biography is and show an example of one. Ask them what sort of things they would expect to find out about a person's life in a biography. Share a biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. and ask students to work in pairs to generate questions about his life. Before small group discussion be sure to prep small group behavioral expectations and signal for transition back to large group work. Then ask for their ideas for how this information might be categorized (such as childhood events, turning points, things he is famous for, ways that he demonstrated the schoolwide expectations (i.e., how did he demonstrate respect, responsibility, safety, did he create rules for appropriate behavior in his work with others?)

3.   Have students brainstorm famous people who might have biographies written about them, and write student responses on the board.

4.   Pass out the graphic organizer and discuss how categories and subcategories can be used to summarize a person's life achievements. In the sample for Martin Luther King, Jr., categories include "childhood and young adult," "beginning of his career," "turning points," "march on Washington," "what he wrote," and "assassination."

5.   Have each student narrow the list on the board to three famous people they might like to study (they will narrow it down to one during the next session, depending on availability of biographies).

    1. 6.   Pair off students to discuss the people they're interested in researching. Before small group discussion be sure to prep small group behavioral expectations, specific tasks and expected outcomes of the activity and signal for transition back to large group work. Plan strategies for

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ensuring the needs of students with IEPs are met. Have them ask each other what they already know about the people. What things do they not know but want to find out? Have students work together to help each other generate questions about each of the people they would like to learn more about.

SESSIONS 2 TO 5:

1. Before transitioning to new environment, review expectations for library or classroom library are and include strategies to ensure students with IEPs are successful.

2. Using your classroom or school library, have each student check out a biography of a famous person. The biography should be about one of the three people on the student's list from Session 1.

3. Pass out the Web Rubric and go over expectations and criteria with students. Consider adding requirement related to identifying moments, experiences, achievements, etc. when the person demonstrated the tier 1 expectations. Web has categories that fit with the information written about the person and are easily understood by the reader. Each category has supporting information that helps the reader understand the details of the person's life. The writing is clear with no spelling or grammatical errors. Each bubble gives brief, clear information. Web shows the main achievements of the person's life based on the student's interpretation.

4. Use the sample web for Martin Luther King, Jr. to model for students how each item of the rubric applies to the creation of the web.

5. Ask students to skim (or preread) their biographies, focusing on the questions they generated during Session 1 about the selected person. Before transitioning them to group work, review behavioral expectations for small group work and strategies for students with IEPs. Then have students work with their partners to group the information they find into appropriate categories and start a rough draft of their webs.

6. For homework (and, if time, in class), have students read independently as they complete their webs. Students can also use the list of suggested websites to add to their webs

7. When the webs are complete, have each student use the Web Rubric to evaluate his or her own web.

8. Have each student share his or her web with a partner and give each other feedback and suggestions for improvement. The partner can fill out the same rubric using a different color. Consider what behavioral skills/lesson plans might need to be reviewed prior to this activity? Consider- "providing and accepting feedback from peers". Plan strategies to ensure students with IEPs are successful.

9. Collect the students' webs, review them, and use the same rubric with another color to make suggestions for improvement.

SESSION 6: AFTER READING

1. Return the rubrics to students, giving them time to review the comments from you and their partners. Allow them the opportunity to make revisions to their webs. Consider what behavioral skills/lesson plans might need to be reviewed prior to this activity? Consider *Providing and Accepting Feedback*

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*from Peers (*Skillstreaming Elementary and Adolescent).

2. Have students copy their webs neatly onto butcher paper and prepare for the class presentation, writing notes or key words and phrases on index cards to help them remember what they will say. Consider what behavioral skills/lessons you might need to review prior to this activity. Consider the following from Skillstreaming Elementary and Adolescent:

   a. *Communicating with Others,*
   b. *Use Initiating a Conversation and Having a Conversation,*
   c. *Contributing to Discussions with Others* (as a starting point for discussing presentation style including eye contact, volume and inflection in voice, relaxing yet confident body language, etc.),
   d. *Asking a Question,*
   e. *Listening to Others*
   f. Relaxation and coping strategies (especially for those that might be nervous in front of groups).

SESSIONS 7 TO 9: CLASS PRESENTATIONS

1. As students give the class presentations, have other students use the Oral Presentation Peer Feedback Form to write their feedback.
2. Consider what behavioral skills/lesson plans might need to be reviewed prior to this activity? Consider *Providing and Accepting Feedback from Peers (*Skillstreaming Elementary and Adolescent).
3. Collect the feedback forms, review and check them for inappropriate comments, and give each set to the corresponding presenter.

EXTENSIONS

1. Have students use their webs and the online Bio-Cube tool to plan and write biographies of the person they have researched. When they are finished, ask students to share the books with a younger class.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS

1. Possible student assessments include: **(A)** Use the Web Rubric to grade the students' webs. **(B)** Use the Oral Presentation Rubric to grade students' presentations based on the quality and completeness of information given. **(C)** Observe and evaluate students' participation in group work and ability to critique other students' presentations based on their comments on the Oral Presentation Peer Feedback Form. **(D)** Have students reflect in their journals on what they have learned about the value of using webs to help them recall and organize information.