Personal Learning Projects

Grade Cluster - 6-8

NETS-S- 3 - Research and Information Fluency

Quick Look:

Middle school students in grades 6-8 research self-selected topics of interest using a variety of print and electronic resources. Students learn how to develop focus questions and research plans. Each student configures and maintains a *blog* to collect and organize information, obtain feedback, and to present their research findings.   Students communicate with experts in the field about their selected topics via email, face-to-face interviews, or *videoconferencing*. Feedback is provided to students from teachers, field experts, and peers through the comments feature of a *blog*. Students learn about the research process, including strategies for finding and evaluating materials.

Scenario:

Middle school students' self-select topics of interest (anything from global warming in Vermont to the first female to hike Mount Everest) and develop a focus question to research. With the help of a teacher, students create their own *blog* using *Edublogs* (or a similar *blog* host) to collect and organize information, obtain feedback, and to showcase their final research projects (3a, 6a, 6d). The teacher creates a model *blog* as well, as a place for daily directions, resources, questions, and research components (questions, notes, interview, reading log, vocabulary, works cited, and report as a finished product). Students set up their *blogs* to have pages or sections for each component of the research (6a). *Blogs* are further customized by students adding relevant *widgets* (such as videos, images, *RSS feeds*, etc.), selecting themes (background colors and fonts), and adding images (6a, 6b, 6c, 6d).

Students use a graphic organizer tool such as *Mindomo* to brainstorm and outline their research. They include a focusing question, a thesis statement, and the main topics for their research (3a, 6a, 6d). Then, students work with their teacher and the library media specialist to practice research strategies for finding information and evaluating materials using resources such as Alan November's Information Literacy Resources http://novemberlearning.com/resources/information-literacy-resources/ (3c). They learn effective research strategies (Boolean searches, advanced searches, keywords, etc.) and how to determine the reliability of a web site (examining, URL extensions, http://easywhois.com, finding authors, etc.) and then apply their knowledge to their own research (3a, 3c, 6b).   Students also set up *RSS feeds* on their *blogs* from sites pertaining to their research. (3b, 3c, 6a, 6d).   In addition, students set up interviews with experts on their topics of interest. Students communicate with their experts through email, *videoconferencing*, or a face-to-face personal interview that is recorded with a digital voice recorder (3b, 3c, 6a, 6b, 6c). As students collect information, they record questions, facts, and sources in appropriate pages or sections of their *blogs* (3b). The class has ongoing discussions regarding fair use and proper citations.

Throughout the research process, students are required to give feedback using the comments feature of the *blogs*. The teacher and experts also provide feedback using *blog* comments. Students incorporate the feedback they receive to guide their continued research and to develop their final report.

Students synthesize all the information and feedback they collect over time to create a final "report" of their research (3b, 3d). The report could be presented in various formats including writing, video, multimedia presentation, etc. as decided by the student. The reports are posted on a separate section of the blog.

Each student selects a person or organization related to his or her topic with whom to share his or her study. In addition, all *blogs* are linked to the teacher's *blog* so students can review others' research (3d). Finally, students present their reports during a community open house where members of the community are invited to view projects and ask questions.

Resources
http://easywhois.com
http://novemberlearning.com/resources/information-literacy-resources/

Student Standards – The following NETS-S are noted in the Scenario:
>   3. Research and Information Fluency—A, B, C, D
>   6. Technology Operations and Concepts—A, B, C, D

Teacher Standards –Teachers who teach this unit address the following NETS-T:
>   1. Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity—A, B, C, D
>   2. Design and Develop Digital-Age Learning Experiences and Assessments—A, B, C, D
>   3. Model Digital-Age Work and Learning—A, B, C, D
>   4. Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility—A, B, C
>   5. Engage in Professional Growth and Leadership—B, C

Content Grade Expectations

The scenario writer has identified the following content grade expectations that s/he felt might be assessed in this scenario. In most of these scenarios, there may well be opportunities to assess other or additional content grade expectations across a variety of disciplines. If you are interested in developing a unit or lessons based on the following scenario, and you don't see any grade expectations in your content area, we encourage you to capture the ideas presented in the scenario and make it your own by adding components that address the grade expectations you are most interested in assessing.

W7:8 In reports, students organize information/concepts by…
- Using an organizational text structure appropriate to focus/controlling idea
- Selecting appropriate information to set context, which may include a lead/hook.
- Using transition words or phrases appropriate to organizational text structure.

- Writing a conclusion that provides closure.
- Obtaining information from multiple locations or sources when appropriate.
- Listing and citing sources, using accepted form, if appropriate.

W7:9 In reports, students effectively convey a perspective on a subject by…
- Stating and maintaining a focus/controlling idea.
- Writing with a sense of audience, when appropriate.

W7:10 In reports, students demonstrate use of a range of elaboration strategies by…
- Including facts and details relevant to focus/controlling idea, and excluding extraneous information**.**
- Including sufficient details or facts for appropriate depth of information: naming, describing, explaining, comparing, use of visual images.
- Commenting on the significance of the information, when appropriate.

H&SS7-8:1 Students initiate an inquiry by…
- Asking focusing and probing questions that will lead to independent research and incorporate concepts of personal, community, or global relevance

H&SS7-8:4 Students conduct research by…
- Locating relevant materials such as print, electronic, and human resources.
- Applying criteria from the plan to analyze the quality and quantity of information gathered
- Citing sources

H&SS7-8:7 Students communicate their findings by…
- Developing and giving oral, written, or visual presentations for various audiences.
- Soliciting and responding to feedback.