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Introduction

Students learn effectively when they have an opportunity to apply their knowledge to real-life problems. This book contains ten expeditions that engage students in real learning. Each project links students to a bigger issue in their community. They illustrate to students how their education has relevance in their lives today and in the future. Each expedition strives to give students new skills that can help them both inside and outside the English classroom. Many projects reach out to other content areas within a year level, allowing students to exchange knowledge between English, history, geography, politics and art.

Expeditions in Your Classroom: English Middle Years provides activities and materials that scaffold student tasks; sets clear criteria for final products; and offers assessment tools and a detailed outline of project steps so that teachers can focus energy on instruction rather than on project management. Each expedition addresses correlated standards and provides accessible routes to understanding for a broad audience of students. Several expeditions call for you to select literature to use with the project. Use this as an opportunity to differentiate instruction, coordinate with other subject teachers on an interdisciplinary unit, or focus on subjects of interest to your class or area.

Given the scope of each expedition, advance preparation is critical to successful implementation. As you prepare materials for each expedition, consider the needs of your classroom. You may wish to print out the student pages as a packet to give in its entirety to students, rather than hand them out in the suggested order. This will streamline your preparation time, as well as allow students who complete activities ahead of time to move on to the next phase.

About Project-Based Learning

In *Real Learning, Real Work*¹, Adria Steinberg describes the qualities of powerful projects: the six A's.

Authenticity

Students solve problems and questions that are meaningful and real. People outside school walls tackle the same challenges. What students create and do has value beyond school.

Academic Rigour

Students encounter challenging material and learn critical skills, knowledge and habits of mind essential for success in one or more disciplines.

Applied Learning

Students put their knowledge and skills to work in hands-on ways, and learn how to organise and manage themselves along the way.

Active Exploration

Students go into the field. They investigate and communicate their discoveries.

¹Steinberg, Adria. *Real Learning, Real Work (Transforming Teaching)*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1998.

The Great Debate

Homework

Have students collect information on the issue their team will be debating. Each student should bring in one article about the issue. They can brainstorm possible solutions to the issue and write them on the Expedition Tool.

Day 2

1. Have members of each debate team share information they have found and the possible solutions to their selected issues.
2. Distribute **Off You Go: Forming an Opinion**, along with **Expedition Tool: Debate Guidelines** and **Expedition Tool: Evaluating Websites**.
3. Review the format for a debate.
4. In their teams, students create a list of steps they need to take to find the best solution to the issue they are investigating.
5. Ask some of the teams to present their ideas, and create a master list of steps. Students copy these steps onto a separate sheet of paper.
6. Students plan how they will research their topic and assign tasks to each team member.
7. Review **Expedition Tool: Evaluating Websites**.
8. Review the reasons for checking the reliability of websites and citing sources.
9. Allow students to work on their research.

Homework

Students should continue the steps in their preparation for the debate.

Day 3

1. Allow students to continue their research.
2. When the teams have collected the information they need, they decide what the best solution to the problem is. This is the team's position statement.
3. Each team writes their position statement on a card and posts it in the room. This will allow opposing teams to identify what their opponents are proposing so that they may build their rebuttal.
4. After writing the position statement, students write their evidence (the facts) that support their opinion on the best solution. They should also record the sources of their facts.
5. Meet with each team to discuss their progress.

The Great Debate

Off You Go

Activity 1: Forming an Opinion

Goal: To learn how to form a position statement for a debate

Materials: notebook, computer with Internet access, card

Tools: Debate Guidelines, Evaluating Websites

Directions

1. Review the format for a debate in Part 1 of **Expedition Tool: Debate Guidelines**.
2. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of steps your team will need to complete to find the best solution to the issue you are investigating.
3. Discuss this with your class and create a master list of steps. Copy these steps on a separate sheet of paper.
4. Meet with your debate team to plan how you will research the selected topic. Each team member should have a specific task.
5. Review **Expedition Tool: Evaluating Websites**.
6. Research your issue. Record your notes, being sure to write the web page title, author's name and web address along with the information.
7. After your team has investigated possible solutions to your selected issue, choose the best solution.
8. Write a statement that describes your solution. This will be your position statement.
9. Write the position statement on a card and post it in your classroom.
10. On a separate sheet of paper, write the evidence (the facts) you have found that support your opinion on what is the best solution.
11. Be sure you have recorded the sources of these facts.
12. Identify any position statements from other teams that will oppose your opinion of the best solution.
13. Write your rebuttal – the reasons why you think the other solutions are not as good as yours.
14. Note any evidence that supports this view.

The Great Debate

Expedition Tool

Debate Guidelines

Part 1: Debate Format

Team A – Solution 1

Team B – Solution 2

Team C – Solution 3

Team D – Solution 4

Team A: Position statement (3 minutes)

Team A: Evidence in support of position (3 minutes)

Team B: Position statement (3 minutes)

Team B: Evidence in support of position (3 minutes)

Team C: Position statement (3 minutes)

Team C: Evidence in support of position (3 minutes)

Team D: Position statement (3 minutes)

Team D: Evidence in support of position (3 minutes)

Break for each team to form summary (3 minutes)

Questions to any team from the audience (5 minutes)

Team A: Summary statement (3 minutes)

Team B: Summary statement (3 minutes)

Team C: Summary statement (3 minutes)

Team D: Summary statement (3 minutes)

Part 2: Good Presentation Skills

- Speak slowly and clearly so the audience can understand you.
- Speak loudly so all can hear.
- Look up from your notes at the audience.
- Hold your notes still, or place them on a stand.
- Stand up straight.
- Speak with variation in your tone to add emotion or emphasis.