

Writing Sample Project: What's in My Name?

Project title	What's in My Name?
Content area(s)	Language arts, social studies, history
Grade levels	6-12
Academic goals	<p>Build student skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering and using information from research; • working with researched content; • writing style and structure at age-appropriate levels; and • evaluating and synthesizing information in order to draw conclusions.
State and local standards	Varies by state and student age, and most are available online at states' education department websites.
Skills used in this project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sentence writing, formation • paragraphing • web searches—use of Google • library search skills
Driving question or big idea	What is the history of your first and last names? (Note: Depending on time limitations, you may want to focus on one or the other, student's choice, rather than both.)
Length of project	4-5 sessions, depending on the time needed by students to do searches and writing, which may be driven by student interest in the topic.
Organization; grouping of students	Individual searches and writing; Small groups of three or four to brainstorm ideas
Overview of project	<p>Students are introduced to concepts of meaning and history of names and provided time and resources to research their own names. Once they have gathered their research and organized it into a short paper of two or more pages, they are given time to share their findings with their peers.</p>
Important data to collect periodically during and after this project is completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student challenges as they work on the project and help provided by staff—staff can use student checklists as a means of monitoring progress • The final paper produced by each student: level of completion, standards met • Student reflection piece, with its identification of needs, interests, concerns and successes • Student participation in learning activities and games

Research and writing skills

Student interest; hook

Apply disciplinary skills; share findings

<p>Resources (technology, people and places from community, printed materials, artifacts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the Internet • Article, "And If It's a Boy, Will It Be Lleh?" or similar reading that focuses on the meaning of names. www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20060519friday.html • Handout article with instructions and task checklist for students, one to a student. A copy of the article and a general checklist are included on the CD-ROM.
<p>Mini-lessons as appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Google or other sites as a search engine—basics in types of words or terms to enter, what the findings mean (blue lines lead to responses). • Modeling and examples of searches on the web and in books and articles. • The 4 types of writing—expository, descriptive, narrative, persuasive—to help students build variety in their writing. • Methods for documenting bibliographical information so students know how to keep essential information about their sources. (A guided worksheet could be provided, especially to help younger students.) • How to document within a document using author's names in parentheses, for example, and how to develop a bibliography. NOTE: Keep this task as simple and easy as possible.
<p>Games and learning activities</p> <div data-bbox="280 1224 558 1325" style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;"> Sharing: a sense of accomplishment </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-group activity with each group matching names with their meanings, the handout being prepared in advance by staff. • Small-group activity with search assignment that gives each group practice in using Google and/or hard copy materials to find answers to quick questions. Questions should be focused on names of famous people, places, etc., of interest to students. • Time for each student to present his/her name findings to peers. This can be a celebratory time, complete with some kinds of rewards. It can be one on one, in small groups or in whole group.
<p>Assessment/evaluation (answer big question and address curricular standards and objectives)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student papers • Debriefing with students, one-on-one with staff about what the student has learned, both in content and process.
<p>Student reflections</p> <div data-bbox="386 1640 605 1740" style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;"> Self-reflection </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing with fellow students and/or staff: "What did I learn?" • Short (no more than one page) written response about what the student learned, both about his/her name and about the writing and research process. (One way of approaching this is to ask the student to role play as a mentor for other students the process of completing the assignment.) • Reflection on how student would like to improve in doing similar assignments in the future. (Emphasize the importance of effort over ability.)

Project Sessions

Session Number	Tasks	Materials Needed	Time Needed
1	<p>To generate student interest, open the project by presenting examples of the meaning of individual's names. Read and discuss an article regarding name meanings. Discuss how people name their children and why they make the choices they do. Ask students to share what they know of how their names, or those of their family members or friends were selected.</p> <p>Discuss:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why are names important? 2. What relationship might there be between a name and a personality? <p>Ask students to write their names on a sheet of paper, first and last. Ask them to write anything they know about their names. Then ask them to write what they like about their names. Provide time to share findings as students offer to share.</p> <p>Explain the purpose of the project they'll be working on: To learn the history and meaning of their names. Provide a single-page handout of instructions and timeline and checklist of tasks for each student, and provide time for students' questions.</p> <p>Check for students' prior knowledge about web searches. Also, during discussion, list on the board ways students can investigate their names. This would be a good time for a mini-lesson on web searches, allowing students to brainstorm their own ideas.</p> <p>Segue into time for students to look at books on names or begin their searches.</p> <p>With 5-10 minutes left in the session, check with students to discover any questions they may have and to explain what the next session will cover.</p>	<p>Copy of article or paragraph focusing on name meanings, such as, "And if It's a Boy, Will It Be Lleh?" from the NY Times—one copy per student. (www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20060519friday.html)</p> <p>Books or articles with information about names (from library, bookstores, etc.—Baby-naming books are usually inexpensive and easily found.)</p> <p>Access to the Internet</p> <p>Paper</p> <p>Pens/pencils</p> <p>Classroom board & chalk</p> <p>Handout of instructions, task checklist and timeline, one to a student.</p>	<p>30-45 minutes (depends on time given to students for searches)</p>

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2	<p>Review briefly what was covered in the first session, preferably by asking the students what they recall. Check for questions; then review the assignment, making sure students know what's expected in the session. Here is a good place to provide a game or mini-lesson as needed to ensure students know what they need to do and how to do it, as well as to enhance motivation for completing the assignment.</p> <p>Provide students with time and resources to work on their project. Provide individual help as needed. The goal of this session is for students to collect as much information as possible in order to be ready to write their first draft in the next session.</p> <p>With 10 minutes left in the session, bring students together as a whole group, checking for questions, sharing what has been learned so far and what students still need in order to succeed at their tasks. Be sure students know what to expect for session 3.</p>	<p>Internet access</p> <p>Books and articles on the topic</p> <p>Handout describing the assignment, along with checklist/timeline for steps of student work.</p> <p>Guided worksheet for student use in collecting information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes on name meanings, plus bibliographical information for each source used <p>For older students: how to set up a bibliography.</p>	30-45 minutes
3	<p>Check for questions and review the expectations for this session.</p> <p>At this stage, students can use the guided worksheet to develop the first draft of their written report.</p> <p>With 5-10 minutes left in the session, debrief the level of progress, questions and student needs for the next step in the process. Review expectations for the next session.</p>	<p>Guided worksheet for student use in writing the first draft.</p>	45 minutes
4	<p>Check for questions, review expectations for the session.</p> <p>Students work on the final draft of their paper, and if time allows, prepare to share their findings in their next session.</p>	<p>Poster paper and markers for students to use to prepare for sharing their findings about their names (2-3 minutes per student).</p>	45 minutes
5	<p>Brief celebratory opening, as students should have projects completed.</p> <p>Provide time for students to make final preparations and to share their findings.</p> <p>Students share findings and turn in their papers.</p> <p>Provide 5-7 minutes for students to reflect on learning. A closing for the session can include student popcorn activity where they state aloud what they have learned.</p>	<p>Poster paper and markers for student sharing—if possible, set chairs in circle, making experience more personal and non-threatening. If students prefer, staff can take notes as each student reports.</p>	45 minutes