San Andres Timilpan
a Design-Based-Learning Project

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Tracy Elementary School
Third Grade Dual Immersion
BPUSD
Baldwin Park, CA
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Tracy Elementary - Project Population
Baldwin Park Unified School District

 Majority of the students’ were Hispanic, English Language Learners and were at a socioeconomic disadvantage. Grade levels the school served are K-6. Total school population is 784.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student body ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income students</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I can’t read that…not in Spanish or in English”, Daniel a 6th grader sadly confessed to me rubbing his eyes. I was working as a bilingual teacher aide majoring in Business. Shocked, I made it my business to teach this student and many more “Daniels” to read! Because of my own experience as an English Language learner I understood students with the challenges I faced. I felt their fear, apprehension and loneliness. Teaching ELL’s, in Los Angeles Unified and Baldwin Park Districts for the last 20 years was a difficult yet rewarding experience. Unfortunately there are many Daniels everywhere. Children with special needs who place their trust in a teacher. Because of this trust I wanted to continue to improve myself as a teacher. Teaching has been an extremely rewarding career.
I am a pair of sunglasses. Like a pair of sunglasses help our eyes to see clearly and protect the eyes from the sun’s harmful rays, I helped create a learning environment where students could “see” clearly. A place where communication and self-expression was possible. I protected them from the barriers that can “blind” them in their learning and damage their education.
My Philosophy

I believe students have many different learning modalities with different backgrounds, and can be taught accordingly. A classroom needs to be a safe, challenging and exciting work place. I hold high expectations for all my students and focus on developing responsibility, and organizational skills. Positive thinking is always encouraged. I strongly believe all students can learn.
“Class, open your books to page 241.” “Social Studies is boring teacher!”

Since I began my teaching career I searched for effective strategies to insure that my students achieved. I was influenced by inquiry and the “constructivist approach” to teaching. I have taken many workshops, attended many conferences which are all exciting bits and pieces, but I couldn’t find a way to make it all come together as a whole. I knew teaching through an open book and lecture was not the way to reach all learners. I was one of those that couldn’t be reached through this type of instruction!

“There has to be a way.” I thought.
Project San Andres Timilpan

From a little town my parents brought me to this land in hopes of starting a better life. This story was about people coming to a new land in which they must survive.

My students were ready and wanted to get started building. Together we listed a Criteria Chart to set the guidelines for the problem to solve based on the CA State Standards. They built a strange 3-dimensional shelter that was Never-Before-Seen out of toilet paper rolls, egg cartons, Styrofoam and other recyclable materials. Once finished, students anxiously wanted to share what they had built. They shared special hideaway places, alarm systems, protective doorways and storage systems they had designed for survival. Through feedback from each other, they revised their shelters based on the Criteria Chart. I integrated writing where they created stories about living in this new land. They measured the perimeter, area and volume of their shelters during math.

Throughout the building, talking, sharing and writing, students were role-playing, having fun and learning. Our Social Studies book became a resource where they learned about people like themselves settling in a new land. Esteban announced one day, “For the first time Social Studies isn’t boring. It’s fun building things, it helped me understand better, instead of just reading. It makes things real!”
I experienced how language can be a barrier to learning leaving the impression that the student just isn’t smart enough. Esteban and Rosa arrived at our school not speaking English. Esteban’s personality was very social while Rosa’s was very quiet. While building a Never-Before-Seen Shelter they interacted with others and created a shelter. I loaded my students with vocabulary and instead of using a book I had them build. Building brought down the affective filter. Esteban began to use the word shelter in a sentence in English without the fear of using the language. Rosa quietly observed and built a shelter to live in and shared her shelter trying to use English with her friends. I saw that the building of things opened barriers to learning, no one felt isolated.

Using Design-Based learning provided English learners with a friendly setting where they were included instead of pushed aside, or isolated. They were valuable members of our land.
Testimonials

“The worst thing about not speaking English is feeling isolated and alone. When we did NBS activities I did not have to sit in my chair and feel alone, I was able to get up, walk around and see what others were doing. Then some students started helping me.” -student

“Not speaking the language made me afraid I would never make any friends. When we did NBS shelters I was able to find friends by working with them. We had to talk so I asked for help, soon we were friends.”-student

“I noticed my son was more interested in learning. He talked about what he was learning in class.”
--parent

“I liked how my child had to invent something out of his imagination. His imagination took flight! I saw how it helped him understand when he created things out of recyclables, instead of a ready-made kit.”—parent
First I began with identifying the standards that are required to teach at my grade level. In Third grade students learn how people in the past used the resources of the local region and modified the physical environment. Instead of opening Social Studies books the second step is setting a problem to be solved. I asked students, “How could you move from one region to another? The ½ step was identifying the challenge to the students such as construct a Never-Before-Seen Transportation System. The third step was setting the criteria which was a T-graph of “don’t wants” and “needs”. The needs consisted of steps to follow and standards they needed to learn, which was controlled by the teacher. Students gave input of the “don’t wants”. Students had to construct a Never-Before-Seen way to get from one region to another using only the resources available in their land. The fourth step was when they built. They talked, planned, presented their 3-D models and wrote about them. In the fifth step I carried out guided lessons to reinforce the challenge. I integrated writing, math and reading with subject areas like Science and Social Studies. This is when students opened their books to research on different transportation systems. The sixth step students referred to their designs making necessary revisions and applying their new learning from the guided lessons. This process was used throughout my year long project for each of the ten challenges.
“What do I do?” “Like this teacher?” No matter how many times I gave directions students would still ask. I found that the criteria chart coached my students instead of them asking me. This is a two sided chart where I wrote the needs for a challenge from the California State Standards. Whenever we built we would create this criteria chart. Students claimed ownership of this chart when I asked them what they thought was not needed. The first time they were surprised that I asked them for input, they didn’t understand, they were used to always getting told what to do or not to do. Eagerly, they raised their hands to give input. This chart meant something different to them because they helped create it. When students began to work I got my usual “Like this teacher?”, but all I had to do was point to the criteria chart and tell them, “I don’t know, did you read the criteria chart?” Slowly students started weaning away from my direction and would walk up to the chart to read it over again. It became a check list for them to complete and helped them make sure they were on the right track. It reinforced key vocabulary words by repeated reading and use to describe the information about each challenge.
Criteria Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBS Organism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Want</td>
<td>Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*messy work</td>
<td>*living thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*a mess</td>
<td>*NBS way to breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*it bigger than your foot</td>
<td>*NBS way to protect itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*copy others</td>
<td>*show how it will get nourishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*aliens</td>
<td>*show where it will survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*cross animals</td>
<td>*3D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Needs list is derived from Math and Social Studies California State Standards written in a simple phrase so students could focus on the content.
“This is a Hopitwhopi”

Never-Before-Seen

When placed in a new land students were faced with the problem of protection. They had to create a Never-Before-Seen Shelter. Out of recyclable trash they built what they believed was a shelter that would protect them in this new land. Created unusual inventions with strange names that had openings underground in case they had to escape because of an attack, some had alarm systems to alert incase of danger. A room where the whole family slept which was the only room enclosed, the rest of the dwelling was partitioned in the open air so that the sun would give light and they would save energy. They were encouraged to think outside of the box which lead to them telling each other, “That is not a never before seen, I’ve seen that already!” Through peer coaching and the use of the criteria chart students got feedback to go back and revise their thinking. By designing NBS objects students had to invent new products based on the criteria. They were forced to think critically and asked meaningful questions because they could not replicate, it had to be never before seen.
I used a Curriculum Integration Chart to plan my monthly challenges and to keep myself accountable for my grade level Standards and for integrating subjects. When I planned the Never-Before-Seen Organism challenge I identified topics in Social Studies, Science and Listening and Speaking Standards. The follow-up guided lessons’ objective targeted Bloom Taxonomy words such as create, write, compose, label and read, trying to target higher level thinking in order to build understanding. The title of the challenge was in the red triangle at the center of the chart which connected my story from one challenge to the next.
I started the school year with a story about coming together to begin a new school year. The story progressed as students faced a challenge on each pathway. The story began with “me”, character traits, location and needs of survival, developed to the “you” with identifying culture and lead to “us” where students learned about how to live together setting up a government. Ending with recognizing what was important to us. Each pair of sunglasses helped us “see” our way to the end of the school year.
San Andres Pathways

- Never-Before-Seen-Me!
- Mapping/Allocation
- Shelter
- Settlement
- Culture
- Monument
- Government
- Recognition
- Organism
- Transportation
I used my Long Range boards to plan for the entire school year. There were 10 boards one for every school month. Each reflected an integrated curriculum; the lessons, the State Standards and the challenges students solved. Each board was divided by horizontal colored channels indicating a specified subject area and the related State Standards and by vertical channels indicating a four week time and the guided lessons. The length of the lessons were measured by the size of the rectangle. Colors were used to separate channels, which indicated one subject. I used these boards to guide my instruction. I could visualize what was ahead and what needed to be covered to get to the next challenge. It made me accountable for teaching all subjects by integrating. I used post it’s and wrote notes that helped me keep track of special needs. My principal and parents could see what standards and subject areas were being covered. Students were aware what lessons were being taught and checked to see what was next.
Monthly Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DBL Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NBS Met!</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Arts</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Listening &amp; Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Listening &amp; Respect</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Studies</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparative Study</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Behavior</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Science Investigation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Science Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class/Town meeting

Follow-up guided Lessons.

Challenge/action of the month.

Subject

California State Standards

This is a sample of the month of September.
History Wall

The History wall was a visual representation of my project and the related curriculum. The wall developed throughout the school year leaving evidence of student work and learning, preparing the room for open house in March. I started the story and it developed month by month following the sequence of my pathways. It began with “One by one slowly the students arrived. Who are we? How are we like or unlike others?

This photo shows September where they learned about who they were through symbolism. They introduced themselves at the beginning of the year. The Challenge was displayed in red. The white middle section showed student artifacts that were selected by the teacher to reflect students learning. Students select who’s work goes on the front of class books. The bottom blue channel showed the CA State Standards written in stars.
September
One by one slowly students arrived. Who are we? How am I like or unlike others?

Through this challenge I found that when students constructed a large physical object that represented them to learn how character traits identify and distinguish individuals, in the way that properties distinguished objects, then they analyzed themselves and identified their own traits and compared their traits to others. Acting like their objects students associated themselves to the properties of their object which lead to sharing through discussion and writing. I found students who didn’t care before willingly wrote because they were focused on analyzing who they were. I found my third graders generated higher level thinking, searching for words to express themselves. A boy who was never on task wrote while starring at a pencil. “I am like this lead, the more I live the more I’m used until I’m wasted then there is no more, I die.” Through this representation this student’s attention was captured to express the comparison of himself as a pencil and convey his thoughts which lead him to write descriptive poetry about himself that would never have surfaced if not for this deep experience. I found students analyzing themselves at a critical thinking level instead of the basic facts such as; pretty, smart, helpful. This experience drew out profound analogies of themselves.
October

Now that students know who they are they needed to know their surroundings. Where should I start a life?

Through this challenge I proved that when students constructed a model of a map of their surroundings to learn about resources and geographical features then they selected an area and generated reasons why they would settle there in order to survive. By constructing the 3-D map students set up the location of where our story is developing. The setting included geographical features that popped out and made the setting of our story 3 dimensional. Students’ struggled to create the mountains while constructing the concept of 3-D and developing spatial sense. They discussed where they planned on living once they finished. “I like the mountains, there are many tree’s that I can use to make my house.” A little girl responded, “I’m living near the ocean, I’ll have lots of fish for food there!”. I found that by creating a setting for the year long project, the challenges became real as, compared to last year when we only built a city with no setting. Students experienced living on this land by playing and pretending which prepared them to make connections when reading the textbook to learn the curriculum.
November

Living on this land, I need to protect myself for survival. What kind of shelter can I build?

Through this challenge I found that when students constructed a shelter to live in our land in order to learn about survival reusing local resources, then they generated ideas of essential necessities and created a shelter that would allow them to survive. A student thought that living in the middle of the lake would protect him from intruders and ferocious animals. He created a ramp that folded out to shore so he could walk to land. He thought this would be a quiet place to live where he could fish for food or walk to land to hunt. As he presented his shelter, he became perplexed because he had not thought of how he would cook his food without burning down his shelter. I found that when students shared about their shelter, it lead them to refine on what they added to their shelter. Security was very important as many designed alarm systems or hideaways for the family in case of danger. This experience prepared my students to read about the Native American’s different type of shelters. They were ready to analyze, compare and contrast and write about the different resources needed to build these shelters.
Through this activity I found that when students built a NBS Settlement to learn how people, who settled in a location, contributed to its’ founding and development, they then compared how and why their own NBS settlement and Baldwin Park City was established.

While role-playing living in their shelter on our NBS settlement, they found they did not have resources that others had. Some found that they were too far away from others or too close to others. Luis asked if he could move after noticing he was all alone in the valley and thought there would be no one to help him in case of an emergency. There was much talking about who lived where and who were neighbors, which was very important to some except for Rodrigo, who put his shelter up on the mountains away from everyone, he wanted peace and quiet. His friend tried to convince him that he would have no one to help him if something happened to his shelter or him. Students revised their thinking, concluding that they needed to organize their shelters to help them survive by sharing resources and protecting each other. While engaging in this controlled play, I saw some students taking charge. While observing where everyone was placing their shelters, Michelle abruptly said, “You need to put your shelter here, because you have a large container for water. We can all help fill the container and share the water.”

Students became active learners working cooperatively with others using a democratic decision-making way.

December
In order to survive students needed to work together as a community.
January
Living together we bring our own culture and traditions to this new land creating a diversity of people.

Students in grade three learn about connections to the past, and how history has formed a diversity of cultures. Through this challenge I found that when students created a NBS Culture to learn about the formation of a culture then they easily appraised and built sensitivity of other cultures. Since I have Chinese, Anglo and Latino students this challenge was very significant because each culture was able to express themselves with pride of being different and of finding similarities. Megan and Briana combined their Chinese and Mexican cultures creating a colorful combination of the two. I saw students recognizing the elements that make up culture, when we read about the Native Americans, Chinese New Year and Black History. They knew that it was based on the beliefs of the people and felt a new sense of respect towards those who were different.
February
Now that we can get from one region to another, how do we move the resources from one region to another in order to survive?

Through this activity I found that if students created a NBS transportation system to learn that some goods are made locally, some elsewhere in the United States, and some abroad then they evaluated the need for today’s need of transportation of goods in order to survive. Through guided play students produced a product based on their resources. They found the need to move their goods across the land in order to trade for goods that were not available to them in their region. Students were given a picture of a birds eye view of the land where they had to plan a transportation system that would enable them to trade their goods to needed destinations. After each student explained how their model worked, a town meeting was held to vote on the best plan that followed the criteria, which they would all work together to build. When finished they tested the system.
I saw how this experience enabled students to test the validity of an idea. They traded their fish, baskets, furs, fruits with each other. Through guided play they “lived” the importance of transporting goods from region to region.
March

Time marches on…
We need to learn about living things in order to find a way
to survive in our new land.

Students learned how the land changed to fit our needs, I found that when students constructed a NBS organism to learn about adaptation in physical structure or behavior they then formulated reasons why adaptation was necessary in order for the organism to survive. Jeffrey proudly shared his rare looking organism. He described how it was able to adapt to its surroundings, but he did not give much detail about his organism’s functions for survival. After guided lessons on various ways animals and people adapt to their surroundings, Jeffrey anxiously revised his organism giving it special “powers” such as camouflage and poisonous hairs. All students related how we changed our land and how animals or people must adapt to where they live in order to survive. Through this experience I saw students making a connection between their NBS organism and what they learned in the textbook about living things and their survival. They tested the validity of an idea and made the necessary revisions through analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
April

Students needed to organize themselves in order to live in peace to learn about governance. How can we select a leader?

Through this challenge I found that when students created a NBS government to learn about the branches of government and how the role of rules and laws affect our daily lives then they formulated an understanding for the importance for public virtue and the role of a good citizen or good student. What I found through this challenge is that students really wanted order and peace. They wanted to be protected and didn’t like people arguing, and wanted a responsible ruler. I tried to guide them to think of the person’s characteristics, that sometimes the popular students might not make the best rulers. I referred them back to our NBS me challenge that we did at the beginning of the year, to think about characteristics which made a good leader. When students saw a need for different jobs, a student exclaimed, “We have our class helper chart! Why don’t we look at that?” They selected jobs to organize themselves. They compared their NBS government with the United States branches of government and found they didn’t have a judicial branch. One student said, “We do have one, the teacher!” I found students made connections with the world outside our classroom. They understood that we needed rules and classroom leaders and a teacher in order to form a productive and safe classroom. They were ready to open the books to learn about the forming of our nation’s government.
May

Looking at our lives we select what is important to us to review important character traits.

Through this challenge I found that when students created a NBS way to recognize a person to learn about the important heroes who took risks to secure our freedoms, then evaluated what character traits, actions and values deserve merit. Students reflected on people’s actions this past year and analyzed who had made an important contribution to the class, to their settlement and why. The focus of conversation was on recognizing positive character traits and actions. I saw students finding special qualities in each other, and proud smiles spreading across the room. Rodrigo was recognized for his “good thinking” qualities. His peers thought he gave them many good ideas. This was a highlight for Rodrigo, who is seldom recognized academically. Students analyzed positive character traits related to people who we learned about or characters in stories we read this year and through this experience they recognized those qualities among each other.
June

It is time to reflect on the challenges that occurred since the beginning of the year. We are part of a bigger whole. Who or what had the biggest impact on how we live now?

Through this challenge I found that when students construct a NBS monument to learn about the histories of important local and national landmarks, symbols, and essential documents then they will create a deeper understanding of what monuments represent.
Luis created a monument that represented our settlement that he titled Invention. He said the monument represented our year of creating NBS objects. When students created their monuments I saw how they tried to represent their hard thinking, fun and feeling of success.
Students evaluated and reflected on the challenges that impacted their learning throughout the year.
Month by Month Pictures

September
Students identify themselves through NBS me.

October
Working together to

November
Students build shelters to survive
In their new land.
Students presenting their NBS organisms to the class. Criteria chart is above the bulletin board.
Today

I transformed as an educator through DBL focusing on making connections and setting up my students to solve problems. For the first time in my career I look at the whole picture instead of working in parts. Through Design-Based Learning I connected the parts through a story, a sequence that students can relate to which made learning meaningful to my students. Through the NBS challenges I have rotated my perspective to see what is being taught through student eyes. Am I being clear? Why am I teaching this? Why and how is it significant to my students? I am now confident that I am addressing all levels of learning through students enthusiasm, engagement and success.