

Create an in-class College Fair

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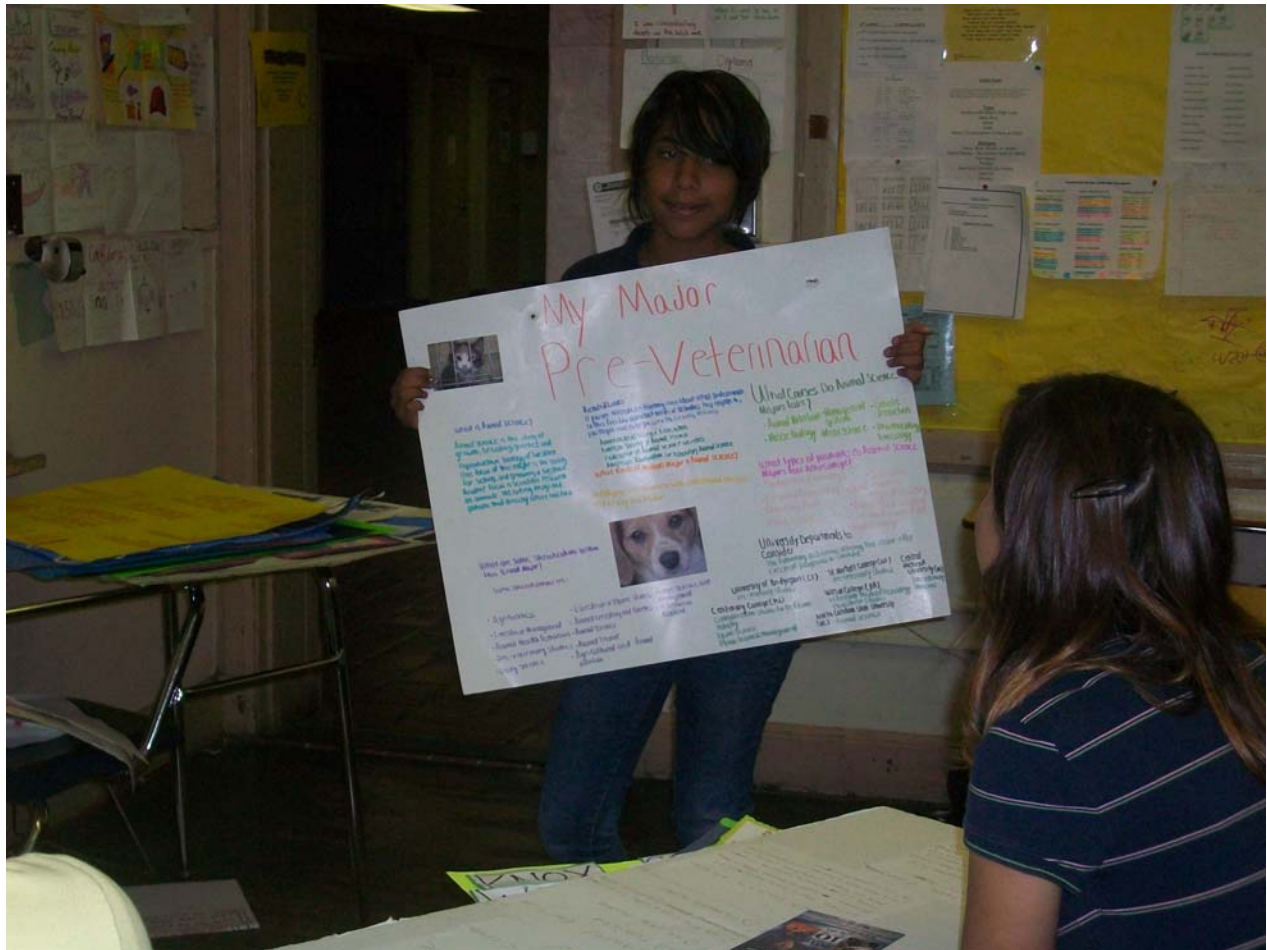
Cancel that field trip! This year we're having our College Fair right here in our classroom!



Project Description:

There is a certain excitement when high school students board a bus to attend a large college fair in a faraway hotel ballroom or expo center. That same excitement can be created during this 2-3 week project of creating a college fair in one's own classroom. And that excitement is usually followed by some real hands-on learning, which is often missing when students passively roam from booth to booth in the expo center college fair.

Making use of widely available resources on the internet and some helpful publications from the College Board, students gather research about colleges, majors, and scholarships which they present to their classmates. This project puts a lot of emphasis on engaging students in each step of the research process. From generating questions to selecting resources, from taking notes to selecting a format for presenting information, and from making presentations to evaluating others, students actively learn throughout this project.



Sunshine State Standards that apply to project:

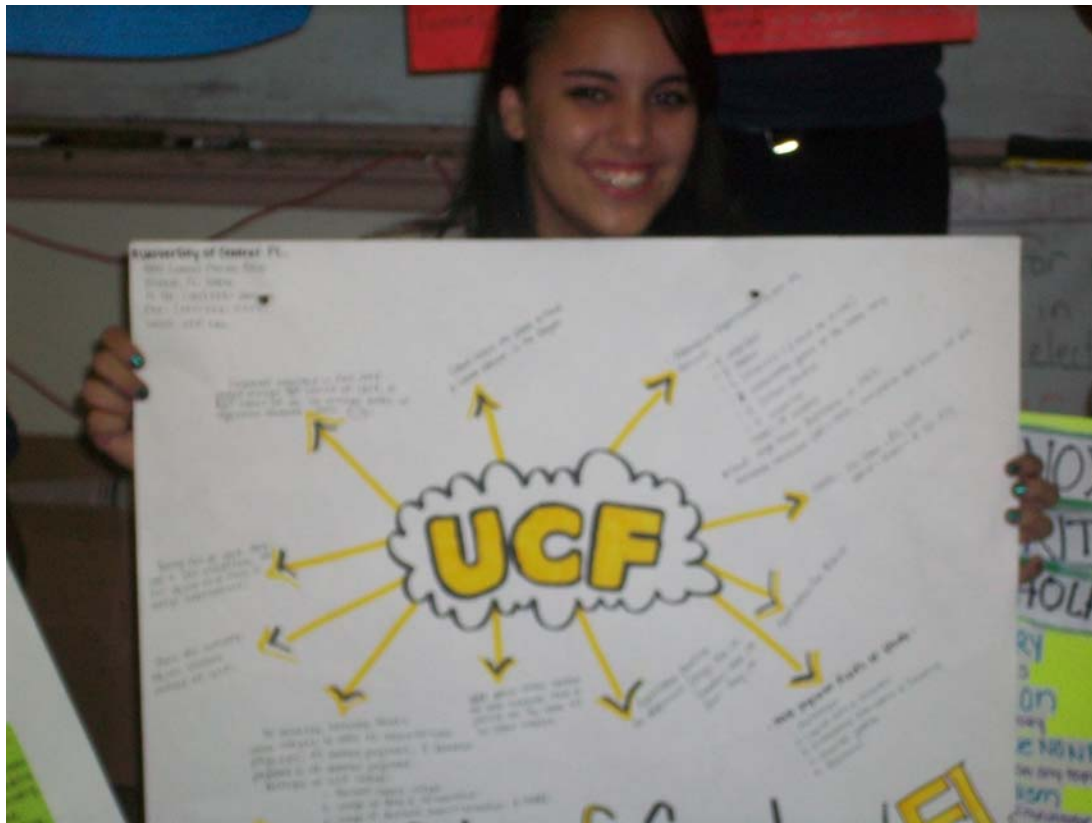
- LA.1112.2.2.1 - analyze and evaluate information from text features (e.g., transitional devices, table of contents, glossary, index, bold or italicized text, headings, charts and graphs, illustrations, subheadings)
- LA.1112.2.2.2 - use information from the text to answer questions or to state the main idea or provide relevant details
- LA.1112.2.2.3 - organize information to show understanding or relationships among facts, ideas, and events (e.g., representing key points within text through charting, mapping, paraphrasing, summarizing, comparing, contrasting, outlining)
- LA.1112.3.5.1 - prepare writing using technology in a format appropriate to the purpose (e.g., for display, multimedia)
- LA.1112.3.5.2 - include such techniques as principle of design (e.g., margins, tabs, spacing, and columns) and graphics (e.g., drawings, charts, graphs)
- LA.1112.5.2.1 - demonstrate effective listening skills and behaviors for a variety of purposes, and demonstrate understanding by critically evaluating and analyzing oral presentations
- LA.1112.5.2.2 - apply oral communication skills in interviews, formal presentations, and impromptu situations according to designed rubric criteria
- LA.1112.5.2.3 - use research and visual aids to deliver oral presentations that inform, persuade, or entertain, and evaluates one's own and others' oral presentations according to designed rubric criteria
- LA.1112.5.2.4 - use appropriate eye contact, body movements, and voice register for audience engagement in formal and informal speaking situations
- LA.1112.5.2.5 - research and organize information and demonstrate effective speaking skills and behaviors for a variety of formal and informal purposes

- LA.1112.6.2.3 - write an informational report that integrates information and makes distinctions between the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas
- LA.1112.6.3.3 - demonstrate the ability to select print and nonprint media appropriate for the purpose, occasion, and audience to develop into a formal presentation
- LA.1112.6.4.1 - select and use appropriate available technologies (e.g., computer, digital camera) to enhance communication and achieve a purpose (e.g., video, presentations)
- LA.112.6.4.2 - routinely use digital tools for publication, communication and productivity.



Students

This project has been used with 8th graders during a summer workshop on getting ready for high school as well as with 11th and 12th graders in an SAT Prep elective class. The project could be incorporated into a variety of subject areas from English to social studies and from business technology to career explorations. Though the project could work with a variety of grade levels and in a variety of subject areas, it is probably best suited for students in grades 10, 11, or 12. Indeed, the curriculum standards provided come from the Florida Sunshine State Standards for reading/language arts grades 11-12.



Lesson Plans:

Time Period

The activities in this lesson plan can be divided up to meet the pacing needs of individual classes. Some teachers might choose to use several activities in one day while others might opt for just one activity per day.

A Word on Learning

In spite of all the amazing resources available to students and teachers today--with our high tech gizmos and our lightning speed access to billions of highly engaging websites--some things about learning remain constant. For example, a lot of what we learn begins as questions. Thus, time spent in developing students' questioning abilities would seem to be time well spent. As teachers and students work toward answering those questions, a journey of discovery begins and the light of learning can shine in the dark recesses of what was once our ignorance.

Activity One

- Teacher asks students to take out a piece of paper and to write down 10 things that they'd really like to know about any college, university, or technical school.
- Teacher asks students to put a star or asterisk next to the question on their paper that they think is the most original (Definition of *original* - few classmates will have that same question on their paper.)
- Teacher sweeps the room asking students to share their original questions. As students read a question, teacher adds those questions to chart paper or the white board in the front of the classroom.
- Teacher passes out a photocopy from a page in the College Board's College Handbook. The photocopy contains at least one full entry for one college or university. Teacher asks students to read through the entry and to infer 5 questions that could be answered by the information in the entry. Students will write those 5 questions on the same paper where they wrote down the 10 things that they'd really like to know about a college, etc. Here is an example of this task: The College Handbook says that the average amount of indebtedness of one college's graduates is \$4,000. Thus, an inferred question based on this information could be: How much debt do this college's graduates owe after they get their diplomas?
- Teacher asks students to share some of their inferred questions out loud, and the teacher adds these questions to the chart paper or white board in the front of the

classroom. After students read their questions, the teacher asks them to provide the answers to the questions.

- Teacher takes some time to lead students through the College Handbook entry so that they might become familiar with the rich variety of information available about each school listed there.
- Extensions for Learning - (1.) Teacher asks students to pair up and list 20 questions that they consider to be most useful when learning about a college or university. (2.) For homework, teacher asks students to compile their personal list of 20 questions that they would ask the representative of any prospective college, university, or technical school.

Activity Two

- Teacher asks students to take out a piece of paper and to write down 10 things that they'd really like to know about any college major.
- Teacher asks students to put a star or asterisk next to the question on their paper that they think is the most original (Definition of *original* - few classmates will have that same question on their paper.)
- Teacher sweeps the room asking students to share their original questions. As students read a question, teacher adds those questions to chart paper or the white board in the front of the classroom.
- Teacher passes out a photocopy from a page in the College Board's Book of College Majors. The photocopy contains one full entry for one college major. Teacher asks students to read through the entry and to infer 5 questions that could be answered by the information in the entry. Students will write those 5 questions on the same paper where they wrote down the 10 things that they'd really like to know about a college major. Here is an example of this task: The Book of College Majors says that the hiring outlook for journalism majors is not promising because the number of jobs in that field is shrinking from one year to the next. Thus, an inferred question based on this information could be: Can people who major in journalism look forward to a lot of job openings in their field?
- Teacher asks students to share some of their inferred questions out loud, and the teacher adds these questions to the chart paper or white board in the front of the classroom. After students read their questions, the teacher asks them to provide the answers to the questions.

- Teacher takes some time to lead students through one entry from The Book of College Majors so that they might become familiar with the rich variety of information available about each major listed there.
- Extensions for Learning - (1.) Teacher asks students to pair up and list 15 questions that they consider to be most useful when learning about a college major. (2.) For homework, teacher asks students to compile their personal list of 15 questions that they would use to find out about any college major.

Activity Three

- Teacher asks students to take out a piece of paper and to write down 10 things that they'd really like to know about any college scholarship.
- Teacher asks students to put a star or asterisk next to the question on their paper that they think is the most original (Definition of *original* - few classmates will have that same question on their paper.)
- Teacher sweeps the room asking students to share their original questions. As students read a question, teacher adds those questions to chart paper or the white board in the front of the classroom.
- Teacher passes out a photocopy from a page in the College Board's Book of Scholarships. The photocopy contains two full entries for any scholarships in the guide. Teacher asks students to read through the entries and to infer 3 questions that could be answered by the information in the entry. Students will write those 3 questions on the same paper where they wrote down the 10 things that they'd really like to know about any college scholarship. Here is an example of this task: Book of Scholarships says that the Paddy Foundation Scholarship can be renewed each year by submitting proof that the recipient has earned 30 credits during the school year and maintained a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Thus, an inferred question based on this information could be: Can this scholarship be renewed, and if so, what is required to do so?
- Teacher asks students to share some of their inferred questions out loud, and the teacher adds these questions to the chart paper or white board in the front of the classroom. After students read their questions, the teacher asks them to provide the answers to the questions.

- Teacher takes some time to lead students through two entries from the Book of Scholarships so that they might become familiar with the rich variety of information available about each scholarship listed there.
- Extensions for Learning - (1.) Teacher asks students to pair up and list 15 questions that they consider to be most useful when learning about a college scholarship. (2.) For homework, teacher asks students to compile their personal list of 15 questions that they would use to find out about any college scholarship.

Activity Four

- On the day that the teacher returns the graded assignments from Extensions for Learning from the previous three activities, the teacher also describes the College Fair research assignments which will be completed during the next 1-2 weeks.

Assignment Requirements

1. Students will choose one area of concentration: schools, majors, or scholarships. Students will research 2 schools, 2 majors, or 6 scholarships.
2. Meeting individually with the teacher, students will present a specified number of questions (More for schools and majors, fewer for scholarships) that they will answer for 2 schools, 2 majors, or 6 scholarships.
3. Students may use College Board publications, reliable Internet resources, or literature made available by individual schools, scholarship funds, etc. to find the answers to their research questions. It is important that students remember that they are on a mission to find answers, not to collect unrelated information about their schools, majors, or scholarships. Students should be given about a week to find the answers to their questions.
4. During the week between assigning the research activity and collecting students' work, the teacher should take some time at the beginning of each class to highlight examples of what students SHOULD NOT be reporting in their research. (It helps to have collected student work samples from previous years. If this is not possible, teachers must try to imagine how students might randomly copy down information from a web-page that is not useful information for a high school student trying to learn about a college.) For example, in past years students have reported that 45% of the students at Long Island University are commuter students. Teachers must help students see that this is not some of the most important information to find out about a school.

5. In an effort to cut down on the mindless research practice of simply copying text from a website and pasting it into a word processing document, students will present their findings in a two-column, handwritten format. On the left side will be students' research questions and on the right hand side will be the answers to those questions.
6. In checking students' work, teachers should give credit to students for having questions that are original and answers that truly answer the questions.

Activity Five

- After receiving their 2-column research back, students make two choices:
 1. Choose 1 of the 2 colleges, 1 of the 2 majors, or 3 of the 6 scholarships to focus on in more depth;
 2. Choose a format---a poster or a Power Point---for making a more in-depth oral presentation to classmates about 1 college, 1 major, or 3 scholarships.
- After choosing their final topic, students will have one week to create their presentation. Students are reminded that in a presentation they might not be able to include all the information they gathered from their research. Thus, they must make decisions about which information would be most original and most useful to their audience and what kind of design elements will make the information stand out and be noticed and remembered by the audience.
- During the week that students have to create their presentations, the teacher should take time in class to demonstrate some model presentations as well as some unacceptable presentations. Unacceptable features include trying to fit too much information on a slide or poster; wasting space with unoriginal or unnecessary information; and reading to the audience from the poster or Power Point slides. Students could be given a scoring rubric to evaluate the teacher when he/she makes a model presentation. Scoring criteria could include:
 1. Usefulness/originality of information (Great, OK, Unacceptable)
 2. Design of presentation (Great, OK, Unacceptable)
 3. Preparedness of speaker (Great, OK, Unacceptable)

Activity Six

- Let the presentations begin! Teachers should decide how many presentations to allow per day. Scheduling 3 per day seems to keep excitement high among the class while not allowing the presentations to drag on. This also allows teachers to schedule other activities into the period. Some teachers, however, like the idea of using an entire class period for as many presentations as possible. This let's one day really feel like the College Fair.
- While one student is making a presentation, it is recommended that students in the audience also have a task to complete. This fosters more engagement from the audience and also holds them accountable for being attentive audience members. Suggested tasks could include: Using a rubric to evaluate each presenter, writing 2 questions on an index card for each presenter, taking notes about each presentation.



Resources & Materials:

College Board publications - *College Handbook* for current year, *The Book of College Majors*, *The Book of Scholarships*

Internet resources: Most websites will be located by students themselves, including a variety of college and university websites.

Materials - Poster boards, markers, laptop and projector



Presenter Bio

Shawn Eric DeNight, a National Board Certified Teacher of English/language arts, teaches intensive reading, SAT Preparation, and journalism at Miami High School. A high school teacher for 22 years, DeNight has a Ph. D. in English education from the University of Miami. At various stages in his career, he has been an English department chairperson, a newspaper adviser, a supervisor of computer reading and writing labs, and a professional development leader for teachers. He has served on two committees for the Educational Testing Service and has attended a variety of workshops sponsored by the College Board. DeNight also works as a facilitator at the University of Miami/MDCPS Zelda Glazer Writing Institute.