



Sense of Place: Our School - Our Sense of Place

Grade Level: **High School Speech Class**

Class Periods: **9 weeks - 1 semester**

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

- The goal of this project is to involve the school and the community in the production and presentation of a historical look at the Okoboji Schools.

Students will:

- Learn to work cooperatively and to respect each others' abilities. Working together in small groups will encourage students to feel more involved in the classroom community and less threatened by group interaction.
- Work with members of the community to develop a better understanding of the past and present.
- Be responsible for determining the scope of the project and for solving the problems that arise.
- Practice interviewing, writing, research, speaking, and presentation skills through speeches and videotaped comments.
- Become more familiar with technology through use of computer and video equipment.

Materials:

1. Video camera and equipment
2. Old yearbooks, photographs
3. Computers
4. Video editing equipment

Background:

The students' sense of place is developed not only through researching the history of the area, but also by talking to the people who have lived through social and cultural changes.

The students are most familiar with and probably take for granted their school, a strong component of the community. In many towns the school is the center of many activities, and in the Lake Okoboji region the school has enjoyed the support of the town. In 1995 an addition to the high school was completed that almost doubled its size.

This major change in the community actively involved the students. Thus viewing the town's history through changes in its schools becomes all the more meaningful.

Procedure:

1. Students explore the concept of "sense of place" through journaling and class discussion. They can consider: What gives you a sense of belonging? What feels like home? Where did you grow up? What is the meaning and significance of security? Do you have a special place?
2. Students give three speeches that further develop the concept of sense of place for them:
 - Who they are
 - A personal experience
 - A story passed down in their family
3. Students become familiar with the videotaping techniques by viewing videos and learning from a guest speaker who is experienced in the process of videotaping. They also study video technique through handouts and work with the media center director.
4. Students brainstorm and narrow down the project to a historical look at their local schools—their sense of place.
5. Students learn interviewing techniques and develop interview questions.
6. Students decide what they want to learn through their interviews and develop the questions to help them reach that goal.
7. Students collect old photos and interview community members about the history of the area.
8. Students develop a letter of explanation that is sent to selected teachers from three buildings: the elementary, middle, and high schools. They set appointments for the interviews and videotape them. At Okoboji, about 20 interviews were conducted.
9. They develop their technical abilities to create a finished video. The outline for the video might include:
 - "Our School—Our Sense of Place."
 - Video of schools with students in the halls.
 - History of each building (using old photos, interviews with community members).
 - Several questions answered by several teachers, one question at a time.
 - Sense of Place definitions given by many teachers.
 - Close with students' comments.
10. The Okoboji Sense of Place video "Our School—Our Sense of Place" will be presented to the community at different functions and to organizations in the area. A one-room school house is being renovated for the celebration and our video will be shown there all summer. Interested parties may buy copies also.

Assessment of Outcomes:

Students learn: Cooperation/teamwork skills.

Composition skills.

Technological skills involving videotaping, video editing, using video computer companion programs, laying music under video, and laying stills over video.

Interviewing techniques.

Video logging of hours of tape.

Research skills.

Storyboarding.

Problem solving skills.

In addition to the skills listed above, student outcomes also are of a much more personal nature. Everyone was surprised at the bonding and motivation that took place within the student teams. The teacher became the students' cheerleader and guide allowing the learning to be directed by the students. Their ownership of the project came through patience, time, being forced to sink or swim, learning through their mistakes. This encouraged their confidence, problem solving skills, and ability to learn something new.

Extensions and Adaptations:

Speeches next year will include family histories.

While the students at Okoboji High School have access to state of the art technology, the project also could have been done as a less professional video, a series of books, or posters.

Resources:

Community members interviewed by the students. Ruth Aldrich, Pocahontas Librarian.

Various text and articles on interview and videotaping techniques.