

Designing Effective Projects: Projects in Action

Anatomy of a Project Plan: Grade 3-5

African Safari Adventure: A 3-5, Life Science Project

Student naturalists help safari guests learn about diversity, interdependence, and the wonder of life in the African wild. You may want to print this page as you view the entire [African Safari Adventure Unit Plan](#).

Essential Question: *What is the price of life?*

Before a Project Approach

Initially this was a research unit. Mr. Tiffany's fourth grade students researched an animal and published a field guide on the important information that they gathered about their African animal.

After a Project Approach

Mr. Tiffany decided to improve this project by helping his students make real-world and personal connections. The task was changed so that the research on African wildlife had a product with a more authentic purpose. The students were to complete a field guide for Jungle Jeep Safari to distribute copies to their guests on a safari tour. The virtual safari tour would be represented by multimedia presentations that the students would complete about their selected African animal. In addition, students would not only research the animal, but present the information from the animals' point of view, creating a personal connection.

Challenges

In shifting this unit to a project-based unit, Mr. Tiffany faced three key challenges. His first concern was time. Adding the virtual safari tour would mean the addition of a multimedia presentation by each student. He was concerned about providing enough time for all students to use the computers and complete the project. With this additional work, students would be given increased responsibility. This led to a second challenge, student time management. He was unsure how they would manage their time efficiently with so much going on. In addition, the new unit plan allowed less time for traditional assessment. He was concerned that he would not have concrete evidence to show that the students had learned the content.

Overcoming Challenges

1. **Time.** Mr. Tiffany was sure to model all expectations and had examples of exemplary work on hand to show students. In addition, he included templates and storyboards to assist students with the planning and design of their field guides and presentations. These aids sped up the process and meant students could rotate through computers more quickly.
2. **Student Management.** Mr. Tiffany helped his students to overcome this challenge by incorporating the use of checklists to self manage and rubrics to guide students with expectations. Initial discussions assumed that Mr. Tiffany and his students were in agreement about what needed to be accomplished, how much time they would have, and the expectations and requirements of the tasks. He also incorporated peer and teacher feedback to make sure students were progressing and to catch any pitfalls before they arose.
3. **Concrete Evidence.** As for assessment, because he was sure to embed several types along the way, he had many different sources to pull from. He took detailed notes when meeting with students, and used the K-W-L charts, reflections, and rubrics in combination to assess the students' learning of the content.