

Activity #2

My School and My Teachers: A Profile of My School and Its People (Focus Topic: Education)

TEACHERS' CORNER

Activity #1 is primarily an individual activity which will take several weeks for most students to finish. Therefore, it may be expedient for the class to start Activity #2 together while individual students are still finishing Activity #1. Note that the Research Ambassador (RA) in charge of this activity may lead it, with two other RA's being recorders and the final two RA's typing the results.

Instructional Goals:

- Students will develop collaborative research skills by working together to answer questions and create a group project describing one aspect of their school.
- Students will develop assessment skills by listing what they feel is positive in their school and what they wish could be changed.
- Students will develop problem-solving skills by creating positive action suggestions to address the school needs they identify.
- Students will develop both cultural and interpersonal skills by accepting and respecting diversity of personal opinions.
- Students will develop a basic understanding of the history of educational funding and its structure in Alaska.

Alaska Content Standards addressed in Activity #2:

English/Language Arts

A. A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.

7) Communicate ideas using varied tools of electronic technology

C. A student should be able to identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.

5) When working on a collaborative project, take responsibility for individual contributions to the project; share ideas and workloads; incorporate individual talents and perspectives; work effectively with others as an active participant and as a responsive audience; and evaluate the processes and work of self and others.

E. A student should understand and respect the perspectives of others in order to communicate effectively.

Government and Citizenship

E. A student should have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as an informed and responsible citizen.

7) Implement ways of solving problems and resolving conflict

Technology

A. A student should be able to operate technology-based tools.

2) Use technological tools for learning, communications, and productivity

D. A student should be able to use technology to express ideas and exchange information.

2) Use communications technology to exchange ideas and information

Materials Needed for Activity #2:

- Flip charts or butcher paper and markers
- Access to digital cameras, computers, printers, and the internet
- Copies of the question list for each group

Prerequisite Student Skills:

- Basic language arts skills expected of students at this grade level
- Skills with digital cameras and/or scanning photos and drawings
- How to access people within the school, such as the principal, to gather information
- Polite ways of approaching and asking questions of busy school staff members

Activities for Research Ambassadors:

- RA's serve as class leader, recorders on each of the Prouds and Wishes charts, and typists for the edited version
- Topic RA (the one in charge of the Education focus topic) takes lists of student questions on their trip, finds answers, and reports back during the return presentation

Teachers are to email the completed assignment to your sister school. If it is not possible to email the photos, you may send the photos separately via snail mail or fax.

PLEASE FAX YOUR COMPLETED LESSON ASSESSMENT TO YOUR SISTER SCHOOL COORDINATOR. SEE FOLLOWING PAGE.

Student Activity #2

My School and My Teachers: A Profile of My School and Its People **(Focus Topic: Education)**

You are developing a profile of yourself and your family to share with your sister school. We are now going to work together to create a profile of our school. Your personal and family profile is your own project, but the school is a community, so we will work together to create its profile. We may have different outlooks and opinions, and that is a positive thing. So in doing group activities, follow the following guidelines:

- Each student's opinion is valid and is to be included.
- Do not try to argue with students who have different outlooks. The best group profile is one that includes diverse outlooks!

Step One: Feelings. All of us have things we like and also things we'd change if we had the power to do so. The first way we are going to describe our school and teachers is through our feelings about it, the "Prouds and Wishes" that reflect our attitudes, opinions, and desires.

Take two large pieces of chart paper and tape them to the board. At the top of one write "PROUDS." Write "WISHES" at the top of the other. Choose a recorder for each chart. The recorders need to be good listeners who will write down the key phrase in what each student says. Don't worry about spelling. The list can be edited later!

Each student in turn gets to say, in one or two sentences, one thing they really like about your school and/or teachers. The recorder has the job of summarizing what you say in just a few words on the PROUDS chart. Then say one thing you wish were different, to be summarized on the WISHES chart. Try to think of things other students have not mentioned. If two students say something that is almost the same, the recorder or the teacher may ask the second student if they're comfortable combining their statement with the one already written down by putting a star next to that statement to show that another student has the same opinion.

After each student has been heard, two other students prepare the lists for sharing with your sister school by typing them while editing and correcting spelling. You may also want to share the two lists with your student council and/or principal, after a class discussion creating ideas for making the school better by building on the "Prouds" and changing some of the things in the "Wishes" column.

Step Two: Facts. In this portion of the project, you will create a profile of your school and the people in it using both pictures and words, using the suggested questions. Although this portion is based on facts, it gives you a chance to also share some of your opinions. Divide up the topics between students or groups of students. Each group will write a paragraph and take photos about their topic. They may want to put these pictures into a Power Point presentation. There are five topics, so the teacher or lead RA should assign one of the five RA's to be in each group to act as recorder and to collect the photos.

Step Three: Send the proud/sorry summary of your feelings about your school and the five fact and picture essays or power points about your school to your sister site.

Step Four: Once you have received Activity #2 from your sister school, compare and contrast both the facts and the feelings. What are the ways the two schools are similar? What are there “Prouds” and “Wishes” that you share with students in your sister school? What are the biggest ways in which the two schools are different? You may want to invite other classes to your discussion about your school and your sister school.

Step Five: Make a list of at least five things that you are curious about and want your Research Ambassadors to find out about while they are visiting your sister school. Give your lists to the RA in charge of this topic to take with them as a research challenge!

Step Six: (Optional, if time) Share the major similarities and differences you noticed with your sister school and see if they identified the same or different items.

My School and My Teachers

Suggested questions for each group to use in researching their topic:

1 - Students

- How many students go to your school?
- What are their ages and/or grade levels?
- What is the average number of students in a classroom? Do you think this is too many, not enough, or about the right number?
- How much of a role do students have in making decisions in your school? What are some things decided by student council or other student groups?
- What individual choices do student have in your school? For example, are there some classes where students can choose which activities they will do, or how they will do certain projects?
- In general, how well do you think students behave in your school?
- Do most students do their best, and do they enjoy school?

2 - Teachers

- How many teachers do you have in your school?
- What percentage of them live in the community where your school is, its “attendance area,” so that if they had children your age they would be attending this school?
- What is the average length of time your teachers have taught in this school? (You may need to talk to the principal to find out the answer to this question and some of the other questions in this section.)
- How many of your teachers have Bachelor’s degrees; Master’s degrees; PhDs/s or other degrees beyond a Master’s degree?
- In general, do you think the teachers in your school enjoy their jobs?
- Do you feel that your teachers like you and care about you as a person?
- Who are your favorite teachers? What makes them your favorites?

3 - School Staff

- In addition to the teachers, what other adults work in your school? Be sure to include your secretary, custodian, teaching assistants, nurse, etc.
- Do any of these people travel to other schools in addition to working at your school?
- What percentage of them live in the community where your school is, its “attendance area” so that if they had children your age they would be attending this school?
- What is the average length of time they have worked in this school? (You may need to talk to the principal to find out the answer to these questions.)
- In general, do you think they enjoy their jobs?
- How has education/school changed since they went to middle or high school?
- Are there some of these workers people you would choose to talk to about things happening in your life or who you feel especially close to?
- Who are they, and why would you choose them to talk to?

4 - School Building

- How many classrooms are there in your school?
- In addition to regular rooms, list the additional spaces in your school which students regularly use, like the gym, shop, computer room, and cafeteria.
- List the rooms that are specially equipped to teach specific skills, such as a woodshop room or a home economics room. Do not count these in the regular classroom category.
- Are there portions of your school that are regularly used by community members after school hours for recreational, educational or other types of activities?
- If so, what are the spaces and what are the community activities held in them?
- Do you think your school building adequately meets the needs of your community, both in size and in how well it is maintained?

5 - School Classes

- Describe your typical school day: when school begins and ends how many different classes you have and how long each class lasts, how often you move from one room to another, whether most students go home for lunch or are served lunch at school, etc.
- What classes are all students in your grade required to take?
- If you have elective classes, list the classes you have the opportunity to choose.
- Is the school schedule pretty much the same every day, or are there a lot of things that cause variety in the schedule, like rotating schedules or special events like assemblies, field trips, etc.
- Do you think you have enough choices in the types of classes you take?
- If you could have additional classes, what would they be?
- What are your favorite classes, and why?
- How well do you feel your classes are preparing you for life after you graduate?