

Weather Inquiry Unit Outline

Throughout the three-week unit, the teacher used the example of a tsunami to model, and then the children applied the strategies taught to researching their specific type of weather.

IMMERSE:

- During the first few lessons, the students explored a variety of resources on severe weather (e-books, videos on iPads, websites, books, and articles). They identified weather in a particular region of the United States, and “wow” facts they could learn about that weather.
- Students examined their facts by asking questions and making inferences about them, focusing on the difference between thick and thin questions.
- Having learned a little about several types of severe weather, from their own research and from their peers sharing, each child chose a particular type of severe weather to focus on for the rest of the unit.

INVESTIGATE:

- In their expert groups, the students explored a variety of resources about their type of weather and chose two that they decided would be most helpful to building their expertise.
- They spent several days digging into each resource, collecting facts and questions or reactions.

COALESCE:

- The teacher modeled comparing and contrasting information from her two resources on tsunamis, and the students compared and contrasted the information from their two selected resources. Through this process, they verified information as likely to be correct and important that they found in both places, and raised questions for further research about contradictory information.
- From all the information collected about tsunamis, the teacher modeled drawing conclusions about how to stay safe. The children then took all of their research and came to conclusions about their own type of weather. The whole class sharing of these conclusions led to further synthesis, as children recognized similarities and differences in how to stay safe in the different types of weather, and inferred why this was so.
- The teacher conducted a mini-lesson on cause/effect relationships, and the children drew and/or wrote about the causes and effects of their type of weather.
- The students did a “cold write” about what they had learned so far about their type of severe weather. They synthesized their learning about general characteristics of their type of weather, what caused it, what damage it could cause, and safety precautions to take.

TAKE PUBLIC:

- The teacher introduced the final project for each expert group to create a “how-to” video to inform others how to stay safe in their type of weather. The children were to create scripts for their videos and the media specialist would videotape them in front of a green screen.
- In their expert groups, the students completed a graphic organizer including the topics to cover. These were the same categories they had been researching throughout the unit.
- A mini-lesson was conducted on how to make a video entertaining as well as informative, and the children spent a few class periods writing and practicing their performances.
- Before taping, they performed for each other and gave constructive criticism to each group of what worked well and what could be improved in their presentations. They also had the opportunity to perform in front of the local TV meteorologist, who came to their class to talk about her work.
- Each group conferred with the teacher to evaluate their video based on the rubric used to create it.
- After taping and adding their green screen backgrounds, a performance was held in the school library. The children presented their videos to fourth graders who were also studying weather.