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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a proposal for an oral history project of schools and education in Elmira, New York from 1900 to 1996, as well as lesson plans, models and samples, expected outcomes, intercurricular connections, and application to learning standards. The proposal addresses process goals, expected outcomes, student assessment, identification of resources, and project assessment. It then presents 12 lesson plans on making contact, interviewing, conducting oral history sessions, and sharing. The models and samples present a task agenda, a sample assessment rubric, a venue arrangement checklist, an oral history session grading criteria, and a self assessment form. The paper then presents a total of six expected process and content outcomes; and also presents intercurricular connections of the oral history project to language arts, social studies, mathematics, art, computer technology, and organizational skills. It concludes with lists of information literacy standards and New York State Learning Standards. (RS)

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# HOW GOOD WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

## A Retrospective of Schools and Education in Elmira

### 1900 - 1996

Patricia K. Crane and Donna Homuth

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# **HOW GOOD WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS?**

## **A retrospective of schools and education in Elmira 1900-1996**

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#### **MODELS AND SAMPLES**

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Business letter grading criteria  
Venue arrangement checklist  
Tape recording competency checklist  
Oral history session grading criteria  
Self assessment form

## **ASSESSMENT**

Expected process outcome #1  
Expected process outcome #2  
Expected process outcome #3  
Expected content outcome #1  
Expected content outcome #2  
Expected content outcome #3

## **INTERCURRICULAR CONNECTIONS**

### **APPLICATION TO LEARNING STANDARDS**

Information literacy standards for student learning  
New York State Learning Standards - English Language Arts  
New York State Learning Standards - Mathematics, Science, and Technology  
New York State Learning Standards - The Arts  
New York State Learning Standards - Career Development and Occupational Studies

# ORAL HISTORY PROJECT PROPOSAL

# **HOW GOOD WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS?**

## **A retrospective of schools and education in Elmira 1900 - 1996**

### **ORAL HISTORY PROJECT PROPOSAL**

#### *The Oral History Experience*

##### **Process goals**

1. Students will actively engage in the process of gathering information for their own consumption and that of future classes, thus becoming contributing members of the educational community.
2. Students will come to view history as an ongoing process of which they are a part, and in so doing gain a sense of responsibility for accurate, well planned, quality products.
3. Students will become familiar with the process of gathering oral histories.
  - a. They will learn how to construct appropriate opening remarks.
  - b. They will develop and exhibit the proper etiquette for conducting oral history sessions.
  - c. They will learn to phrase and ask open ended questions.
  - d. They will become active and attentive listeners.
  - e. They will become comfortable with recording technology.

##### **Expected process outcomes**

1. It is expected that students will have compiled a specified quantity of information regarding their assigned subject.
2. The product will contain all component parts as described in their task agenda.
3. Students will have
  - a. written an appropriate opening remark
  - b. conducted the oral history session in a courteous manner
  - c. asked questions which encouraged their subjects to talk
  - d. made only minimal comments, and shown interest in their subject's story
  - e. recorded an oral history

### **Content goals**

1. Students will gain a perspective regarding schools and educational life in the Elmira City School District (in particular Ernie Davis Middle School and Elmira Free Academy) through several decades.
2. Students will make inferences about changes within the educational community by comparing the information they have gleaned from their project with that of other students.
3. Students will speculate as the nature of education in future decades. They will be able to explain and defend their theories.

### **Expected content outcomes**

1. It is expected that students will conduct their oral history session in such a way as to elicit pertinent information regarding the nature of education during whatever span of time their subject was involved in the educational community. They will have collectively compiled a retrospective history of education in the Elmira City School District.
2. Students will construct a timeline of ECSD educational history.
3. Students will communicate their thoughts regarding the future of education in the ECSD either in essay form, as a panel discussion, as a debate, or as an audio visual presentation.

## **Product value**

1. The oral histories which are gathered will become a part of the Ernie Davis Middle School archives, and will be available to any and all interested parties which may include:
  - current students
  - in-coming sixth grade students
  - parent groups
  - former students
  - community groups
  - the district administration
  - district retirees
2. Ancillary materials which are gathered (documents and/or photographs) will be available for public display.
3. Appropriate materials (documents, photographs, transcripts, etc.) may be incorporated into a web site for the school

## **Curricular integration**

The following curriculum areas will be specifically addressed in the project plan:

1. Language Arts - mythology and folklore as examples of the oral tradition, business letter writing
2. Fine Arts - presentations may take many forms, among which are visual representations and performance pieces
3. Social Studies and History - the oral histories will be imbued with content pertinent to Social Studies and local history.
4. Technology - the audio recording equipment as well as other equipment (computers, scanners, digital cameras, etc.) used for the assembly of presentation pieces will require that students operate and manipulate technology.
5. Physical Education - the content of many oral history sessions will be centered on sports

## **Student assessment**

Guidelines for assessment of student progress in both process and content will consist of rubrics, checklists, and grading criteria documents



### **Equipment and materials assessment**

1. Adequate numbers of tape recorders (with external microphones) must be acquired.  
At least 34 would ensure that a whole class of 30 would be accommodated at one time (with a few extras to serve as backups in case of equipment failure or loss).
2. Sixty minute cassette tapes must be acquired in large quantities. At least one per participating student is the minimum. Two per participating student is preferable.
3. Available facilities for production of presentation pieces should include:
  - computers
  - a scanner
  - projection equipment
  - projection screen
  - amplifiers
  - digital (or other) cameras
4. Storage containers for tapes and ancillary materials.

### **Identification of resources**

1. Teachers who have retired from the ECSD (a list of potential participants and their addresses might be acquired from the administrative offices)
2. Past school Board members
3. Adults in the community who were students in the ECSD as children and who now have children of their own in ECSD schools (this may include some of the the parents and/or guardians of current Davis students)
4. Community leaders (past and/or present)

### **Implementation as an instructional process**

1. Identify willing participants - teachers, students, and/or narrators
  - may implement as a small pilot or
  - may be implemented either grade-wide
  - or school-wide
2. Develop intercurricular lesson plans
3. Create task agenda for students
4. Prepare assessment criteria guidelines
5. Agree upon a time frame

### **Presentation**

1. Post production activities (editing, transcribing, etc.)
2. Formal program (perhaps to SPTO)
  - a. students describe project
  - b. vignettes may be presented
  - c. any finished multi-media programs in part or in whole
  - d. student anecdotal assessment of project as to importance of product or educational experience
3. Promote collection community wide

### **Preservation**

1. Identify space for collection
2. Acquire equipment necessary for clients to access collection components
3. Catalog collection
4. Construct promotional display

## Project assessment

1. What will have constituted a successful educational experience? (quantification of expected process outcomes and interviews with participants)
2. Was a viable product created? List criteria: audible  
well planned  
on target  
etc.
3. Community feedback (any? positive or negative?)
4. Create an oral history of the project.

# LESSON PLANS

# WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

## LESSON 1 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### Lesson Goals

1. Students will be able to define oral history and cite reasons that oral history exists.
2. Students will be able to identify types of information likely to be discerned through oral history as opposed to formally researched and written history.
3. Students will be able to predict who would or would not be resources for oral history compilation.

### Expected Lesson Outcomes

1. Students will define oral history as “the tape recording of reminiscences about which the narrator can speak from first-hand knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>
2. Students will be able to express an understanding of oral history which includes the concepts that:
  - a. oral histories are intended for future use
  - b. they should have a broad scope
  - c. the project should be well planned
  - d. they take the place of what in the past would have been written material<sup>2</sup>
    - i. personal letters
    - ii. diaries
    - iii. extensive memos
    - iv. personal reflections
    - v. letters of negotiations

- e. they engage in record keeping, classes of people who will not or cannot be included in scholarly compilations
- f. they add color, authenticity, and personal intimacy to what might otherwise be tedious recitations of fact or formal pontificating of opinion.
- g. they bring to light and record for posterity details which would be overlooked in formal written work as not worthy of note, but which provide interesting tidbits and sometimes clarify reasons for decisions or situations
  - i. the expression on a person's face at a particular moment in history
  - ii. the mannerisms of an individual
  - iii. the weather
  - iv. observations about mood, demeanor, etc.
  - v. humorous anomalies associated with a person or situation
- h. they are particularly important for recording the cultural history of a society
  - i. their beliefs
  - ii. their decision making processes
  - iii. their goals
  - iv. their fears

3. Students will be able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources of information.

4. Students will recognize that oral history (and therefore suitable narrators or resources for oral histories) must be recorded by persons who were present at the time of a meeting or event, or who actually met or conversed with the people about whom they will be reminiscing.

<sup>1</sup> Baum, Willa. Oral History for the Local Historical Society. Nashville, TN: American

Association for State and Local History, 1987. p. 1

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p. 3

# ORAL HISTORY, HISTORICALLY SPEAKING . . .

## LESSON 2 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### Lesson Goals

1. Students will understand and appreciate the rich history of the oral tradition.

### Expected Lesson Outcomes

1. Students will have listened to oral histories.
2. Students will have read or listened to folk tales and/or myths, the historic purposes of which were to:
  - a. pass on cultural and/or family histories
  - b. educate society members in practical skills
  - c. provide entertainment
  - d. generate respect for elders
  - e. make order in a chaotic world by explaining the unexplainable
  - f. define moral values and dictate moral behavior

# MAKING CONTACT

## LESSON 3 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### Lesson Goals

1. Students will identify desirable narrators for oral history projects.
2. Students will outline preliminary parameters for the oral history project.
3. Students will plan tentative and contingency arrangements and scenarios for meeting with a narrators.

### Expected Lesson Outcomes

1. Students will list potential narrators for their oral history projects. The names will be ordered most to less desirable.
2. Students will discuss practical arrangements for suggesting sites for oral history sessions, including considerations of:
  - a. accessibility
  - b. atmosphere
    - i. little movement
    - ii. away from continuous noise (air conditioners, traffic, opening and closing doors, etc.)
  - c. possibility of interruption (no phones, away from people likely to interfere, etc.)
  - d. comfort
  - e. electrical power
  - f. background (if a video camera is to be used)
3. Students will define the desired content and scope of their oral history



project.

4. Students will compose a formal business letter detailing their plans. It will be addressed to one or more of the persons on their list.
5. Students will make any necessary arrangements to reserve the space they require or the equipment they need to conduct their oral history session.

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# MAKING CONTACT *(for real!)*

## LESSON 3A ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

*This lesson is the application of skills learned in Lesson 3. It may be inserted at any point as deemed appropriate by the instructor, but most probably fits best between lessons 6 and 7.*

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Lesson Goals**

1. Students will identify the preferred narrator for their portion of the oral history projects.
2. Students will outline parameters for the oral history project.
3. Students will plan arrangements and scenarios for meeting with a narrators.

### **Expected Lesson Outcomes**

1. Students will name their desired narrator as well as a contingency choice.
2. Students will discuss practical arrangements for suggesting sites for oral history sessions, including considerations of:
  - a. accessibility
  - b. atmosphere
    - i. little movement
    - ii. away from continuous noise (air conditioners, traffic, opening and closing doors, etc.)
  - c. possibility of interruption (no phones, away from people likely

- to interfere, etc.)
- d. comfort
- e. electrical power
- f. background (if a video camera is to be used)

3. Students will define the content and scope of their oral history project.
4. Students will compose a formal business letter detailing their plans. It will be addressed and mailed to their narrator of choice.
5. Students will make any necessary arrangements to reserve the space they require or the equipment they need to conduct their oral history session.

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# **INTERVIEWING: MINDING ONE'S Ps AND Qs**

## **LESSON 4 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Lesson Goals**

1. Students will appreciate the value and consequences of appropriate decorum.
2. Students will represent themselves and their school in a socially acceptable manner.

### **Expected Lesson Outcomes**

1. Students will demonstrate themselves to be respectful interviewers by:
  - a. smiling
  - b. dressing in a clean, neat, and tidy fashion
  - c. introducing themselves in a formal manner
  - d. offering a standard handshake
  - e. expressing their appreciation of the narrator's cooperation in a sincere manner
  - f. refraining from chewing gum, eating candy, etc.
  - g. offering a seat and (if possible) a glass of water
  - h. sitting up straight
  - i. paying rapt attention
  - j. apologizing for any inconvenience, miscues, or mechanical problems (heedless of fault or lack thereof)
  - k. refraining from the use of street slang, nonstandard English, cursing, or discriminatory remarks

2. Students will conduct oral history sessions in which they:
  - a. refrain from argument
  - b. refrain from sarcasm
  - c. allow the narrator to speak uninterrupted
  - d. do not insert their own personal anecdotes
  - e. allow the narrator time to collect his thoughts, even if a few minutes of silence ensue
  - f. do not attempt to supply words, answers, thoughts, or suggestions to the narrator.

# **INTERVIEWING: WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION DO YOU GET?**

## **LESSON 5 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Lesson Goals**

1. Students will understand the value, validity, and nature of information gained from interviews.
2. Students will appreciate the differences between fact and opinion.
3. Students will develop criteria for separating fact from opinion and hearsay.

### **Expected Lesson Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to explain a narrator's point of view.
2. Students will be able to differentiate between first-hand information and hearsay.
3. Students will be able to separate fact from opinion



# **INTERVIEWING: WHAT DO YOU ASK?**

## **LESSON 6 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes have been outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Lesson Goals**

1. Students will be able to compose well planned open ended questions.
2. Students will be able to ad lib questions or remarks appropriately.

### **Expected Lesson Outcomes**

1. Students will recognize that open ended questions are ones which require more than a yes/no or one word answer.
2. Students will compose such questions and will recognize that the phrasing of such questions often includes
  - a. how . . .
  - b. why . . .
  - c. what kind of . . .
  - d. what did \_\_\_\_\_ think . . .

3. Students will have composed a list of noncontroversial phrases designed to encourage the narrator to continue
  - a. how \_\_\_\_\_ were you? (worried, afraid, excited, surprised)
  - b. that must have been \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective)
  - c. such as . . . ?
  - d. Do you remember any stories about that?
  - e. how often did you . . .
  - f. please, go on
  - g. what were you thinking at the time?
  
4. Students will discuss “Tips for Interviewers” from Willa K. Baum’s Oral History for the Local Historical Society.

# **INTERVIEWING: GET READY, THIS IS IT!**

## **LESSON 7 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes have been outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as much or as little time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Lesson Goals**

1. Students will make a content plan for their oral history project.
2. Students will plan interview questions

### **Expected Lesson Outcomes**

1. Students will list the possible areas of expertise upon which their narrator may speak
2. Students will compose a list of possible questions and comments for each subject listed above.
3. Students will assemble any outlines, notes, photos, or clippings to take with them to the interview.
4. Students will have written and practiced an introductory statement.
5. Students will have selected their opening question.

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# **TAPE RECORDING: HOW DOES THIS MACHINE WORK?**

## **LESSON 8 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as much or as little time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Lesson Goals**

1. Students will be able to set up and operate a tape recorder.
2. Students will become comfortable with recording technology.

### **Expected Lesson Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to load tape into a tape recorder.
2. Students will be able to
  - a. record
  - b. rewind
  - c. play
  - d. fast forward
3. Students will practice and determine desirable volume settings.
4. Students will be able to identify parts of a tape recorder.

# CONDUCTING THE ORAL HISTORY SESSION

## LESSON 9 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### Lesson Goals

1. Students will apply the techniques they have planned and practiced.

### Expected Lesson Outcomes

1. Students will conduct an oral history interview with a narrator appropriate to their subject.
  - a. they will be early so as to
    - i. greet the narrator
    - ii. set up their equipment
    - iii. deal with any last minute difficulties
  - b. they will make sure seating is available
  - c. they will thank the administrator of the facility they are using
2. Students will tape record the interview.
3. Students will take a photograph of the narrator. If possible they will include themselves in the photo.
4. Students will rewind the tape.
5. Students will label the tape with the date and the name of the narrator.

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# STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

## LESSON 10 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### Lesson Goals

1. Students will assess their experience anecdotally.
2. Students will assess their product.

### Expected Lesson Outcomes

1. Students will discuss their interview sessions.
  - a. special problems
  - b. common problems
  - c. common realizations
  - d. their own comfort level
  - e. the perceived comfort level of the narrators
  - f. worries, fears, surprises, unusual situations
  - g. dealing with the unexpected
  - h. ease or difficulty
2. Students will assess their product by rating it according to a student and/or teacher generated checklist of desirable characteristics.

# SHARING

## LESSON 11 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes are outlined. Methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### Lesson Goals

1. Students will learn about oral history interview strategies from one another.
2. Students will appreciate the various aspects of education and the educational setting over time.

### Expected Lesson Outcomes

1. Students will listen to the oral history sessions or part of the oral history sessions conducted by their classmates and/or they will read the transcripts of those sessions.
2. Students will note techniques they might adopt to improve their own future interviews.
3. Students will also note practices to be avoided.
4. Students will discuss what worked and what was not successful. They will speculate as to what could have been done or what might have been done better.
5. Students will compare reminiscences and comments of narrators with those of other narrators and with their own educational experiences.

6. Students will, when practically applicable, formulate a collective timeline.

Such a timeline may include:

- a. dates buildings were erected or dedicated
- b. dates of any additions or renovations to buildings
- c. building principals
- d. lunch prices
- e. dress modes or codes
- f. when girls were allowed to take 'shop'
- g. when boys were allowed to take 'home ec.'
- h. when sports teams were named
- i. popular haircuts, shoe styles, etc.
- j. discipline policies
- k. initiation of interesting programs



# SPECULATION

## LESSON 12 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This lesson plan is intended as a guide. Only goals and expected outcomes have been outlined. The methodology is left to the instructor. This lesson may take as little or as much time as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Lesson Goals**

1. Students will speculate about the future of education and the educational setting.
2. Students will be able to express and defend their hypotheses.

### **Expected Lesson Outcomes.**

1. Students will synthesize a theory of what schools and/or the educational process will look like in the next century based on their knowledge of past philosophy, programming and practice gleaned from oral history interviews.
2. They will, in an agreed upon vehicle, explain their theories and their process in reaching this theory.
3. Students will be able to defend their theories using examples, citing trends, and referencing primary sources.

MODELS  
AND  
SAMPLES

# TASK AGENDA

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the task agenda is to provide students with a list of steps and component parts expected for the successful completion of the oral history project. It should be provided to students so that they have a running record of their progress and some feedback regarding their efforts.

### **Format**

The format for this agenda may be in any manner that the instructor chooses. The sample task agenda which follows is a suggestion which may prove useful. It may be employed as a notebook table of contents as well as a running record of progress. A duplicate kept by the instructor would serve not only as a grade book entry, but also as a viable portfolio document.

The format of the task agenda may well lend itself to an assessment rubric, a sample of which also follows.

# TASK AGENDA OF \_\_\_\_\_

TASK	DUE DATE	DATE DONE	INIT VALUE	COMMENTS
1 Specify subject of project				
2 List & rank potential narrators				
3 Practice business letter				
4 List potential venues				
5 Notes on interviewing				
6 Collect background information				
7 Write list of open-ended questions				
8 Write opening statement				
9 Decide opening question				
10 Write and send letter				
11 Make venue arrangements				
12 Demonstrate tape recording competence				
13 Conduct oral history session				
14 Label & rewind tape				
15 Transcribe tape				
16 Presentation piece				
17 Self assessment			na	
18				

# SAMPLE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

TASK	BEST PRACTICE	GOOD PRACTICE	ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE	MARGINAL PRACTICE	NO CREDIT
* VALUE SPECIFY SUBJECT	4.0 - 3.1 Student chooses an unusual or creative subject involving questions of <i>how</i> or <i>why</i> . The area to be explored is somewhat complex.	3.0 - 2.1 Student chooses to explore a common subject in a somewhat complex manner.	2.0 - 1.1 Student chooses a common topic.	1.0 - 0.1 Student accepts a topic assigned by the instructor.	0 Student declines to choose a subject, rejects those assigned by instructor, and does not make an effort to specify a subject. (i.e. He chooses to <i>see what happens</i> without planning.)
2 LIST AND RANK POTENTIAL NARRATORS	Student demonstrates ingenuity in researching relevant potential resources. Those listed are ranked in with some accuracy according to expressed criteria	Student lists thoughtful sources including some outside family and friends. Those listed are ranked with some accuracy according to expressed criteria	Student lists family members or friends. Those listed are ranked with some accuracy according to expressed criteria.	Student relies upon sources supplied by instructor. Ranking is random or only as a function of convenience	Student claims inability to compose list due to lack of resources
3 PRACTICE BUSINESS LETTER	Student completes a practice business letter.				Student does not complete a practice business letter.
4 LIST OF POTENTIAL VENUES	Student composes a list of 4 to 6 possible venues, lists the advantages and disadvantages of each and makes on-site preliminary assessments regarding viability, accessibility and availability.	Student composes a list of 4 to 6 possible venues, and lists the advantages and disadvantages of each.	Student composes a list of 2 to 4 venues and lists the advantages of each.	Student lists 2 to 3 venues within the school. Only the advantages of each are listed.	Student lists no venues or only one venue within the school
5 NOTES ON INTERVIEWING	Student has notes on interviewing.				Student has no notes on interviewing.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Student does extensive research as evidenced by notes, clippings, photo copies, etc., regarding his subject. He has also researched the historical era to be discussed **and** the extent of the narrators relationship to the subject in question.

Student has done some research regarding his subject. He has researched the historical era to be discussed and has noted the relationship of the narrator to the subject.

Student has researched **either** the subject **or** the historical era to be discussed. He has noted the relationship of the narrator to the subject.

Student has noted the relationship of the narrator to the subject. He has done no research.

Student has done no research. He knows only the name or title of the narrator.

## 7 LIST OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Student composes a list of 12 open-ended questions relevant to the subject upon which his narrator exhibits expertise. He also composes a list of contingency ad lib questions or comments.

Student composes a list of 8 open-ended questions relevant to the subject upon which his narrator is an expert. He also makes a list of contingency comments.

Student composes a list of 6 open-ended questions upon which his narrator is an expert.

Student composes a list of 6 questions. More than half **are not** open-ended or they are general and do not address his narrator's area of expertise.

Student composes a list of yes/no or one word answer questions.

## 8 OPENING STATEMENT

Student writes a statement which includes the name and position of the narrator, the subject upon which the narrator will speak, and a brief description of the narrator's

Student writes a statement which includes the name and position of the narrator and the subject upon which the narrator will speak. Grammar is proper.

Student writes a statement which includes the name and title of the narrator. Grammar is proper.

Student writes a statement which includes only the narrator's name. Grammar is proper.

Student does not write a statement or writes a statement including only the narrator's name but does not use proper grammar.

<p>9 <b>DECIDE OPENING QUESTION</b></p>	<p>credentials. Grammar is proper. Student has determined which question will be used to initiate the interview.</p>	<p>90 to 100 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>Student has not indicated an opening question.</p>
<p>10 <b>WRITE AND SEND LETTER</b></p>	<p>Student has made arrangements per checklist.</p>	<p>90 to 100 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>below 60 points on grading criteria</p>
<p>11 <b>MAKE VENUE ARRANGEMENTS</b></p>	<p>Student has demonstrated competence per checklist.</p>	<p>80 to 89 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>Student has made no arrangements.</p>
<p>12 <b>DEMONSTRATE TAPE RECORDING COMPETENCE</b></p>	<p>Student has demonstrated competence per checklist.</p>	<p>90 to 100 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>Student fails to demonstrate competence.</p>
<p>13 <b>CONDUCT ORAL HISTORY SESSION</b></p>	<p>Student labels and rewinds tape</p>	<p>90 to 100 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>below 60 points on grading criteria, or student fails to conduct an oral history session</p>
<p>14 <b>LABEL AND REWIND TAPE</b></p>	<p>Student transcribes tape</p>	<p>80 to 89 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>Student fails to label and rewind tape</p>
<p>15 <b>TRANSCRIBE TAPE (optional)</b></p>	<p>Student transcribes tape</p>	<p>80 to 89 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>Student fails to transcribe tape</p>
<p>16 <b>PRESENTATION PIECE</b></p>	<p>Student labels and rewinds tape</p>	<p>90 to 100 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>Student fails to label and rewind tape</p>
<p>17 <b>SELF ASSESSMENT</b></p>	<p>Student transcribes tape</p>	<p>90 to 100 points on grading criteria</p>	<p>Student fails to transcribe tape</p>

## Sample/Model Business Letter

123 Panarama Trail  
Penfield, NY 14610  
February 12, 1998

Mr. Amos Crane  
567 Baird Rd.  
Penfield, NY 14610

Dear Mr. Crane:

Our social studies class is working on a research project about stores and shopping practices in Penfield from 1900 to 1950. The project, "Was There Shopping Before Malls?", concentrates on oral history, recording the thoughts and memories of people who lived in Penfield before the malls existed.

We invite you to become a narrator for our project. As a narrator, you would answer questions and converse with me about stores, merchandise, and shopping habits of you, your family and friends in Penfield during the first half of this century. Our conversation will be tape recorded. The tapes from this project will be available to the public in the history room of the Penfield Town Hall.

I'll be happy to come to your building, the Grand View, and conduct the interview in your apartment or in the Daniel Penfield Sitting Room. If you agree to participate, I'll phone you to arrange the day, time, and place of our visit.

Enclosed is a copy of this letter to sign and return to me if these arrangements meet with your approval. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Anne Matthews, Grade 8  
Penfield Middle School

Approved:

---

Mr. Amos Crane

---

Date



## BUSINESS LETTER GRADING CRITERIA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Rough copy	10	_____
Correct business letter form	20	_____
heading		
inside address		
salutation		
body		
closing		
signature		
margins/spacing		
Body	40	_____
invitation to narrator	5	_____
purpose of interview	10	_____
possible meeting places	5	_____
tape - archiving (where it will be kept)	5	_____
- accessibility (who may listen)		
follow-up, confirming phone call	5	_____
(date, time, place)		
return copy/approval signature	5	_____
polite	5	_____
Clear wording/complete sentences	10	_____
Correct spelling and punctuation	10	_____
Neatness and legibility	10	_____

## VENUE ARRANGEMENT CHECKLIST

\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Site Chosen \_\_\_\_\_ (name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (address)

\_\_\_\_\_ (room)

\_\_\_\_ Permission obtained from owner/administrator

\_\_\_\_\_ (name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)

by \_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_ letter \_\_\_\_ in-person request

\_\_\_\_ Seating and table available (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ electrical power source \_\_\_\_ (y/n) Do you need an extension cord?

\_\_\_\_ (y/n) Extension cord secured

\_\_\_\_ Checklist for distractions

\_\_\_\_ (y/n) Any noisy machinery nearby?

\_\_\_\_ (y/n) Too close to regularly used train tracks?

\_\_\_\_ (y/n) other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## TAPE RECORDING COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

(The nature of the items is adjustable according to the features and difficulty of operation of the particular model of tape recorder to be used.)

\_\_\_ load tape

\_\_\_ record

\_\_\_ rewind

\_\_\_ play

\_\_\_ operate external microphone

\_\_\_ adjust volume to desirable level

note settings \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ demo tape - practice opening statement

## GRADING CRITERIA ORAL HISTORY SESSION

The following elements of the oral history session may be demonstrated and judged from the completed tape.

<p>Opening/Introductory Statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>well constructed</li> <li>interesting</li> <li>narrator's name</li> <li>topic</li> <li>relationship of narrator to topic</li> </ul>	<p>10</p>	<p>_____</p>
<p>Courteous Manner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no sarcasm</li> <li>no argument</li> <li>minimal interruptions</li> <li>interviewer refrains from personal anecdotes</li> <li>interviewer refrains from supplying words to hurry along the narrator</li> </ul>	<p>20</p>	<p>_____</p>
<p>Questions/Comments</p> <p><i>Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>thoughtful</li> <li>open ended</li> <li>ask <i>how</i> and <i>why</i></li> <li>ad libbed questions</li> <li>well phrased</li> <li>inserted at appropriate times</li> <li>pursue important sub-topics</li> <li>redirect narrator to topic or sub-topic</li> </ul> <p><i>Comments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inserted at appropriate times</li> <li>encourage further responses</li> <li>encourage more details</li> </ul> <p><i>Allow for thoughtful silences and pauses</i></p>	<p>45</p>	<p>_____</p>
<p>Tape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear, audible</li> <li>appropriate volume</li> <li>few environmental distractions</li> <li>clear label on cassette</li> </ul>	<p>20</p>	<p>_____</p>
<p>Photograph of narrator and interviewer</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>_____</p>

# SELF ASSESSMENT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## Ps and Qs Checklist:

- \_\_\_\_\_ wear clean, neat clothing
- \_\_\_\_\_ arrive early
- \_\_\_\_\_ arrange seating
- \_\_\_\_\_ set up equipment
- \_\_\_\_\_ smile
- \_\_\_\_\_ introduce yourself
- \_\_\_\_\_ shake hands
- \_\_\_\_\_ thank the narrator
- \_\_\_\_\_ thank the venue administrator

## Product Reflection

Problems encountered: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What worked well: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I would do differently: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I learned about schools and education in Elmira: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I learned about \_\_\_\_\_ (narrator's name) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I learned about recording oral historys: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

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What I learned about myself: \_\_\_\_\_

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What surprised me: \_\_\_\_\_

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---

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Suggestions for future classes: \_\_\_\_\_

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---

---

How I may apply what I learned to my own education and/or life: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

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Other comments, thoughts or reflections: \_\_\_\_\_

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I deserve a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ (letter grade) for this project because \_\_\_\_\_

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# ASSESSMENT

## **ASSESSMENT EXPECTED PROCESS OUTCOME #1**

### **Expected process outcome**

It is expected that students will have compiled a specified quantity of information regarding their assigned subject.

The successful accomplishment of this goal will be demonstrated through (1) a recorded history of the process employed while engaged in the project (annotated task agenda), the component parts of which include (2) a thoughtfully compiled list of open ended questions and ad lib comments to be used during oral history sessions, and (3) a collection of preliminary notes, observations, and/or research from which such a list was compiled. In addition, students will have (4) conducted themselves in a polite, socially acceptable and appropriate manner, and will have (5) operated any audio and/or visual equipment effectively. These processes will be assessed through rubrics and/or checklists as provided to students for guidance and self evaluation.



## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS OUTCOME #2**

### **Expected process outcome**

The product will contain all component parts as described in their task agenda.

The successful accomplishment of this task shall be demonstrated through a notebook, file, or otherwise organized collection of student generated documents which includes:

- \_\_\_ the specification of the subject of the project
- \_\_\_ a listing and ranking of potential narrators
- \_\_\_ a practice business letter
- \_\_\_ an annotated list of potential venues
- \_\_\_ notes on interviewing
- \_\_\_ background information
- \_\_\_ a list of open ended questions
- \_\_\_ an opening statement
- \_\_\_ a copy of the letter which was sent to the narrator of choice
- \_\_\_ any return correspondence from potential or designated narrators
- \_\_\_ copies of correspondence used to make venue arrangements **or**
- \_\_\_ notes from any conversations used to make such arrangements
- \_\_\_ the venue arrangement checklist
- \_\_\_ the tape recording competency checklist

## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS OUTCOME #3**

### **Expected process outcome**

Students will have

- a. written an appropriate opening remark
- b. conducted the oral history session in a courteous manner
- c. asked questions which encouraged their subjects to talk
- d. made only minimal comments, and shown interest in their subject's story
- e. recorded an oral history

The successful accomplishment of this task will be demonstrated through (1) a written opening remark (2) a polite and courteous manner as demonstrated on the finished audio tape, (3) the inclusion of open ended questions in the oral history session and a narrator who is forthcoming in response to such questions, (4) a recorded oral history session which does not seem rushed, in which thoughtful pauses and silences are allowed and which (5) is not dominated by the interviewer. The (6) finished tape will be turned over to an archive for storage and access.

## ASSESSMENT EXPECTED CONTENT OUTCOME #1

### Expected content outcome

It is expected that students will conduct their oral history session in such a way as to elicit pertinent information regarding the nature of education during whatever span of time their subject was involved in the educational community. They will have collectively compiled a retrospective history of education in the Elmira City School District.

The successful accomplishment of this goal will be demonstrated through (1) tape recorded oral histories and (2) presentations.

Tape recorded oral histories will exhibit the following characteristics:

- \_\_\_ a well constructed, interesting opening statement
  - \_\_\_ gives the narrator's name
  - \_\_\_ briefly explains the topic to be discussed
  - \_\_\_ describes the relationship of the narrator to the topic
- \_\_\_ a courteous manner
  - \_\_\_ no sarcasm
  - \_\_\_ no argument
  - \_\_\_ minimal interruptions
  - \_\_\_ interviewer refrains from personal anecdotes
  - \_\_\_ interviewer refrains from supplying words to hurry along the narrator
- \_\_\_ questions which are thoughtful and most often open-ended and comments which are appropriate and encouraging
  - \_\_\_ some planning is apparent
  - \_\_\_ questions ask *how* and *why*
  - \_\_\_ thoughtful pauses and silences allowed
  - \_\_\_ well phrased questions ad libbed at junctures appropriate to the pursuit of important or interesting subtopics
  - \_\_\_ questions are used to redirect the narrator to the topic at hand
  - \_\_\_ comments inserted at appropriate points to encourage further or more detailed responses
- \_\_\_ a clear, audible tape
  - \_\_\_ appropriate volume
  - \_\_\_ few environmental distractions
- \_\_\_ clear labeling on the tape cassette
- \_\_\_ an ancillary photograph of the narrator with the interviewer

## **ASSESSMENT EXPECTED CONTENT OUTCOME #2**

### **Expected content outcome**

Students will construct a timeline of Elmira City School District educational history.

The successful accomplishment of this goal will be demonstrated through the construction of a timeline from student generated component parts. The timeline will reflect the nature of education and the educational community in Elmira from 1900 through 1996. The subjects represented in the timeline will be vary, depending on the ideas, resources, and resourcefulness of the students involved in the project, but some likely components include:

- dates of building construction
- other pertinent information about buildings
- “firsts”
- trends in education
- fashions
- gender issues
- discipline policies
- school subjects and/or assignments
- prices
- sports
- school supplies
- technology
- social issues
- clubs
- programs

Timeline component parts will demonstrate the following characteristics:

- \_\_\_\_\_ accurate information
- \_\_\_\_\_ information appropriately assigned to the correct time period
- \_\_\_\_\_ an understanding and differentiation between fact and opinion
- \_\_\_\_\_ an understanding of point of view, distinguishable when appropriate
- \_\_\_\_\_ legibility and neatness
- \_\_\_\_\_ evidence of thoughtful format planning
- \_\_\_\_\_ aesthetically pleasing juxtaposition of text and graphic elements

The format and organization of the construction may vary according to the available resources, and considerations of time, student ability, materials, space, etc.

- whole group project (draft and/or final)
- small group project (draft and/or final)
- “experts” group project (draft and/or final)
- organized as one single large presentation piece (mural)
- organized book-style
- organized chart-style

## ASSESSMENT EXPECTED CONTENT OUTCOME #3

### Expected content outcome

Students will communicate their thoughts regarding the future of education in the Elmira City School District either in essay form, as a panel discussion, as a debate, or as an audio visual presentation.

The successful accomplishment of this goal will be demonstrated through the presentation of completed essays, or through other presentation forums which includes information drawn from oral history projects, experiences, and any other research appropriate to the subject. The discretion of the project coordinator and/or the instructors will determine whether all or only some of the students participate in the hypothesis phase of the project.

Essays will exhibit:

- the use of the writing process
- correct structure
- observation of conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.
- the effective use of an essay to convey the thesis

Panel discussions will exhibit:

- clear and audible speech
- a format which promotes the purpose of the panel discussion
- equal participation by all participants
- the effective use of the panel to convey the theses

Debates will exhibit:

- an appropriate format
- adherence to predetermined rules of procedure
- clear and audible speech
- the effective use of the debate to convey theses

Audio-visual projects will exhibit:

- clear, neat visuals
- effective use of chosen technologies
- a well defined and apparent point of view
- the effective use of the audio-visual medium to convey the thesis

# INTERCULLICULAR CONNECTIONS

# **INTERCURRICULAR CONNECTIONS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

## **LANGUAGE ARTS**

communication skills  
business letter writing  
writing skills (writing process)  
public speaking skills

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

local cultural history  
time line  
relation to national and world events

## **MATHEMATICS**

statistic gathering and information

## **ART**

photography  
balance, color, and design (visual presentations)

## **COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY**

keyboarding (transcribing)  
preparation of slide show (Power Point)  
use of digital camera and/or scanner

## **ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS**

keeping and organizing correspondence  
making arrangements  
evaluating and prioritizing narrators and venues

APPLICATION TO  
LEARNING  
STANDARDS



## **APPLICATION TO LEARNING STANDARDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

### **Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning**

(American Association of School Librarians & Association of Educational Technology and Communications)

**Standard 1 Accesses information efficiently and effectively, as described by the following indicators:**

1. recognizes the need for information
2. recognizes that accurate and comprehensive information is the basis for intelligent decision making
3. formulates questions based on information needs
4. identifies a variety of potential sources of information
5. develops and uses successful strategies for locating information

**Standard 6 Strives for excellence in information seeking and knowledge generation as described by the following indicators:**

1. assesses the quality of the process and products of one's own information seeking
2. devises strategies for revising, improving, and updating self-generated knowledge

**Standard 7 Recognizes the importance of information to a democratic society as described by the following indicators:**

1. seeks information from diverse sources, contexts, disciplines, and cultures
2. respects the principle of equitable access to information

**Standard 8 Practices ethical behavior in regard to information and information technology, as described by the following indicators:**

1. respects the principles of intellectual freedom
2. respects intellectual property rights
3. uses information technology responsibly

**Standard 9 Participates effectively in groups to pursue and generate information as described by the following indicators:**

1. shares knowledge and information with others
2. respects others' ideas and backgrounds and acknowledges their contributions
3. collaborates with others, both in person and through technologies to identify information problems and to seek their solutions
4. collaborates with others, both in person and through technologies to design, develop, and evaluate information products and solutions

**New York State Learning Standards**  
New York State Department of Education

*English Language Arts*

**Standard 1 Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.**

- \* compare and synthesize information from different sources
- \* use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing, and categorizing information
- \* distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and opinion
- \* develop information with appropriate supporting material, such as facts, details, illustrative examples or anecdotes; and exclude extraneous material
- \* use the process of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and proofreading
- \* use standard English for formal presentation of information, selecting appropriate grammatical constructions and vocabulary, using a variety of sentence structures, and observing the rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

**Standard 3 Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.**

- \* assess the quality of texts and presentations, using criteria related to the genre, the subject area, and purpose
- \* understand that different points of view depend on the particular interests and values of the individual, and recognize those differences in perspective in texts and presentations.
- \* evaluate their own and others' work based on a variety of criteria and recognize the varying effectiveness of different approaches.
- \* present (in essays, position papers, speeches, and debates) clear analyses of issues, ideas, texts, and experiences supporting their positions with well developed arguments.
- \* develop arguments with effective use of details and evidence that reflect a coherent set of criteria.
- \* use standard English, precise vocabulary, and presentational strategies effectively to influence an audience

**Standard 4 Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.**

- \* listen attentively to others and build on others' ideas in conversations with peers and adults
- \* express ideas and concerns clearly and respectfully in conversations and group discussions.
- \* use verbal and nonverbal skills to improve communication with others

*Mathematics, Science, and Technology*

**Standard 2** Students will access, generate, process, and transfer information using appropriate technologies.

- \* use a range of equipment and software to integrate several forms of information
- \* obtain accurate and relevant information from a range of sources
- \* collect data from probes to measure events and phenomena

*The Arts*

**Standard 1** Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performances in the arts and participate in various roles in the arts..

Visual Arts

- \* know and use a variety of sources for developing and conveying ideas, images, themes, symbols, and events in the creation of art
- \* use the elements and principles of art to communicate specific meanings to others in their art work

**Standard 2** Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

Visual Arts

- \* use the computer and other electronic media as designing tools to communicate visual ideas

*Career Development and Occupational Studies*

**Standard 3 Students will demonstrate mastery of the foundation skills and competencies essential for success in the workplace.**

- \* basic skills include the ability to read, write, listen, and speak as well as perform arithmetical and mathematical functions.
  - students listen to and read the ideas of others and express themselves both orally and in writing.
- \* thinking skills lead to problem-solving, experimenting, and focused observation and allow the application of knowledge to new and unfamiliar situations
  - students use ideas and information to make decisions and solve problems related to accomplishing a task
- \* personal qualities generally include competence in self-management and the ability to plan, organize, and take independent action
  - students demonstrate the personal qualities that lead to responsibility behavior
- \* positive interpersonal skills lead to teamwork and cooperation in large and small groups in family, social, and work situations.
  - students relate to people of different ages and from diverse backgrounds
- \* technology is the process and product of human skill and ingenuity in designing and creating things from available resources to satisfy personal and societal needs and wants.
  - students demonstrate an awareness of the different types of technology available to them and how technology affects society

The lesson plans in this unit may be applied to subjects other than the history of education in a particular locality. Other applications may include a history of businesses or industries, of art or other cultural pursuits, of recreation and/or entertainment, of sports, of geological or geographical features, of city, town, or county government or aspects of any of their services, of any aspects of lifestyle, of religious institutions, of architectural styles, or of family concerns.

P.K. Crane is a librarian at Ernie Davis Middle School in Elmira, New York.

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private sector policies can improve these conditions.

\*\*\*\*\*

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