

Erie Canal State-Wide Collaborative Project 2016

For the last 7 years, Monroe #1 BOCES has facilitated an exciting state-wide collaboration with 4th grade students about the Erie Canal. Students learn about other communities and history near the Erie Canal, as well as explore more about the historical relevance of the Erie Canal on their community. Classrooms participate in a Mystery Through History in the initial distance learning connection. In a future distance learning connection, students take an active role by working together to create an interactive presentation that addresses their “essential question” about the Erie Canal. *New this year! Complete Erie Canal Unit Common Core Aligned resources are available for educators.



Purpose: The purpose this project is to address NYS 4th grade Social Studies curriculum regarding the Erie Canal, transportation, and geography. Educators and students will participate in a “teaching” session, titled *Mystery Through History* presented by the facilitator of the project. Classrooms will then create their own presentation in which they address the class-created Essential Question about the Erie Canal. The entire project entails three distance-learning connections. Overall, nearly **3000** students have participated and learned from the Erie Canal project.

Instructional Framework: The purpose of these modules is to be as flexible as possible in meeting the varied needs of both multiple learners and multiple educators. As such, they will be designed utilizing a number of curriculum frameworks:

- Common Core Aligned!
- The SS core curriculum and standards from the NY State Learning Standards with a focus on:
 - "local communities with connections to New York State"
 - Industrial growth and expansion
 - Transportation, inventions, communication and technology
 - Immigration and migration (how did the Erie Canal facilitate this?)
 - The important contributions of immigrants to New York State (those who worked on the canal and then stayed on to live in various locations)
 - Geographic influences of industrialization and expansion (eg. Natural resources, location): the interactions between economic and geographic factors
- The 21st Century standards

Collaborative Space



A Collaborative Space was created for educators to use during the project. The Collaborative Space was created in Moodle, an online learning environment. The facilitator uploaded a glossary of Erie Canal Facts for educators to utilize. In addition, there were spaces for each group to communicate and share resources. Frequent communication was delivered within the space as well as reference documents. Finally, classroom projects were uploaded to the space so that educators could view other group’s presentations.

Connection #1: *Optional* information meeting for *educators* only. Facilitator shares “collaborative space” (we used Moodle – classroom management system), timeline, and important dates for educator input. This also acts as a connection and equipment test. This is recommended for first time participants.



Connection #2: This is for educators and students. Facilitator presents the interactive experience in which students help solve a ***Mystery Through History*** about the Erie Canal. The ***Mystery Through History*** showcases 4 suspects (Businessman, Canal boat Captain, Inventor, and Canal Worker). Inspector J. leads the students through the interrogation as students ask each suspect where they were during the robbery, what they do on the canal boat, why were they on the canal boat, and if they can add anything to the investigation. With each question the students are able to gather evidence about historical information about jobs, life on the Erie Canal, economics, geography, immigration, and cultural information about the Erie Canal.

Connection #3: This is for educators and students. Classrooms present an interactive presentation that addresses the classroom-created Essential Question. An example of an Essential Question: “How did the Erie Canal spark inventions?”, “What could be the future of the Erie Canal?”, “How were different groups of people impacted by the Erie Canal?”, and “What do pictures, songs, and stories about children tell us about the culture on the Erie Canal?”

Examples of Classroom Presentations:

1. Power point presentation Jeopardy game
2. Smartboard “Progressive Poem”
3. Game Shows
4. Debates
5. Reporter about town
6. Visit to historic Erie Canal Town
7. Canal boat ride with details of local establishments
8. Videos created and narrated by students

With each presentation, classrooms were encouraged to create an interactive experience for other classrooms participating. Many classrooms embedded hints or questions within their presentation to encourage interaction. Other classrooms actively included the other classrooms in their presentation. We encouraged digital projects, but this was not mandatory. Final classroom presentation should be 5 minutes long to allow time for questions and interaction from other classrooms.

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