

ORBITALS

Chris Stevenson (1992, 1997) suggests "orbital studies" as an ideal way to address both commonalities and differences among middle-level learners. Indeed the strategy appears easily adapted to learners at all levels.

(Tomlinson, 1999, p. 71)

Orbitals...

- ...are independent investigations, generally 3-6 weeks, revolving around some facet of the curriculum, allowing students to select their own topics
 - ...focus on a topic of student interest related to some facet of the curriculum
 - ...are intended to provide enrichment
 - ...are effective for use with individual students who have already mastered the concepts the class will be working on
 - ...provide an opportunity for them to focus on a part of the concept or separate topic of particular interest to the students, something they are passionate about
 - ...allow the student to share with the class what he or she has learned at the conclusion of the project
1. Students are asked to complete out-of-class investigations to answer questions or learn about topics of interest to them. The topics/questions do not have to relate to class content.
 2. Teachers help students develop a clear question for study, a plan for research, a method of presentation, and criteria for quality
 3. The teacher guides students from their particular points of readiness to pose good questions, find resources, abstract viable information, keep records, determine answers, share work, raise subsequent questions, etc.
 4. Students share their findings in appropriate formats with peer audience.
 5. Length and conditions of orbitals will vary with student readiness, interest, and mode of learning.

EXAMPLE

Cross Cultural Connections



1. Choose a culture and complete the research organizer. You should use encyclopedias, books, and Internet sites to gather information.

India

China

Japan

Aztecs

Incas

Mayans

work sessions _____ due _____

2. Complete a bibliography for your research. Use your CRH pages 63-72 . You must have at least five sources.

work sessions _____ due _____

3. As we study Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome look for similarities and differences with your culture. These comparisons should be noted on the given pages.

work sessions _____ due _____

work sessions _____ due _____

work sessions _____ due _____

work sessions _____ due _____

4. Compile all of your research in a final product. Your final product must contain information on your culture in all eight areas. You should also incorporate comparisons to Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

You may choose from the following products:

-write a paper

-give a technological presentation using Prezi, PowerPoint, or iMovie

-make a travel book

-create a newspaper

-write and tape a news program

-other approved topic

work sessions _____ due _____