

Worksheets for Meaningful Learning

Vimal P Thomas

Suma is a primary school teacher who teaches maths and EVS to classes IV and V and uses worksheets extensively across grades. She gives worksheets to her students after teaching a new topic/concept with the aim of giving them practice in it. Most of these worksheets are given as homework, which she then corrects and returns to the students.

Anish is also a primary school teacher. He is the home teacher of class III in a school, that is, he handles all the subjects for class III. For Anish, worksheets are primarily an assessment tool. After teaching a concept, he uses worksheets to check the students' understanding of what he has taught and also to keep the students engaged when he is dealing with other administrative work in his school.

It goes without saying that worksheets are an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Like Suma and Anish, most teachers make use of worksheets in their classrooms – primarily for practice and assessment. In this context, it would be useful to discuss worksheets in detail – what are the components of a good worksheet and what are the different ways in which a worksheet can be used effectively in the classroom.

Features of an effective worksheet

Connects to students' lives

A variety of worksheets on all topics is available on the internet. However, it is very important for the teacher to select the ones that are relevant to or connected with the lives of their students. Let us take an example: For the theme *Pet Animals*, which of these worksheets would be interesting and meaningful to students?

- The textbook has a short paragraph in which a boy describes his pet cat. The teacher gives a worksheet to students with the same para but where they can change (insert) the cat's name and colour.
- The teacher gives a task to the students where they have to prepare an ID card for their pet animal. The worksheet has a template for the ID card.

The second worksheet would definitely create more of a buzz in the classroom because, in contrast to the first one, the second worksheet is more connected to their lives, and they get to describe their own pet – real or imaginary.

Pet ID Card

Name of the pet: _____

Owner's name: _____

Animal type: _____

Colour: _____ Gender: male female

Age: _____ Eats: _____

Identification marks: _____

Address: _____

Paste the photo or drawing of your pet here.

Figure 1. Pet ID Card worksheet

Study Tour - 2019

Worksheet 1

1. DESTINATION

Options:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

Destination finalized: _____



2. DATE & TIME

Date: _____

Time

Start time: _____ End time: _____



3. MODE OF TRANSPORT

Options:

- 1) Train
- 2) Bus
- 3) Ship

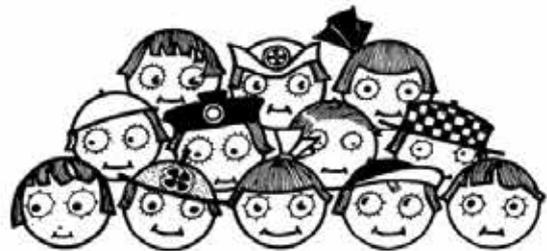
Mode of transport chosen: _____

4. PARTICIPANTS

Total no of participants:

Boys: _____ Girls: _____

Teachers / Parents: _____



5. FOOD

Breakfast:

Tea and snacks (morning):

Lunch:

Tea and snacks:

Dinner:

No. of vegetarians: _____

No. of non-vegetarians: _____

Figure 2. Tour details

Travel Plan

Starting point : _____

Place of visit 1 : _____

Place of visit 2 : _____

Place of visit 3 : _____

_____ : _____

_____ : _____

_____ : _____

_____ : _____

End point : _____



Distance Between Places of Visit



From starting point to place of visit 1 : _____ kilometers

From place of visit 1 to place of visit 2 : _____ kilometers

From place of visit 2 to place of visit 3 : _____ kilometers

_____ : _____

_____ : _____

_____ : _____

From place of visit __ to end point : _____ kilometers

Total distance : _____ kilometers

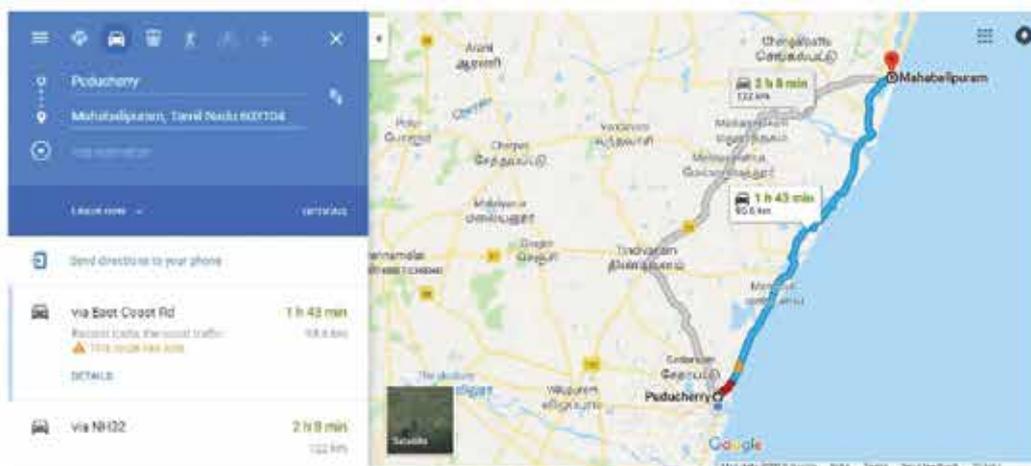


Figure 3. Places to visit and route map

List of things to be taken:

1. Identity Card
2. Water bottle
3. Cap
4. First aid kit
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____



Figure 4. Items to be carried

Involves multiple skills

Worksheets must involve multiple skills – thinking, speaking, drawing, crafting etc., though another common notion about worksheets is that they should be filled up with writing alone. For instance, the Pet ID card worksheet gives the students the opportunity to observe their pets, describe them appropriately, represent them in drawing or paste their photos.

Is attractively designed

If one were to glance through a children’s magazine or storybook, the colours, images, illustrations and font are sure to grab attention. The design of any material created for children should be attractive. Teachers can keep this aspect in mind while selecting or designing worksheets for students. The Pet ID card worksheet has used an attractive font and the worksheet itself is designed to resemble an ID card.

Is flexible

Worksheets need not be too rigid in terms of what is expected from the students. They should have scope for some level of flexibility, that is, the opportunity for the student to express his/her thoughts and feelings freely. Besides, the student should not get a sense of being evaluated or judged based on his/her work. Before sharing the Pet ID card worksheet, the teacher could have a discussion with the class on the different pets people have - cats, dogs, horses, fish, goats, donkeys and tortoises, so that even students with unusual pets do not feel left out. Similarly, the teacher could bring in possible imaginary pets, such as orange elephants, horses with wings or goats with coloured horns.

Multi-grade worksheets on travel

Rukma is a primary school teacher who teaches English to classes I-V in her school. She decided to create some interesting worksheets on *Travel*, a theme that runs across the textbooks of all classes. While trying to figure out which worksheets or activities could create interest among her students, an idea struck her - what better occasion than the annual school tour to discuss travel? She jotted down the different aspects of travel that could be discussed around the school tour and ended up with several ideas for worksheets.

To begin with, Rukma decided to involve her students right from the planning phase. To do this, she designed a worksheet (Figure 2) in which

students could list down the places that they would like to consider for their tour and then choose one from the list. She also included details, such as date, time, mode of transport, number of students and food options in this sheet. She planned to use this worksheet with all the grades.

In another worksheet designed for classes IV and V, Rukma gave her students the opportunity to describe the places selected for visits. She gave them the option of writing about these places and/ or pasting pictures. For the lower grades, she designed a worksheet where they could just collect pictures of the chosen places from newspapers or magazines and paste them into the assigned boxes.

A third worksheet (Figure 3) had the route map. Rukma leveraged the availability of the smartboard in her school to project and use *Google Maps* to make students discover the distance between places and the approximate time required to cover these distances. This worksheet was again conceived for classes IV and V.

In another worksheet (Figure 4) she got the students to prepare a list of items that they should carry along with them during the tour. The worksheet had some picture clues as well.

Needless to say, all her students enjoyed engaging with these worksheets, given the fact that the school tour was an event that they eagerly looked forward to and anything about it got them excited. Rukma later went on to add a few more worksheets in which the students could plan their meals for the day and create name lists for their respective classes.

Thus, the school tour turned out to be a joyful occasion for the students and at the same time a great learning opportunity for them. They got to experience the different aspects of planning a journey – right from deciding the date, time and place to the finer details of route and meals. The set of creative worksheets designed by their teacher complemented their learning experience.

Observations

The case of Rukma and her students helps us draw some conclusions on using worksheets as a tool for learning. While Suma and Anish utilised worksheets for practice and assessment respectively, Rukma went many steps ahead to tap into the multiple possibilities of worksheets and made them an effective tool in her teaching process itself. She ensured that the worksheets were relevant to her students and connected to their experiences. She

also brought in aspects that involve many other skills besides writing and drawing, such as thinking, discussing and planning. She made sure that the worksheets, as well as the entire tour, turned out to be a process owned by her students. The broad objective of helping her students understand the topic of ‘travel’ was not compromised either. Learning was a by-product of the whole process.

Summary

It is important that worksheets create a sense of ownership in students. Students could also design worksheets for themselves or improvise on an existing one. For instance, for the Pet ID card worksheet, the teacher could take the students’

opinions on what other information they would like to add to their Pet ID cards. The teacher could even take the students’ opinions before designing the worksheet and create one incorporating their suggestions. Likewise, worksheets completed by the students need not be collected by the teacher to store in the school. These can be displayed in the class/school or returned to the students so that they can show these to their friends and family. Students may also maintain a portfolio of their work. All these would develop a sense of ownership of the worksheets/activity among the students and not make them see it just as work enforced upon them by the teacher.

Reference

Link to the worksheets *Travel – Class V*: <https://www.azimpremjifoundationpuducherry.org/resource-catalogues/travel-class-v>



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