

## LESSON OVERVIEW

**Name:** Catherine Tommasello **Grade:** Kindergarten **Subject:** Interdisciplinary **Location:** Marietta, GA

**Context & Purpose:** This lesson was the launch for our kindergarten Project Based Learning (PBL) unit. Our driving question was: How can we make our Tritt School playground more inviting for all? I used a primary source photograph from the Library of Congress of a playground from long ago to generate the engagement of the learners.

### Lesson Procedure:

Day 1:

1. Teachers will review and model the QFT rules, using kindergarten-friendly language.
2. Students will think quietly for a minute about observations and wonderings.
3. Students will start recording their questions on paper: in writing, if they know how, or by drawing and labelling.
4. Teachers will conference with students to hear, record, and make anecdotal notes about their questions.

Day 2:

1. Teachers will post all of the students' questions around the room and read them out to the class.
2. Students will think about which questions most relate to their PBL project and pick questions to research.
3. Time permitting, students will practice identifying priority questions as closed or open-ended. Teacher will ask: "Is it going to give us a lot of answers, or is the door going to *close* after we say yes or no?"
4. Students will reflect on what they learned from asking questions.

### Next Steps (i.e. how student questions will be used):

- Students will split into three teams and research the priority questions using books, the internet (via student databases provided by the district), and expert interviews. They will rotate through the teams to have a chance to try each type of research.
- Students will make a Venn Diagram to compare the playground from the past to our playground at Tritt. What is inviting about both? What is uninviting about the playground from the past? What is uninviting about our playground?
- Students will compile our findings and shared these findings with our other Kindergarten classes. This research helped us further investigate our driving question.

## LESSON OUTCOME

### Question Focus:



*N.Y. Playground, between ca. 1910 and ca. 1915*

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2014693976/>

### Student Questions:

- Is this a safe activity?
- Where are the boys?
- What are they swinging on?
- Why are there buildings?
- Where is the teacher?
- Don't they have any grass?
- Is that fence safe? It has spikes on top.
- Why can't that kid come inside?
- Why do those kids have tights on?
- Why is there a truck with hay on it?
- Why do they have a fence?
- Did anyone get hurt playing this game?
- Do they have a PAWS promise?
- Where is their mom and dad?
- What does that sign say?
- What happens after it rains?
- Why don't they invited that kid to play?

## TEACHER REFLECTIONS

### Reflect on your QFocus. This might include the process through which you decided, or it might speak to how students responded.

This photograph provided many interesting prompts to keep the students on track with the lesson objective and to provide solid engagement. The students immediately noticed that there was one little kid outside of the fence who was just standing there looking longingly at all the boys and girls playing the game, and they said, "Why didn't they invite that kid to come play?" It led us right into talking about inviting others, which is exactly the theme of our project-based learning. They were intrigued by the attire of the children and the weird equipment, as well as the fact that the playground had no grass. They asked, "What happens after it's rained?" They were already thinking ahead about the fact if there's no grass, there is nothing to absorb all the water and it would be muddy. The students also could not believe that a school was located in a city, rather than in a suburb like they are. They wondered where the houses were. They noticed a wagon of hay in the background and wanted to know what in the world a wagon was doing off of a farm in a city next to a playground? The students enjoy seeing photographs of other children and they really connected to that aspect of the photograph.

### Which student questions stood out to you? Why?

*Why is that child not allowed to play?* This connected to our Social Emotional Learning – Empathy for others. Students discussed how that child must have felt looking at the other children playing and having fun.

*Is that a safe game for kids to play?* Our school has a PAWS promise that we recite every morning – positive attitude, act respectfully, work hard and stay safe. The students discussed how these children must not have had a stay safe rule at their school.

### Speak to the role of student questions in subsequent lessons, or in the next steps you took after the QFT.

In subsequent lessons with the students, they were more forthcoming with their questions, more comfortable and confident stating their questions in front of others, and their questions were noticeably more in-depth and complex. The students were beginning to understand the syntactical structure of formulating questions. The students began to write their own questions in subsequent lessons rather than dictating them to the teachers. They were also more enthusiastic about trying to learn how to read as they realized that reading is critical to discovering answers to questions.

The children were excited to track down teachers or other adults at our school for the interview phase of the research. The students already had practice asking experts questions from interviewing our school police officer and a firefighter after a QFT in our Community Helpers unit. This time, they went around the school asking other students in the upper grades what they thought of the primary source image, if they thought it looked like an inviting playground, and what would make an inviting playground for all. They even asked some of the older teachers about whether they recognized the game in the picture and if they had played it as kids.

### How did you tailor the standard QFT process, if at all? Describe.

Because this is kindergarten, I adapt the QFT in a few different ways:

1. I use kindergarten-friendly terms for the 4 rules and model them for the students. My rules look like this:
  1. Ask as many questions as you can. **Let them fall out of your mouth.**
  2. Do not stop to judge, discuss, or answer the questions. **No put downs about the questions.**
  3. Write down, **say, or draw** the questions exactly as it is stated. **We're not going to edit. We are not going to do any fix-ups. I often model this as the scribe.**
  4. Change statements into a question. **Example: I like pizza. Do you like pizza?**
2. This is the script I used to take the students on a walk through the photograph: "We're going to take a look at a picture from the past of children. Carefully take a look; make observations of this picture. Then go back to your seat and begin recording your questions about this photograph. Remember our rules for our QFT game."
3. My class is an inclusion classroom with students with special needs and students in general education. For differentiation, I remind students to look on our Word Wall for Wh- and other question starters: who, what, when, where, why, how, is, did, do, are
4. To support students who do not know yet how to write their own questions, we have their "Book Buddies" (older students from our school) come in and act as the scribes. We also use the Seesaw app for recording students' spoken questions. We also encourage students to draw pictures of their questions and label them.
5. When practicing closed- and open- ended words, I help them remember the difference by saying, "Is it going to give us a lot of answers, or is the door going to *c*lose after we say yes or no?"