

The Project Approach to Learning at

RisingOaks
Early Learning | St. Matthew

Project Name: Winter Olympics

Age Group: 8-12 years old

Project Start Date: January 2022

Project End Date: April 2022



Background

The School-Age Group 3 children, accompanied by their educator Kelsey Woodstock, RECE completed this project. The ages of the children that took part in the project ranged from ages 8 to 12 years old. This project started on January 28th and was completed on April 30th 2022.

The School-Age 3 group decided to embark on a Winter Olympics project as the conversation surrounding the games was growing at school with chatter about the current Winter games happening. The following day, there was again growing conversation as the group began talking about the Olympic Games starting February 4th/22 in Beijing.

Phase 1: Beginning the Project

Prior to starting the project, the group collectively came up with a list of things that they wanted to know about the Olympics. At the same time, they also listed off some interesting facts that they already know about past Olympics and what it represents. They also ensured to identify whom they could ask to discover more information. Highlighted below is this information.

What do you want to know about the Olympics?

- If athletes liked their sport as a kid or done it as a kid – Nyah (9)
- How they got into the Olympics - Theia (9)
- Do you use dogs in the Olympics? - Charlotte (8)

What do we already know?

- They all practice very hard to be in the Olympics – Lily (10)
- They do really cool things and tricks – Charlotte (8)

Who can we ask?

- My parents know a friend of theirs who competed in the Olympics! - Nyah (9)

The group ensure they had a working knowledge of the formal and informal definition of the Olympics themselves. This is something that the group re-visited throughout the entirety of the project.

Definition

Informal - Winter sports coming together to celebrate as a team and individually to win for their country. They receive medals.

Formal - The Winter Olympic Games is a major international multi-sport event held once every four years for sports practiced on snow and ice. The first Winter Olympic Games, the 1924 Winter Olympics were held in Chamonix, France. (Google definition)

This project showed extra importance and uniqueness as it was completed as the 2022 Olympics was happening in real time. The group wanted to highlight this so a few members of the group decided to do a survey highlighting if anyone was able to watch the opening weekend of the Olympic Games. Below is the outcome of the survey.

Who watched the opening weekend of the Olympic Winter Games:

- Emily (9)
- Nyah (9)
- Hailey (9)
- Nora (8)
- Charlotte (8)
- Elijah (8)
- Theia (9)
- Quintin (11)
- Jaime (10)
- Lily (10)
- Logan (9)
- Sebastian (9)
- Haylee C (8)

Prior to diving into the second phase of the project, the group collectively put their thinking skills to the test as they created a mind map, which highlighted the direction they wanted to take with this project. It highlighted various elements of the Olympics, as well as events and talking points.

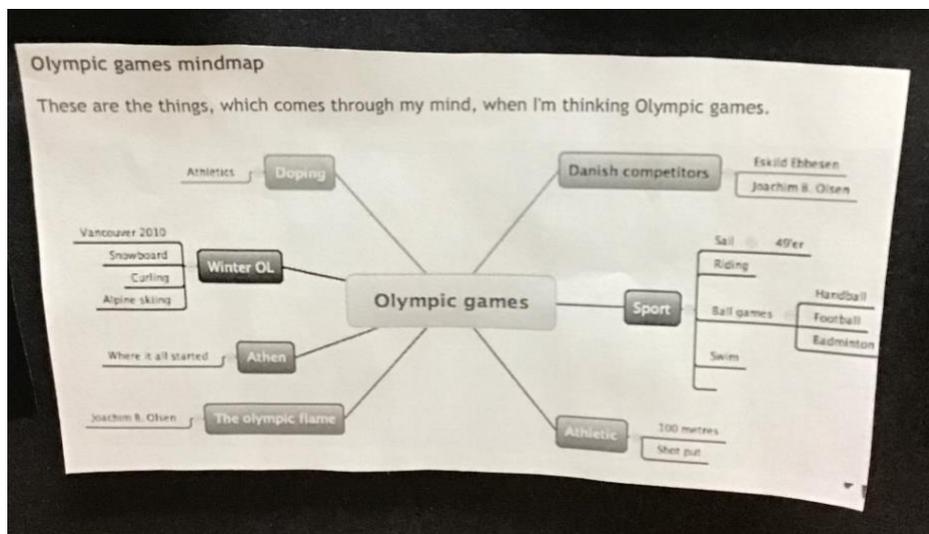


Figure 1 The completed mind map of the Olympics Project

Phase 2: Developing the Project

The group wanted to ensure they captured all of the learning and knowledge they gained throughout the project, so together the group identified and recorded any key words that they learned throughout the project. Below is the list of vocabulary that the children identified throughout the project:

Vocabulary of the Winter Olympics:

- Bob-sleighbing
- Skiing
- Snowboarding
- Ski jumping
- Ice
- Skating
- Competitors
- Winter Fun Medals

Winter Olympics Flag Creation

Before getting into details of the games and identifying talking points and experiences, the group emphasized the importance of athletes representing their countries in these games. To highlight this, the group decided to create a poster, as their representation of the games.

The group decided to add some drawings highlighting all of the events that would take place. Adding their own designs, the group focused on Olympic representations from each individual in the program, creating the sense of belonging in our program. They finished this off by adding the Olympic Rings with the wording Beijing 2022 across the poster. Hailey (9 years of age), took on that assignment, as she was able to relate with her love of skiing and many other Olympic sports. This was a great way to commence our project as it allowed the group to create a sense of belonging and teamwork to finish a collective goal.

The group decided from there that they wanted to feel like they were experiencing the games to the fullest as they could from afar. Collectively, they decided to pick an Olympic sport (indoor or outdoor sport) and free hand a drawing of them performing the sport. It could be something they are passionate about as Hailey mentioned, "I love skiing and I'm even in a ski team at Chicopee" as she picked Canada and Switzerland as her countries of choice as she shared that it is her dad's home country. Nyah (9) also mentioned, "I love to ski as well and skating is a passion of mine. I will get my dad to take pictures of me skating pretending I'm competing in the games." Emily as well mentioned, "I will ask my mom if she can book me in for a skating class, I love skating and we can get photos of me skating." Nora (8) mentioned, "I love ice hockey I play on a hockey team so I'm picking hockey and draw a picture of me playing hockey for the Canadian team." Sebastian (9) mentioned he also enjoys skiing and wants to master ski jumps more as a goal and picked Romania for the country he is competing from, as that's his home country.



Figure 2 Creation of the Winter Olympics Flag. Figure 3 Group working hard to create their design. Figure 4 Exploring the Olympics Rings

The group worked hard on their drawings, and spent some time ensuring the detail highlighted and captured everything they wanted it to be. After this was completed, Kelsey took pictures of each “competitor” of their Olympic sport and added their competition picture with their drawing of their sport. This process was an important step as they were able to re-visit and reflect on them throughout the entirety of the project.

The group also took the games outdoors as they engaged in toboggan race competitions and other activities that allowed them to identify their risk level to get the “gold” medal and then next up silver then bronze. Kelsey ensured that the entire group was included and represented in the outdoor challenges as again the group reflected on the element of ONE team.

Olympic Rings Creation

Next up, the group decided to dedicate some time to represent the Olympic Rings. This activity allowed the group to use their creative expression as they used sequins, loose parts and glue to create their own vision of what the Rings are and what they represent. While completing this experience, the group engaged in various conversations surrounding the Olympic Rings and what they know about them. We even used the iPad to revisit some information surrounding the Rings.



Figure 5 The finished Olympic Rings

Winter Games Mascot

One key element of the 2022 Olympics that the group wanted to focus on was that of the Mascot. Conversation arose about the meaning of mascots in certain sports and what they represent for that. Together, the group decided that the mascot of the 2022 Winter Games should get as much recognition as they could give. This brought on an activity on how to draw the mascot of the Winter Olympic Games. Following step by step they drew the mascot. This experience tested their hand-eye coordination, as well as their focus and attention to detail.

Charlotte (8) and Minas (8) took on the challenge of the activity by watching the iPad together and following the steps of the process. Bing Dwen Dwen, the mascot is a panda and in Mandarin, the word “Bing” has several meanings, including ice, and also symbolizes purity and strength. “Dwen Dwen” means robust and lively and also represents children. This being perfect for the activity as the wording represents children as this project is based on my school age group. Charlotte (8) and Minas (8) really took the lead on this as they were learning about the Olympics in school too.



Figure 6 Creating the Winter mascot.



Figure 7 Step by step process of the mascot

Making Medals to Highlight Achievements

As the group was preparing for RisingOaks very first Winter Olympic Games, they thought about what could enhance the experience even more to ensure they were getting the full Olympic Games experience. After some discussion, the group landed on designing and creating Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. Collectively they made one gold, one silver, and one bronze.

When the bobsleighting games took place each group of two will be rewarded a medal for first, second, and third place in our competition. Using images of the Beijing games they copied the look of the actual medals the contestant's win. Using loose part, the group was able to make the paper medals with construction paper and string to go around their neck. Some even got creative as they used gel pens to give the medals a shiny look. They were so excited for the Rising Oaks Winter Games using our very own sleds as bobsleds. Emily (9) and Nora (8) working on the medals together.



Figure 8 Hard at work creating or medals

Bobsled Competition Preparation

As the excitement continued to grow surrounding the upcoming bobsled competition, the group decided to make signs for our Olympic Games using big sheets of paper painting/writing mediums. Sebastian and Minas enhanced their teamwork skills as they used paper plates and cut out the middle of each plate to create the rings. They then used coloring mediums to decorate them, along with hot gluing the rings together to make the Olympic Rings.



Figure 9 Process of completing the Olympic Rings



Figure 10 Designing our own rings



Figure 11 Trying to score in the rings

Final Bobsled Event – RisingOaks 2022

In the following days, the big day had finally come for our competition. We had each team one at a time go down the hill and stay in their spot where they ended up. They all practiced the form of bob sledding and gave each other pointers and tips in which they have seen the bobsledders do in the current games. They also used video they found on the internet that highlighted bob sledding and the process of the sport.

Collectively as a group, we picked the top 3 farthest bob sledder's to continue to the final round. Once again, the teams chanted out which Country they were representing prior to starting. The final round crowned the gold, silver, and bronze. Competing from Romania Sebastian (9) and Theia (9) in third, coming in 2nd Nyah (9) and Hailey (9) from Switzerland. 1st place Emily (9) and Layla (9) from Portugal for the gold.

The final bobsled event proved to be popular and is still talked about daily in the group as they reflect on memories through picture documentation.



Figure 12 Teams showing off their hard earned medals



Figure 13 The crowd showing off their homemade signs

For our final activity we had our winning teams make a poster of their country and the place they came in. They were so happy to do this final project before we watched the movie on bobsleighbing competition based on a true story. They got creative with it as well for their poster. Having words on some and the flag representing their country. Using markers, they really turned out very nice. Displaying great colour as well in the winning posters. They were so thrilled with this final activity.



Figure 14 Creating country posters

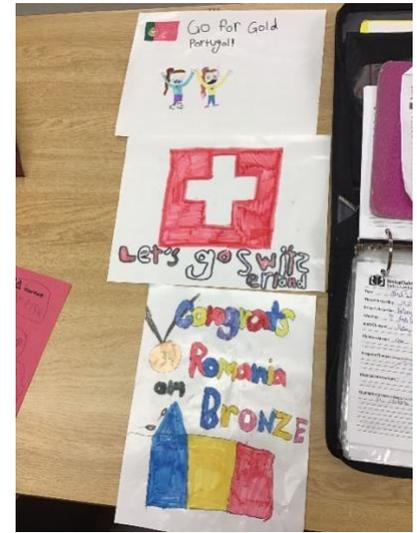


Figure 15 Medal winning flags

Phase 3: Concluding the Project

As our Olympic project came to its final months, the group decided to celebrate their accomplishments by having our final project wrap up highlighting the sport of bobsled by watching the movie Cool Runnings. This movie highlights the Olympics and the challenges and special moments they encompass, including the process of becoming an Olympic athlete.



Figure 16 Enjoying the Cool Runnings



Teacher Reflections

The children benefited from this project, as it was very much an interest for this group. Many children in my group did winter sports like skiing and skating. They all really enjoy winter sports so incorporating this into our project was a great idea. I had our group get involved by bringing in a photo of themselves skiing or skating, and some even had recent photos of skiing this year on the hill for downhill. Hailey was even going out west for skiing. They all got so involved in it and wanted to talk about it each time after school and do activities related to the winter Olympics. Their growth of learning about Olympic Winter Games expanded their knowledge as well. They got to bring the real-life games into play with our Winter Olympic bobsleighbing. From learning about an Olympic sport, to an art activity, making medals, bobsleighbing outside and watching Cool Running based on a real-life bobsleighbing team they benefited beyond the subject of Winter Olympics. Well done group 3! What an amazing job everyone and how talented you all are in Winter sports. Perhaps this project even inspired you to pick up a winter sport next year.