



Once Upon a Region

A third grade inquiry project

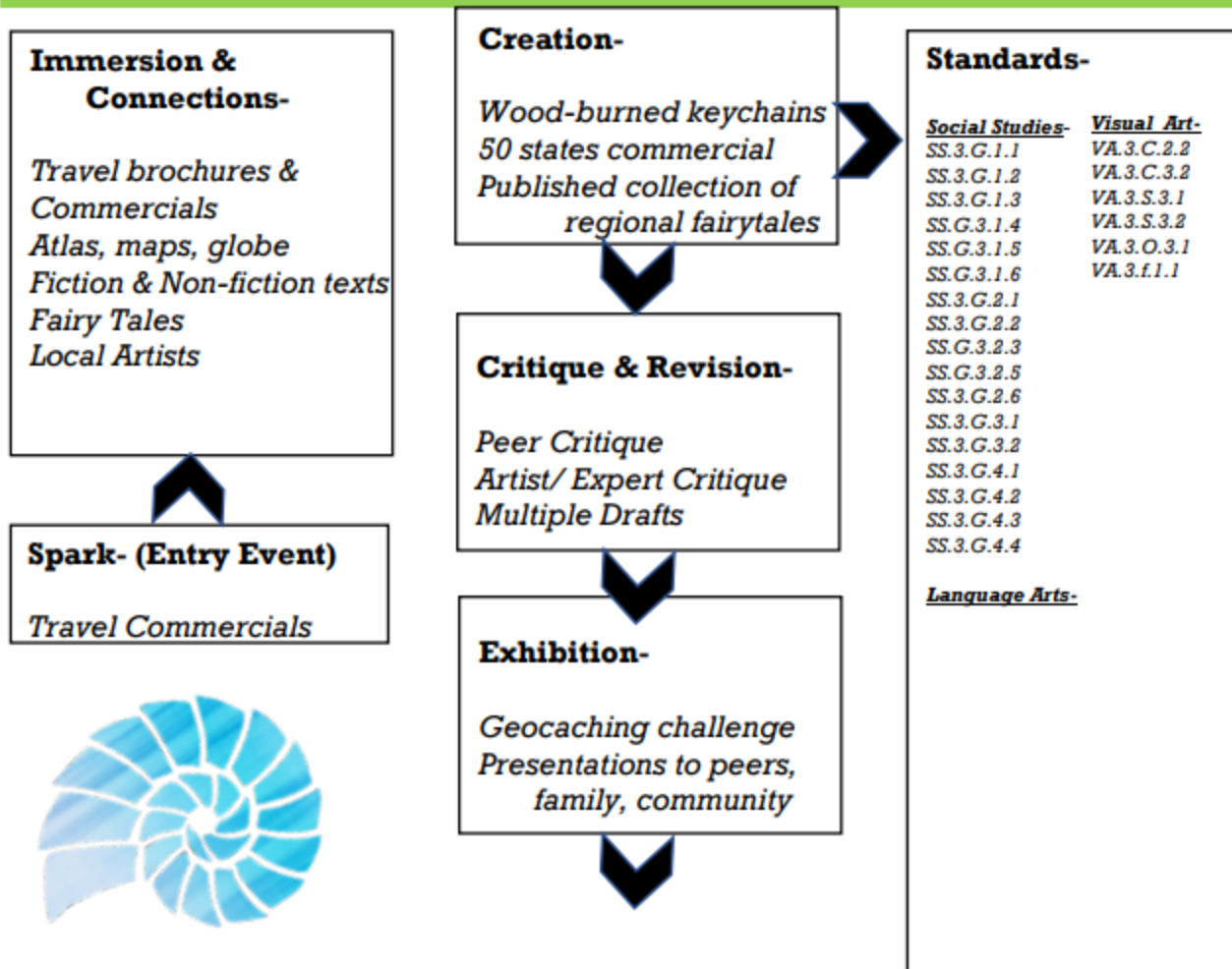
Sarah Marshall, TCS



The Big Picture.....

This project is a great example of an inquiry learning path planned first from standards. Sarah Marshall began by carefully grouping her third grade Social Studies standards in a way that would allow for a sustained and cohesive study of North America. Launching the topic with students by viewing exotic and engaging travel commercials hooked them quickly. They were then immersed in real-life resources and artifacts—maps, atlases, brochures and more-- as they learned about the diverse geography and cultures that make up our nation. Student voice and choice came in the creation phase when students chose to film their own travel commercial featuring all 50 states, along with creating a set of 50 wood-burned keychains, planted around school grounds for other students to engage in a geocaching experience. If that wasn't enough, during a writing unit featuring fairy tales, one student challenged the class to create a book of their own original fairy tales, each set in a different region or state, which was titled "Once upon a Region," and eventually published. Every student was responsible for representing one of the states through all of these creative pieces, and they took their job seriously, researching their region thoroughly to craft stories, slogans, and visual symbols that would reflect the heart of their state. At exhibition, these proud ambassadors shared their beautiful products along their newfound love of geography with an audience of peers, parents, and community members. There are many ways to design and support a powerful student-led learning experience; Mrs. Marshall's commitment to honoring the standards as building blocks resulted in deep levels of learning and engagement for all.

The Process.....



Reflections.....

" I felt this project hit the nail on the head with **collaboration** between **teacher and students**. The project did not stem from a student-led spark, instead it was planted by me. I had **standards** in mind that I knew I wanted to cover. I did fear that with less student choice they might not be as invested, but as it all unfolded I learned an important lesson- to be straightforward with them, letting them know what it was I needed them to learn, and then working together to design what we would do and make to show our new knowledge. Once I presented my concepts, a great **collaboration** began and we truly worked as a team. The result was one of our best projects to date (I have been teaching this same group of students through inquiry and PBL since they were in kindergarten). The students are so clever! They came up with the idea of publishing the regional fairytale book and it turned out better than any **assessment** I could ever have designed. I learned through this project to never underestimate my students ability to **design their own path**; that my role is to know the standards well and use them to help students create in ways that are **meaningful** to them."

----- Sarah Marshall, teacher