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TE 848
Teaching Project
December 4, 2011

My Proposal:

*** Articulate the focus area for your unit plan; be specific as to learner population and subject area (real or projected)**

The focus area for my Teaching Project is going to be Social Studies/History. I do not teach writing as a subject this year but I would like to incorporate some kind of writing with my social studies curriculum this year. I will be using my eighth grade class of fifteen students. I have three students with IEPs in writing/Language Arts.

*** Articulate instructional sequence's learning objectives**

The students will be compiling different entries to their blog. The students will create a character that would have lived in the 18th/19th century. I would like them to create a journal entry like someone would have done in the 19th century about the Revolution and events that led up to the Civil War. Students will be reading from textbooks and other online resources to learn about the Revolution and Civil War. They will also be learning how to create a blog. They will be using different writing techniques to express themselves through introspective writing. My main focus is social studies related. I would like the students to learn about a time period in our American history. They will learn about how people felt during this time period, the start/beginning of our country. I will be looking for specific ideas expressed in their writing to show me that they understand the importance of this time period in American history. I will be looking for entries that express how the people of this time period felt during this period of change in our country. I will be looking for examples of which side the author has taken: Loyalist or Patriot. I should see examples in their writing to reflect their position.

*** Provide a preliminary outline for the instructional sequence and assessments**

- Learn how to create a blog online
- Practice personal writing/autobiographies/biographies
- Read in history textbook about the Civil War
- Research people, places, clothing, food, ethnic groups, etc., during the 19th century
- Create blog entries (like journal entries)

*** Identify questions, sticking points, or areas for input you would like addressed by me and your peers**

- What are some kid friendly blog sites that I could use that would be safe and easy to use for my students?
- How often should the students blog?
- How should this assignment be graded? Should it be "graded"?

Bibliography

Cooper, Charles, R., 1999. “What we know about genres and how it can help us assign and evaluate writing.” This article defined genre as many different ways of writing. It gave many examples of ways our students can create different writing essays and other writing techniques.

Gere, A. R., Christenbury, L., & Sassi, K. (2005). *Writing on demand: best practices and strategies for success.* Chicago: Heinemann. This text will help give me some ideas on ways my students can take their project and run with it on their own. Using the writing on demand technique my students will be using a writer’s notebook to log journal entries, ideas, answers to writing prompts, etc. The authors state that “...writing on demand is a crucial skill for high school and college students, and it is imperative that we, their teachers, help them learn that skill.” After reading this text I saw how important it is for students to learn this skill and use this skill in their writing for all subjects, not just for tests. Because I teach 7th and 8th grade I think it is crucial for me to start using this skill now in order to prepare them for high school and beyond. One point that really stood out for me, especially thinking about using a blog as my teaching project is, “The audience in the traditional model is always the teacher.” (p. 34) This is very true when it comes to most writing that is done in my classroom. I thought having the students create a blog would let them reach not only the other students in our classroom, but beyond the walls of our school. This text also really stresses using peer groups in order to share their writing. “As teachers we can let our students practice a number of invention techniques to help them get into a topic, techniques that will give them confidence and which they can use in their writing in our classes...” (p. 38). Two other ideas from this text are using narrative prompts and writing in response to a quotation. These ideas will work great with the topic of the Civil War. The students can look at pictures from the time period as a “prompt” to their writing. They can also read a quotation from a famous person from the Civil War era.

Reed, Dawn, “This I believe” blog. I really got the idea to have my students do a blog for my teaching project is from Dawn Reed’s class doing their “This I Believe” blogs online.

Teachinghistory.org.<<http://teachinghistory.org/digital-classroom/ask-a-digital-historian/24545>>. This website offers a lot of insight to teaching history through blogging. This also led me to the website kidblog.org. I used the teaching history website to help me set up the kidblog for my students. This site gave me ways to think about the blog and how it would relate to history. “Students will be able to see other posts and scaffold their learning off the responses of others. As the educator, you can quickly assess, focus, and possibly redirect your unit to meet the specific needs of your students.” This site gave me ideas to post video clips and also have other students comment on their classmates’ blogs.

Hicks, T. (2009). *The Digital Writing Workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. This text has information about blogging and social bookmarking. Chapter Two talks about the importance of keeping a writer's journal in order for students to explore their writing in different ways. Hicks explains why it is important for teachers not only to give the students opportunities to write stories and poems of their choice but also for teachers to teach nonfiction writing. He talks about the fact that in terms of blogging we are "simply using a traditional pedagogy (teacher-led discussion) with a new technology." Hicks also outlines Blogging Basics in Chapter 2. He outlines the advantages blogs have for authors. Students can receive immediate feedback and are able to reach a wide audience. Students are able to also have a log of their writing over time so they can go back to revise and review what they have written.

In *Teaching History Through Technology*. Retrieved Nov. 20, 2011, from <http://thwt.org/index.php/discussion-collaboration/blogs>. This website outlines important information about edublogging. This talks about how blogging can be incorporated into an educational basis. This site actually gave a list of things I could do with a blog. This would be a site to use for other examples and ideas to do with the class. There are classroom blogging examples from numerous places. There are wonderful examples from other teachers' history classrooms.

These readings all work together to help me finalize my Teaching Project. All of the pieces work together and give me numerous examples as to why using technology in a classroom is something that needs to be done in order to keep up with the way society is changing. I have seen with these readings that using technology in the classroom is important because the students have grown up using technology and expect to be able to use it in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom. The Writing on Demand text really gave me some good ideas on how to get my students to start writing and then to keep writing. This text explains that as teachers we need to let our students explore different ways in which they can write. I think introducing a blog is a very creative way in which the students are able to write and express themselves to a wider audience. The Dawn Reed clip from NPR was an inspiration to do this blog. Using her idea I was able to come to some conclusion for what I wanted to do for this Teaching Project. The two websites thwt.org and teachinghistory.org were great places to go to get ideas to launch the project in the classroom. I was able to use these sites to show the students what a blog was and how they were going to go about this project. The Hicks text was a wealth of knowledge and also really got me thinking about using technology throughout the social studies and other subjects. This text outlines a lot of basics that is very helpful to me because I am new to using a blog. It was helpful to see the numerous things that can be created using online resources.

Introduction

This unit is being introduced to my 8th grade American History class. We meet for an hour every day except Tuesday and Friday. There are 15 students in this class, with 3 of these students with learning disabilities. We meet at the same time that the 7th graders meet for Geography with my partner teacher. We meet in the same room, opposite of one another. My class works on the side with the computers so that makes transitioning from the textbook to the computers quite easy. Each student has their own textbook however there are only 11 computers that the students can use at one time. Blogging time will be split up between two groups of students; each will have 30 minutes each day we meet to blog. I would like my students to become more engaged in the social studies material. I think it is important for them to understand history and interact with it, not just reading from a textbook. I thought blogging would be like a history journal for them to reflect on what they have read and to actually “live” the details. I think this is an appropriate way for students to learn history because it is closely related to what they are already interacting with every day. I think having them use a blog as a way to learn and interact with history will also give them an opportunity to learn a new form of technology. In the Hicks text, The Digital Writing Workshop, he states that “if students used blogging in the ways that bloggers do – to reflect on their own ideas, comment on other blogs, and synthesize their readings from other sources – this would make the process new in the sense that students would be utilizing the full capacity of blogs as a literacy practice, not just relocating traditional practices in an online space.” (Hicks, 2009, p.16) I wanted the students to create a character for this unit because this is the start of our American history. It seems so far removed from our current culture. I would like

the students to create a connection between this time period and the 1780s. I think having them create a character will help them become more creative and they will be able to have their character experience things they are physically able to do. They will be able write about certain events that happened during the Revolution. I would like to see them take topics from their American History textbook and expand upon it using online resources. According to the website, Teaching History with Technology, we should blog because “Whoever is doing most of the talking or most of the typing is doing most of the learning (and the more people listening the better.” One of my reasons for blogging was affirmed through this site. If students are blogging online, they know other people will be reading it. There is a purpose to their writing.

Curriculum Map

Primary Goal #1:

To relate to historical figures from the start of our country through writing blogs.

Primary Goal #2:

To understand historical concepts from the American Revolution to the Civil War.

Grade Level Content Expectations:

8 – U3.3.4 Explain how the new constitution resolved (or compromised) the major issues including sharing, separating, and checking of power among federal government institutions, dual sovereignty (state-federal power), rights of individuals, the Electoral College, the Three-Fifths Compromise, and the Great Compromise.

8 – U3.3.7 Using important documents (e.g., Mayflower Compact, Iroquois Confederacy, Common Sense, Declaration of Independence, Northwest Ordinance, Federalist Papers), describe the historical and philosophical origins of constitutional government in the United States using the ideas of social compact, limited government, natural rights, right of revolution, separation of powers, bicameralism, republicanism, and popular participation in government. (C2)

Assessment:

I will assess the students in a few ways. They will still be taking end of the chapter tests using the American Nation curriculum. They will also be getting a rubric so they will know what I am expecting out of their blog.

Instructional Strategies

 Journal Writing

 Cooperative Learning

✚ Independent Research

✚ Blogging

✚ Online research

Lesson Plan – Day One

About one hour

Daily Objectives:

Students will understand the reasons for the start of the American Revolution.

Order of Events:

- 1.) The students will be reading Chapter 5, Section 1 of their American Nation textbook.
- 2.) We will discuss events leading to the Revolution and important people of the time period.
- 3.) Students will be introduced to the novel, *Love Thy Neighbor: The Tory Diary of Prudence Emerson* by Ann Turner.
- 4.) We will discuss the blogging assignment.

Assignments:

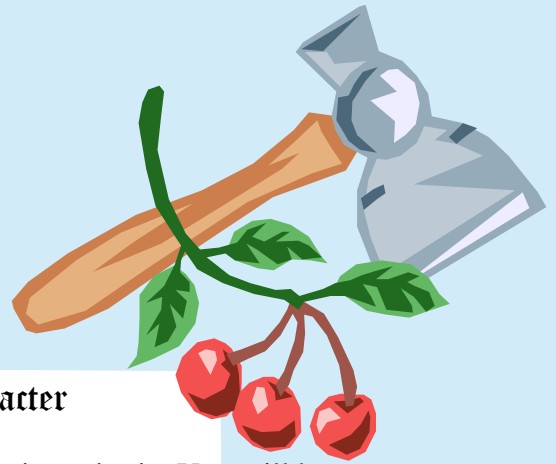
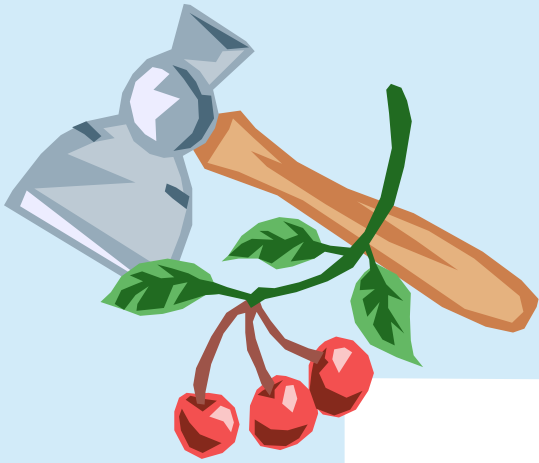
Students will be assigned to create a character using the information from the textbook. They will also be able to go online to do any time period research that they cannot find in the textbook. We will read chapters throughout the unit from the novel *Love Thy Neighbor, The Tory Diary of Prudence Emerson*. Students will create a character that they will “become” throughout this unit. In their social studies journals students will write down the characteristics of their historical person. They will do a draft in their journals to share with their classmates and me. We will do a peer review and answer questions on how their character can improve. In their American Nation textbook there are actual accounts from some historical characters during the Revolution. We will read a few of these from the entire chapter and talk about important details that make these journal entries interesting. We will also explore a few blogs from thwt.org and see how our blogs could look as a classroom. We will discuss the importance of using personal details/narrative when creating a journal/blog. Once students have discussed and shared their trial journal entry, they will fill out their character information sheet.

Resources:

American Nation textbook

Love Thy Neighbor: The Tory Diary of Prudence Emerson, by Ann Turner

Character information handout



My Historical Character

You will be creating a character using the following criteria. You will be creating a journal/blog that your character will be writing. Be sure to have historically accurate information. You will be able to use your textbook, class novels, and the internet to do research.

My Historical Character

Name _____

Gender _____

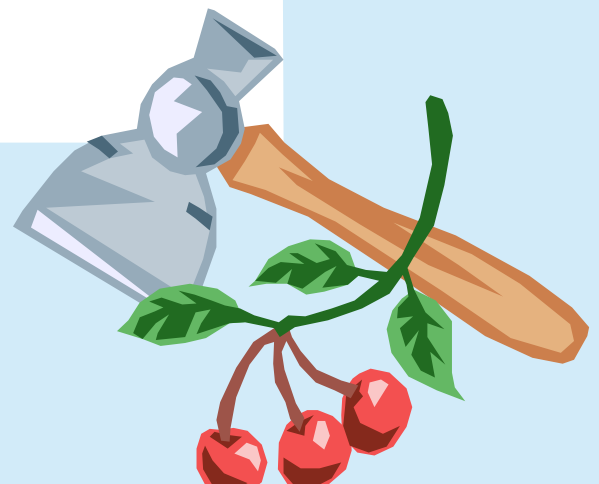
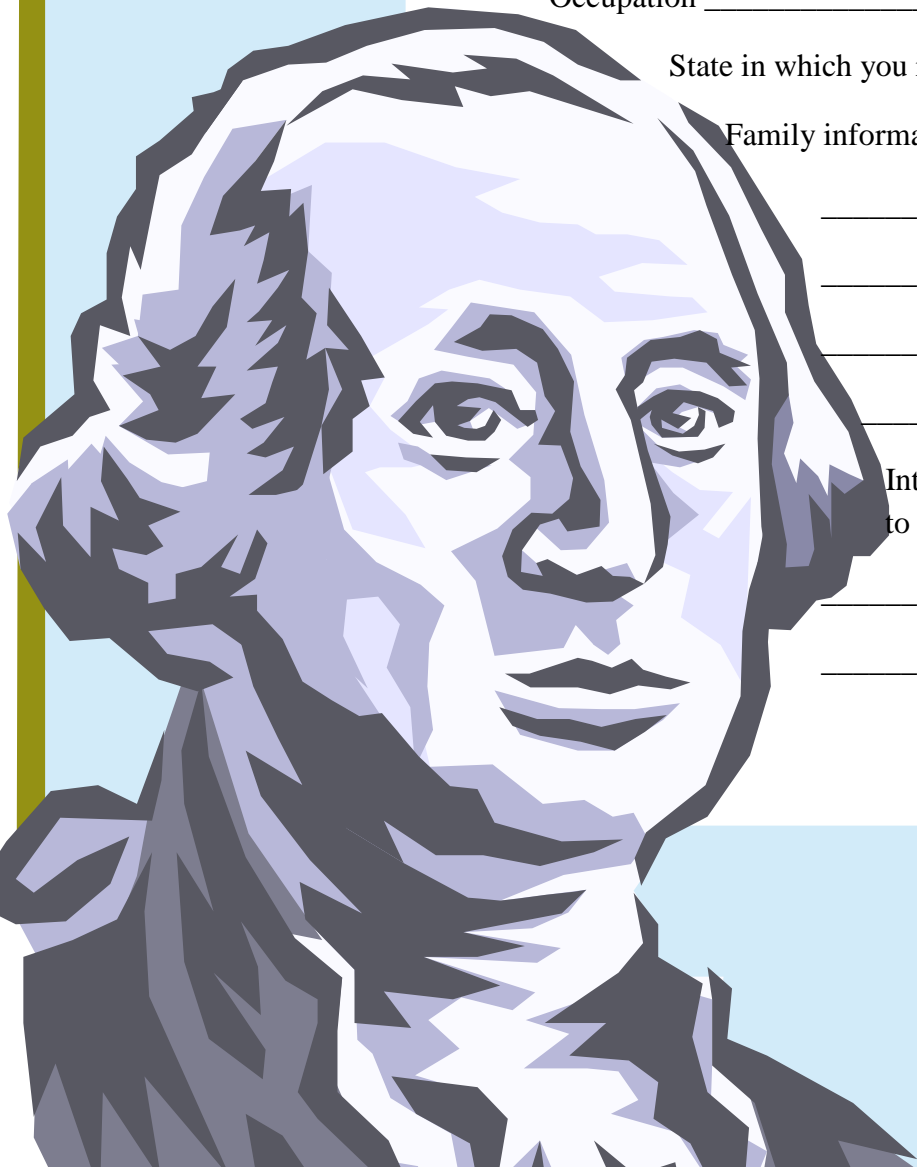
Age _____

Occupation _____

State in which you reside _____

Family information _____

Interesting facts you want your character to exhibit _____



Lesson Plan – Day Two

About one hour

Daily Objectives:

Students will introduce their character to the group and read their first draft of their blog.

Order of Events:

- 1.) We will review the My Historical Character handout.
- 2.) Students will introduce their character to the group.
- 3.) Students will be able to ask questions of the other students to get clarification.
- 4.) We will read the next section of Chapter 5 in our textbooks, then discuss.

Assignments:

Students will answer the questions at the end of the section with a partner. Students will be getting ready to create their own blog. They will read their latest draft of their journal and character information sheet. Eventually, when the students have their blogs posted, I want them to comment on each other's writing. For today's assignment the students will get with a partner to make comments and suggestions on each other's' journals. I would like to see them asking questions about things they do not understand or places where their partner could elaborate. We will discuss the importance of constructive criticism especially when these blogs and comments will be posted online for other people to see.

Resources:

American Nation textbook
Character information handout

Historical Role Play : Character Blog

Teacher Name: **Mrs Smock**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Historical Accuracy	All historical information appeared to be accurate and in chronological order.	Almost all historical information appeared to be accurate and in chronological order.	Most of the historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Very little of the historical information was accurate and/or in chronological order.
Role	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were consistently in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were often in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were sometimes in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were rarely in character.
Knowledge Gained	Can clearly explain several ways in which his character \\\"saw\\\" things differently than other characters and can clearly explain why.	Can clearly explain several ways in which his character \\\"saw\\\" things differently than other characters.	Can clearly explain one way in which his character \\\"saw\\\" things differently than other characters.	Cannot explain one way in which his character \\\"saw\\\" things differently than other characters.
Required Elements	Student included more information than was required.	Student included all information that was required.	Student included most information that was required.	Student included less information than was required.
Grammar and Spelling	No grammar or spelling errors.	Little grammar or spelling errors.	3-5 grammar or spelling errors.	Numerous grammar or spelling errors.
Voice of history	The student insightfully took on the role of a historical character.	The student mainly stayed on topic in regards to their role as a historical character.	Often strayed from their role as a historical character.	Did not stay on track with regards to a historical character.

Reflection

I wanted to create a lesson that would be different than what I normally do. I knew I wanted to use technology in some way because that is one of my goals for this school year. My students constantly want to go on the computer to do anything and everything they can. I thought having this assignment would actually get them excited about learning history. The students are actually going to be able to put their voice to something and to make it “real.” This course has given me some ideas in which to use writing as a tool that I can incorporate into other genres such as Social Studies and research. We have started the blogging process by mainly introducing the students to the blog website and having them make an initial post introducing their character and just getting a general feel for blogging. You can visit the students’ blog at:

www.kidblog.org/lakeeriehistory

Log in as: lakeerie and the password is: Smock

Some of the students have already posted a few blogs! They are very excited about this project and some have actually asked me to go on their blog in their free time. They also have been commenting on each other’s blogs without me even telling them to. I am excited to continue with this project for this quarter.

Reflection: Part 2

Continuing the reflection from the first draft there are few things I would change to make this unit go a little better. I changed how I would introduce the assignment. Where before I just had the students log in a start blogging, I would have them follow the lessons that are added here in this unit plan. Students will be given more instruction prior to the actual blogging. We will read numerous accounts from the Revolution in order for the students to be more exposed to what I expect from them. So far the students have been very excited to continue with their blogs. I have seen great peer responses both on the blog and in person. I feel the students have or will have met the requirements that I set forth. They have shown voice and character involvement with the American Revolution. I have recently stopped the actual blogging in order to show them other examples of historic journals. Some students have requested that their characters should all meet up one day and then they could blog about this in their journals. I would like to incorporate this idea, but will first have them do some drafting in their regular social studies journals. They will also have to do some outlining to be sure there is a possibility that their characters actually could meet. I believe that overall this is a successful assignment. My students have created a buzz in the classroom and have even been talking to the seventh graders about their blogs. I feel that the students are doing well in creating voice and a background for their historical characters. I am very excited to see this project continue as we progress through history.