Ed 200: Analyzing Schools – Curriculum Project

The “Win” Factor

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Introduction:

This curriculum plan focuses on what we like to call the “WIN” factor. WIN is an acronym that stands for “What’s Important Now”. Children in general don’t have a sense of what is going on in the world of politics. Components that affect their futures are often underappreciated and replaced with a barrage of media. Pop culture signifiers are especially troubling in inner city areas where middle school students are more likely to know who their favorite rapper is as opposed to the name of the governor of the state that they live in. In order to combat this predicament we have developed a curriculum that will give students their first taste of the political landscape. This curriculum will allow students to openly debate about the news and how it affects their community. It will also provide students with knowledge about broadcast journalism, media technology and public speaking.

Context:

This curriculum is intended for 7th grade students at an all-male charter public school in an urban community. There should be approximately 25 students in each class. The purpose of the all male school within the urban community is simply this: most of the young men in this time and at this age, are often times led astray and their minds are like sponges. If we create a more positive atmosphere for them with out the distraction of members of the opposite, then we can catch these young men early enough then we can guide them on the correct path. We have found that young men are quite competitive with one another. We have decided to utilize this trait and conform it into something positive. We will use this trait of competitiveness to foster healthy debate and competition of academic pursuit. The curriculum is also designed to help
these young men see that although they are from different backgrounds culturally and regionally, the same factors of the place they live in affect them all the same.

Activities:

Day One: Introduction to the Unit

Today we will introduce the unit to the students. We will start with an edition of NPR’s Morning News and follow that by having the students answer corresponding answer questions that will be on the board upon arrival to class. Following the morning’s listening, students will then answer the questions aloud. Immediately following the students will then get into groups of 5 and then discuss US Policies, what they know, what they don’t know, and what they would like to know. Students will also be notified of their project.

Day Two: Application

Again we will start with an edition of NPR’s Morning News and answering of corresponding questions. This will be followed by a discussion of what was talked about in the morning news. The students will have an in-depth talk about its relevancy and how it affects our everyday lives. This discussion will be followed by a workshop on how to create a podcast in order to prepare the students for their final project.

Day Three: Publication

Today students will go over various news publications [ magazines, newspapers, etc.] [provided by us] that deal with US policies, policy making and law. This portion of the curriculum will focus on note taking strategies.
Day Four: Argumentation

On Day 4 we will start with another edition of NPR’s morning news followed by questions. By this day students should a little bit more knowledgeable about United States policy and this is the day when they will really get their chance to shine. Students will take a stance on the statement: “US policy has made significant progress throughout history”. They will argue about whether the recent developments in the news are helping to change America for better or for worse. This class time will be important because it will force students to make the critical connection between the news and their own personal experiences.

Day Five: Final Presentations

Student presentations will begin immediately. Students will be able to actively participate by presenting their own podcasts to the class. Each student will be given the opportunity to explain what their presentation is about and then they will play their prerecorded 2 minute podcast to the class. Once they are completed, they are to listen to the other projects and provide a peer evaluation.

Objectives:

1. Students will become aware of the news and get accustomed to a new way of thinking

This objective will allow the students to learn about the news and how it works. This will be the first time some students get to take a look in some newspapers and it will be the first time they will ever listen to NPR. It will be good for their futures because it will get their minds out of the
proverbial gutters and into a different arena. This curriculum promotes citizenship and open
debate which are things that are often missing in urban education. We want to prepare the
students to be ready for a life after high school and promote higher thinking within the school
system. This will also be a good thing because it can alter some students’ minds on politics in
general. They may become more engrossed in the realm of politics and take initiative in joining
some of the schools organizations. This class could in turn create the next class president, if not
the next president of the United States.

2. **Students will learn how to use modern technology when learning the specifics of
creating a podcast. They will also come away with information about broadcast
journalism and its importance in the history of America.**

Our curriculum requires the completion of a podcast project. We will provide the students with
information on how to create a podcast using recording tools. This might spark a future in
broadcast journalism. Not only will it do that but it will introduce these young students to new
media technology that they might not be aware of. By helping them to become media savvy we
are preparing them for the future of education which could possibly use all of these technological
components. By listening to NPR every morning the students will get an idea of how the media
affects peoples opinions on certain events that happen. They will become aware of the factors
that influence their decisions thus becoming more intelligent consumers. In addition to learning
about current events the students will get a plethora of information on the history of how the
media works in America and they will be able make connections to their history classes. Since
this is a fun activity it will make learning in other classes more fun especially if concepts are overlapping.

3. **Students will learn effective note taking strategies.**

It is very important that these students have experience in note taking strategies in preparation for high school. Notes will come in handy during these lessons because they will help to bolster memory about certain events that have taken place. During the lesson students will sit down with a magazine or newspaper and their note taking abilities will be challenged. They must be able to gather all the important information from their news sources in order to become more knowledgeable and to prepare them for their presentations. This objective is most important because these students are in 7th grade and they are preparing for high school. High school is all about note taking and formatting. The best note takers are usually most successful in the school. In order to help get them ready for these new challenges we must start them early and put them on a path for success in higher learning. These note taking lessons will not only prepare them for the future but it will help them in the current classes.

4. **Students will connect these current events to their own lives and find an importance in what is happening in the news.**

One goal of this curriculum is to give the students an idea of the world beyond their neighborhood and their school. We want the children to be aware of what is important to their parents and their teachers. As a mature student organization they will be able to find the
significance of what is happening in the current landscape of U.S. politics and they will be able to connect that to their own experiences. This kind of thinking is called critical thinking and it is important as students move up from middle school to high school and college. A lot of the times colleges say that their most important objective is to help students become better critical thinkers. The goal is to make the transition into higher learning as smooth as possible. If these students have experience in critical thinking then the switch won’t be as offsetting and a lot of these students will be more successful once they reach institutes of higher learning.

5. **Students will sharpen their public speaking abilities and gain confidence through their presentations.**

A main objective of Middle School grade level is to help students with public speaking. There are two aspects of this curriculum which support this agenda. The open debates will spark discussion between students in the class. They will each have the opportunity to speak and classmates will be respectful. The podcast portion of the week will also help students with their public speaking abilities. When they are listening to their voices over the speakers they will gain confidence in their voice and what is being said. After this class the students should have more self-assurance in speaking out and having conversations with all types of people.

**Evaluation:**

The student’s final grades will be based on participation, attendance, podcast project, completion of bell ringers, final quiz on current events and peer evaluations. The participation portion of the grade will be based on how active the students are in debate and discussions. The attendance grade is straightforward but important because the curriculum only lasts for 5 days.
and if students miss too many classes they will miss out on very important information. The students will receive a rubric on the presentation. Peer evaluations will also be handed out to the students before their presentations take place. Each student is required to do a peer evaluation of each student in the class. These peer evaluation grades will count for a small amount but they are important in order to keep the students paying attention to each presentation. There will also be a final quiz on the current events just to make sure that students are all aware of the events that are happening.

**Presentation Rubric:**

A (90-100): Thorough explanation of topic with specific details. Critical analysis of current event. Displays an understanding of the components of communication.

B (80-89): Explanation of topic with mostly specific details. Analysis of current event. Communication is fluent.

C (70-79): Importance of current event is conveyed but not elaborated. Ideas are communicated but hard to understand

D (60-69): Explanation of topic is confusing and lacks organization. Reasons why the topic is important are not given.

F (0-59): No effort is made to explain the topic or why it has any importance.