Curriculum Project:
Puerto Rico: Uncovering La Isla

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Introduction:

This curriculum for a Social Studies class will help direct second grade students towards a path at understanding how one’s culture can have an impact on society. In Connecticut, the single largest minority is Latinos. Specifically, Puerto Ricans are the largest subgroup within the Latino community in this state\(^1\). Two of the second grade classes at the Burns School of Latino Studies had a large number of Puerto Rican students. With the curriculum being designed so that these young students can relate to it, they will become agents of their education while developing a significant grasp on how culture affects their society. The students would not learn about the standard “heroes” from typical social studies textbooks, but rather about different aspects of Puerto Rico. Uncovering the island, Puerto Rico, will help the students learn about something that has a closer meaning to them.

Context:

This curriculum is designed for second graders. This class is setup for a public school class in Hartford, Connecticut. Since the students within several schools are primarily Latinos, especially Puerto Ricans, a multicultural curriculum would be able to benefit for students struggling to adjust to the American educational system because it focuses on a personal aspect of their lives. The curriculum is a social studies lesson on Puerto Rico; it covers the arts, history, music, and sports of the island. As evaluator, Ms. E.D Rourke pointed out, the integration of several different aspects works well with Bloom’s taxonomy. It emphasizes the cultural impact that Puerto Rico has on the students’ current surroundings. In incorporating higher levels of the blooms taxonomy such as evaluation and synthesis, there was a goal of students being able to apply their personal experiences as well as come to answers through an individual thought.

process. The students will draw upon connections of personal experiences to that of Puerto Rican and American culture. Ideally other second grade instructors will adopt the curriculum, but focus on a different Latin American country. At the end students can visit other classes, and almost as a tourist explore and learn about different countries.

The majority of the curriculum will be in the classroom during the week; the students will go to a computer lab on one of the days as well. The class periods should be 50 minutes long for one academic week. The week will be wrapped up with a fair that duplicates a science fair, but the students will instead display the things that they learned about Puerto Rico during the week. Overall, the curriculum is a doable and appropriate concept for a second grade class because it connects with the students and engages them to concepts from another area in the world.

Objectives: These objectives were a combination of Connecticut Standard framework, as well as objectives we hoped the students would accomplish through the curriculum.

1. **Express themselves artistically through writing and drawing.**

   This objective is significant because the students will be engaged in this curriculum without being limited to a particular expression. The only way this curriculum can work is if the students are allowed to express their thoughts and comprehension of Puerto Rico. They will reflect on their knowledge on the lesson while collaborating with classmates. They will create displays and share opinions through their art and writing. This objective gives students an opportunity to have the spotlight because their knowledge plays a huge role in this curriculum. The idea here is to get these second grade students at a higher level of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Instead of memorizing and retelling, the students will create unique displays and analyze their ethnic background.

2. **Develop self-confidence.**
Many students in elementary school classes are nervous and afraid to express themselves in classrooms. By developing a curriculum geared towards the students’ personal experiences and personal lives, they will develop self-confidence because they are experts in that field. Students will become agents of their education because their opinions and thoughts are important in this curriculum. The students will focus on their ideas and want to share them because they are confident they can relate to what they are learning. The students will make judgments while comparing and contrasting in several activities within the curriculum.

3. **Demonstrate an understanding of the geographical space and place of Puerto Rico. (Connecticut Standard 1.4)**

This objective meets a standard from the Connecticut Standard framework for a second grade social studies class. Students will understand geographical space because the curriculum focuses on a specific island and different aspects of the island. Second graders should understand their surroundings and some geography. This curriculum will compare and contrast Puerto Rico with their American surroundings which enable them to get a sense of a geographical space.

4. **Demonstrate an understanding of significant events and themes in United States history. Explain the contributions of historical figures (CTS 1.1)**

A standard textbook has significant events and themes in a United States history from particular majority perspectives. These events do not fully contribute towards every student’s interest nor background. This curriculum will fulfill another standard, but also personalize the lessons towards the students’ ethic background. This objective ties in with Pierre Bourdieu’s

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contribution to reproduction theory: “children of upper-class origin inherit substantially different cultural capital than do working-class children...schools devalues the cultural capital of the lower classes (13).” The students will not be oppressed by the standard historical figures or events that mark their culture or history as insignificant. The themes of the curriculum will be in the eyes of Puerto Rico’s culture with American history. The student’s would learn about how Puerto Rico became a United States commonwealth which is a significant event because Puerto Rico became a signature space for America. The students will learn about historical figures and heroes of Puerto Rico that strongly contributed to Puerto Rican history.

5. **Compare and contrast their experiences.**

In order for the students to be agents of their education, they will have to work together during this curriculum. This curriculum has several of Robert Slavin’s cooperative learning tactics. They will help students to work together towards gaining the most out of this education. Every person can have a deep impression on any given concept. The students will express their knowledge and past experiences on the curriculum to get the most out of it. This objective ties in with the self-confidence objective because when an elementary student is given the spotlight, he or she can give great insight on the subject. Comparing and contrasting their experiences will also allow students who are not Puerto Rican in the classroom to have a voice as well. We are aware that some students will not be Puerto Rican, but they still can contribute with their ideas and thoughts on the concepts of the island. Students will rely on each other as well as the lessons and activities to gain the most out of the curriculum.

6. **Demonstrate an understanding of significant events and themes in world history/international studies. Investigate one’s own family heritage especially making comparisons to classmates and community members** (CTS 1.3)
Being that this curriculum relates to the students, they will investigate their own family heritage. They will learn about significant historical figures and the impact that they had on society. This objective fulfills another social studies standard for second graders. In the curriculum students are learning about another area’s history in Puerto Rico. This objective also ties in with the previous objective because after learning about different information on Puerto Rico, students will compare and contrast their lives to the things that they learned. They will be able to define what it means to be Puerto Rican in this country as well as the impact Puerto Ricans can have on their families, communities, and each other.

Activities:

Day 1: Heroes

The first day of the curriculum will entail the students receiving their journals. These journals will be a self-reflective aspect throughout the week. Students will personalize their journals by decorating the covers and characterizing themselves. Some of these characteristics can be simplistic such as a favorite color or best friend; others can have a more definitive meaning such as ethnic background or important adult figure in their lives. The students are fulfilling several objectives because they will express themselves and develop self-awareness. Afterwards, the students will listen to the teacher read the book, “Pride of Puerto Rico: The Life of Roberto Clemente” by Paul Robert Walker. Students will learn about a Puerto Rican baseball hero; Roberto Clemente was the first Puerto Rican to enter the baseball hall of fame. We will discuss where Roberto Clemente was born through a map (Puerto Rico) and show how significant he has been to the American society.

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When Social Studies textbooks describe standard heroes, students are typically taught about American heroes such as Benjamin Franklin or Martin Luther King Jr. In choosing this children’s book, this lesson is confronting discrimination within most curriculums. It is not oppressing heroes of other ethnic backgrounds or the heroes who are normally not displayed within many textbooks. The students will evaluate a hero that they can draw closer comparisons to.

This day will conclude with the students writing in their personal journals. They are to write 2-3 sentences on the given prompt: “Who is a hero in your family? Why is he or she a hero to you?” This activity allows the students to choose a person of their liking as well as provide supporting arguments as to why they chose this person. They are drawing opinion personal opinions and comprehension of the lesson. It gives the students an excellent chance to define the lesson that they learned about today.

**Day 2: Music**

The students will listen to Puerto Rican and American music today. The lesson today is designed around comparing and contrasting to things. The students will continue to express their thoughts and ideas as well as compare and contrast their experiences to that of Puerto Rico. Students will discuss the significance of the two songs to their origin. They will then listen to a song titled “Quiero Dercirte” by the popular Puerto Rican salsa group, DLG (Dark Latin Groove). They will express their thoughts on the song and discuss why they believe this song is popular in Puerto Rico’s culture. Then the students will listen to Justin Beiber’s song, titled “Baby.” They will discuss why this song is one of the most popular songs in America; the students will have to think more critically about the song in order to fully understand the song’s impact on society. The instructors are aware that many young students admire Justin Beiber,
which should allow the students to be more engaged and thoughtful about this lesson plan. After listening to these artists, the students will divide into groups of four. The groups will be made of Robert Slavin’s STAD cooperative learning idea; the four-member groups are based on performance level, gender, and ethnicity\textsuperscript{5}. They will create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the music they heard\textsuperscript{6}. Students must come up with at least two descriptors for each portion of the Venn diagram. The class will gather into a large group after this activity is completed.

The instructor will create a large Venn diagram for the classroom. Each group will take turns in sharing their ideas. Students will reflect on the patterns seen in the groups’ responses and see the influence of Puerto Rico in popular American songs. This day of activities demonstrate another aspect of Puerto Rico’s impact on an American society. It also relates to the students personally as Puerto Ricans and Americans.

\textit{Day 3: History}

The lesson focuses on important historical events in Puerto Rico. The students will go to a computer lab to better visualize the curriculum for this day. Students will visit a particular website where they can learn about Puerto Rico’s history\textsuperscript{7}. This activity allows students to continue to be proactive within the lesson plans. After researching the history individually, the class will reconvene.

The instructor will have a presentation in the form of a lively PowerPoint. The students can follow along on their computers. The focus of this presentation will be on the two historical events of Puerto Rico: becoming a commonwealth and El Grito De Lares. These two events will

\textsuperscript{5} Robert Slavin Introduction to Cooperative Learning pg. 5
\textsuperscript{6} See worksheet
\textsuperscript{7} www.elboricua.com/BoricuaKids_PuertoRicoUSA.html
show the strength and empowering nature of Puerto Ricans, as students will finally have a positive and influential outlook. The lesson is staying within the Connecticut standard, as well as not discriminating against a history the students can better relate to.

The students will write an entry in their journals. The students will reply to the prompt “What is a significant event in your life that you are most proud of?” Through these prompts, the students will develop encouragement to see the significance of their personal experiences and apply the history of Puerto Rico to aspects of their lives.

**Day 4: Painters and Sculptors**

The arts of Puerto Rico have a great impact on their culture. The lesson plan will focus on two historical artists in Puerto Rico’s history: Tomas Batista and Jose Campeche. The students will look at a painting by Jose Campeche and a monument in Puerto Rico made by Tomas Batista. There will be an open group discussion about the painting and sculpture asking the students why they think it is significant towards Puerto Rican culture? Afterwards, the instructors will give a lecture on the background of these two artists and their impact on Puerto Rico.

Students will split into groups of 4-5 based on Robert Slavin’s cooperative learning. The groups will be divided into the concepts of STAD and Jigsaw². Each group will randomly be assigned one of the aspects explored throughout the week: sports/ heroes, art, history, or music. Students will create posters in relevance to the aspect they were given. This is a more informal and creative expression of their thoughts on Puerto Rico.

**Day 5: Puerto Rico Fair!**

The classroom will consist of a demonstration similar to a science fair. The students will display their artwork and journals that they did throughout the week. They will present their

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² Robert Slavin Introduction to Cooperative Learning pg. 6
posters and Venn diagrams to the class and any other members of the community that will be able to attend. The students will read some of their journal entries on their understanding of several aspects of Puerto Rico. Several of the evaluators believed that having the fair on this day would be too rushed for the students. This creative idea would most likely not fit into the time frame given for this curriculum. If the fair did become a serious issue or impossible to achieve, then the students will reflect on the past four days by playing a game of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.” The concept of the game is to ask multiple choice questions based on the four concepts the students learned about during the week. The questions will relate to the sports, arts, music, and history of Puerto Rico. The students can gain extra credit points and show how much they gained from the past week. There will be 4 different groups based on both the STAD and TGT (Teams-Games-Tournaments) cooperative learning strategies\(^9\). Each group member will have to work together in order to answer the questions. There will be two games played. The two groups that win the games will receive the extra credit points. If a team scores an antiquate amount, then they can also gain extra credit points. These activities are an enjoyable and constructive way for the students to reflect on the curriculum and uncover the island.

**Evaluation:**

The students final grades will be based on four criteria: participation, journals, artistic displays, and teamwork. This evaluation is a meaningful and helpful way to determine this particular second grade class understanding of the curriculum. It is also a way to avoid a standard and corporate way of determining the students’ levels of intelligence. While it is unrealistic to completely avoid all standard grading, the evaluation includes those as well as a chance for the students to have a chance to earn their best possible grade. Students will become aware of the writing criteria for the journals for second graders as well as what is expected when

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\(^9\) Robert Slavin Introduction to Cooperative Learning pg. 6
they are designing their artwork. The writing criteria are based on the Connecticut standards and personal standards of the teacher, based on their feel towards the class the length can vary from a couple sentences up to 4. Participation and teamwork are ways for students to control their grades. If a student is not willing to help his or her group because they do not desire to, then his or her grade will be reflected on that. Likewise, if students refuse to participate and contribute in areas where it is highly encouraged, then their grade will also be reflected towards that. The goal is not to force the students to do something they do not wish, but to work them towards a path of becoming more proactive in their community and for their education. We hope this curriculum shows the students the impact that they can have on their education and how significant they are in their surrounding areas.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the lectures, activities, and discussions, we feel the goals of this curriculum will be met. This curriculum is personalized for second grade students, but fulfills the Connecticut standards for Social Studies. Students will learn about a different origin that they can relate to. They will learn of its importance and the impact that Puerto Rico can have on their education. They can become better writers, more expressive, and proactive towards their education. The students will not only uncover la Isla, but uncover themselves.
DLG vs. Justin Beiber

VENN DIAGRAM!

both A and B