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Using City as Text in an Elementary Classroom

Jonathan Weinrich

Abstract

Education is focused on standardized assessments. The tests in every state, because of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed in 2001, are used to measure a student’s success. This high stress, one shot environment, provides little opportunity for students to show what they know. Teachers need assessments that have flexibility based on student interest and more opportunities to prove their knowledge collaborative skills. Based off the National Collegiate Honors Council’s City as Text template, this poster provides an example of an activity teachers can use to assess their students. This lesson also shows how teachers can expose their students to academic research at a young age, introducing above-grade-level texts to the students and discussions with the community and peers. The lesson provided allows students to follow their own interest. With multiple enrichment opportunities and motivational activities for the students, teachers would be able to guide their students to success. While state-mandated assessments remain as computerized tests, teachers should provide other options in their classroom.

Lesson Plan

Objectives:
Understand how to do basic research.

Essential Questions:
How does our community react and understand issues?
How do you do research?
What are you interested in?

Setup:
Have personal interest worksheets and evaluation sheets printed and ready.
Speak with the school librarian about having a session talking about finding resources. The discussion should mention first and second- hand sources.

Day one:
Talk about the city the class is in.
Discuss differences between boroughs, towns, cities.
Populations
What is yours?

Review the meanings of the terms below (7.3.A)
•Population
•Culture
•Settlement
•Economic activities
•Political activities

Let each of the students choose the most interesting subject to them:

Split class into groups to discuss these topics.
Concentrate discussion on key issues **in the area**:
Example:
What are the popular cultures in the area?
Where do most people in the population live?

Day two:

Talk about available resources that students can use to do the research.
Books, Magazines, Online reputable Website

Visit the library. in conjunction with the school librarian, show students the available resources. Pose questions to the students such as:
What books can be helpful for finding key issues?
Fiction or non-fiction?
Who can be helpful when researching?

Allow time for students to work in small groups and research their topics.
Homework: Speak to guardians and community members about their perspectives on the subjects in which they are interested.

Day three:
Explain the importance of sharing research with others.

Students will work with the groups they started with to discuss what they have found for homework.

Discussion: speak with peers about what you have found.

Guide students to work together as a class to create a rubric to judge their presentations. Guiding questions:
What is important when giving a presentation?
How will we know what you have learned?
How does the presentation relate to your chosen topic?
Have groups plan a way to share the information. Options could include:
provide canvas for posters
create time for oral presentations
Multimedia presentations
Dioramas
3D Maps

Day four:

Give groups time to create their mode of presentation

Day five and further:

Work through groups to present information

After the presentations are done:

Have each student complete an evaluation for other student presentations.
After the presenter finishes the presentation,
hand them the evaluations that are the most useful.
The student will then complete their own evaluation.

City as Text
Where are you researching? _____
What is the population? _____
What are the significant geographical/economic/political activities? (7.3.3.A) _____

What topic are you researching? _____
What are key issues in this subject topic? _____

Who in the area can help solve these issues? _____

Outside resources:

Ask your guardians and community members about these issues, what did you learn from them? _____

Relevance

The lesson plan provided is based on a third-grade social studies curriculum. The City as Text template, used in university level research, can be adapted to an elementary-level research

This lesson plan brings aspects of self-directed research, critical thinking and peer feedback into a standard-based lesson.

This focuses on first and second-hand resources. Interviewing people is one way they will access this, while also getting information literacy skills.

The National Association of Educators for Young Children (NAEYC) require educators to provide the best possible assessment that is appropriate for the students. To follow this guideline, we must change how we assess.

Assessment

7.3.3.A

Identify the human characteristics of **places** and **regions** using the following criteria:

- Population
- Culture
- Settlement
- Economic activities
- Political activities

8.1.3B

Identify fact, **opinion**, multiple points of view, and **primary sources** as related to historical events.

Prerequisite

Organize a meeting with the School Librarian to help the students seek out resources.

8.1.3B

Identify fact, **opinion**, multiple points of view, and **primary sources** as related to historical events.

1

Aiming

Struggles to show distinction between fact and opinion, multiple of each mixed up.

2

Attending

Able to distinguish between fact and opinion but can’t reflect on others.

3

Performing

Identified at least **one** opinion and **one** fact within their own

4

Norming

Have identified **multiple** facts, opinion and are able to distinguish between them in discussions, on the evaluations **and** in their own presentations

Reflection and discussions:

What is **one** fact that you learned from your peer? _____

Presentations notes:
What did you think is interesting?

What did they do well?

What can they improve in the future?

Conclusion

The way of assessment that is used in Pennsylvania public schools is insufficient and does a disservice to students. Using peer and student feedback is one way to make education more equitable. This lesson plan demonstrates how authentic assessment can be used in public education. Incorporating peer feedback is important, providing both a chance for metacognition and time to reflect on each presentation.

References and Acknowledgements

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