

Workshop 5

Patriotism and Foreign Policy

Key Concepts

- This lesson uses students' passion for their major to engage them in understanding some key concepts in civics. Getting to know your students' interests—and building them into your lessons—is an essential part of the constructivist strategy being modeled here. Alice Chandler stresses that teachers learn about their students both inside and outside the classroom and are most successful if they fully participate in school activities.
- Socratic teaching focuses on presenting students with a series of open-ended questions, providing time for them to develop considered responses, and then asking additional questions that probe their understanding and help them clarify their thinking.
- Gardner's seven intelligences—logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, personal, and intrapersonal—are particularly useful in thinking about how to provide learning experiences that enable each student to use his or her strengths to learn.
- Chandler constantly calls upon students' concept of themselves as professionals as a means of motivating them and, more important, as a means of putting the responsibility for learning in their hands.
- Engaging students in committee work provides them with an experience that mirrors what they are likely to find in a professional environment and develops networking skills that have wide application.
- Providing a rubric that defines exactly what a student must do to achieve a specific grade is another strategy that puts the responsibility for learning in the students' hands.

About the Lesson

Overview

The students in this lesson are seniors at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, a public magnet school in Washington, D.C. that has a strong commitment to integrating the arts with academic subjects. U.S. Government teacher Alice Chandler, who finds Socratic questioning and Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences particularly useful in an integrated arts environment, has developed a lesson in which students are to create a Museum of Patriotism and Foreign Policy. Socratic questioning is designed to elicit and clarify the wealth of ideas and facts that exists in any group. Gardner expands the concept of intelligence to include such areas as music, spatial relations, and interpersonal knowledge, which is particularly useful in an arts magnet school.

Over three days, the lesson alternates between whole-class discussions, in which the use of Socratic questioning is evident, and committee work, in which students determine what will be placed in the museum, using their particular art major as the basis for their choices. The conclusion of the lesson shows the students’ presentations, including dance, music, theatrical performances, and visualizations, along with rationales for their selections. This lesson highlights small-group work as a constructivist methodology.

Context

Teacher: Alice Chandler has been a social studies and special education teacher at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C. since 1994. She holds a Master of Arts in special education from the University of the District of Columbia, a Bachelor of Arts with a major in sociology and a minor in history from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and has done graduate work in American history at Howard University. For a number of years, Chandler worked on the Integrated Curriculum Development Project at Ellington, developing social studies lessons for a Smithsonian Institution-developed curriculum. She is also a consultant to the local affiliate of the National Writing Project.

School: The Duke Ellington School of the Arts is a public magnet school within the District of Columbia Public Schools that began in 1974 to provide an environment where students of color could gain tools to achieve cultural equality. In addition to seven arts disciplines—dance, literary and media arts, museum studies, music, theater, technical theater, and visual arts—the school offers a full academic college preparatory program. Students come to Ellington with various levels of academic achievement; this class includes several special education students. Ellington provides classes ranging from basic reading and math refresher courses to college-level English, pre-calculus, advanced U.S. history, and advanced biology. Ellington’s social studies department is reputed to be one of the best in the city. Because the school is in the middle of Washington, D.C., its students are probably more exposed to politics and political activity than most high school students, including seeing Washington’s monuments on a regular basis, passing through the area of the city in which most foreign embassies are located, witnessing numerous traffic stops as the President and other dignitaries pass through the city, and seeing and/or participating in a variety of political rallies.

Course: U.S. Government is a one-semester course for seniors taught on a block-period schedule at Ellington. Chandler often organizes the course in what she calls “portfolio mode,” a series of papers or examinations that the students complete during an advisory period. In one advisory period, she might focus on the U.S. Constitution, in another, on political parties. Teachers at Ellington are encouraged to integrate academic subjects with the arts. During the advisory period prior to this lesson, for example, students had to choose a book and/or video that dealt with both the United States government and the art form they are studying. A theater major, for example, might have prepared a project on Paul Robeson that explored both his acting and his political activism.

Workshop Session

Before Viewing

How do you assess students' work when their primary learning is done as part of a committee? What consideration do you give to the "end product"? How do you determine if an individual student has participated productively and in a cooperative manner? How do you assess students' participation in class discussions? Develop a rubric that would take both cooperative learning and full-class discussions into consideration.

Watch the Video

Watch the video, stopping at the end of each segment. Use the following questions as a basis for discussion and reflection. If you are not attending the workshop with other teachers, use your workshop journal to respond to at least two questions per lesson activity.

Activity 1. Large-Group Discussion on Patriotism and Foreign Policy

- Which Socratic questions seemed to yield the best results?
- One of the benefits of constructivist teaching that Chandler stresses is its ability to help students make connections with what they already know. Where do you see evidence of this in this lesson?
- How do you maximize learning and participation in whole-group discussions?
- What is the value of Socratic questioning and how does it compare to other types of questioning?
- On what basis would you assess students' performance in a Socratic dialogue?
- How do you determine what type of questioning is most appropriate for a particular lesson?

Activity 2. Area Specific Committee Meetings

- What are some of the benefits to having students work in committees? Is there anything about the organization of these committees that could be applied to your classroom?
- Chandler's committees are organized on the basis of students' arts major. What are some possible ways that you might organize your students in committees to capitalize on their interests?

Activity 3. Warm-up Activity on Patriotism and Foreign Policy

- What did you see in this lesson that you found particularly effective? Particularly surprising? Particularly useful for your teaching situation?
- In reviewing the lesson, Chandler felt that the students better understood the concept of patriotism than they did foreign policy. In the future, she thought she might either separate the two concepts and/or provide additional preparation for the discussion of foreign policy. What do you think about her proposed modification and why?
- If you were going to do this lesson, how would you introduce the concept of foreign policy? How have you introduced the concept of foreign policy successfully in the past?
- What questions would you use to stimulate students' thinking on the impact of patriotism on foreign policy?

Activity 4. Committees Finalize Museum Selections

- How do you monitor the progress of groups and redirect those that are off-task? What do you do when you hear misinformation being shared within groups? How do you correct the misinformation without demeaning the student?

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Activity 5. Committee Presentations

- How would you explain the value of this lesson to an administrator who favored more traditional methodologies?
- This lesson took place near the end of the school year and it is clear that students have worked together in groups before. If you were introducing the concept of committee work to students earlier in the year, how would you modify the assignment?
- What do you do when students key to the performance are absent on presentation days?
- How would you assess students' essays in which they present their personal reflections on patriotism and foreign policy? What other kinds of culminating assignments would you consider for this lesson?

Before Next Week

Assignments

- Read *Multiple Intelligences: Gardner's Theory* from Essential Readings on the workshop Web site. Think about your current students and match the students in your class with each of Gardner's intelligences. How could you use this information to structure a cooperative learning situation in the future?
- Select one of the following concepts—civic participation, civil rights, or freedom of speech—and develop a series of Socratic questions you could use with your class. For each question, write down two or three probes you might use to help students clarify or probe assumptions.
- Working individually or with others, define patriotism and select three examples of patriotism, one each in the following categories: a person, an event, and a work of art (music, dance, theater, literature, or visual art). In one or two sentences, tell how each selection exemplifies your definition of patriotism. Discuss how easy or difficult you found this exercise and how you think your students would respond to it.
- Review those sections of the Web site that you have not yet read, e.g., Other Lessons, Teacher Perspectives, and Student Perspectives.

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/civics

Notes
