

8th Grade Social Injustice Unit Plan

Date of Experience: Fall 2013 Semester

Description of Experience:

During my student teaching experience at Audubon Elementary I designed and taught a Social Injustice Unit to both 7th and 8th grade classes. Attached is the 8th grade unit plan that I developed. Throughout this unit I used a variety of instructional strategies, ranging from class discussion, partner reading, individual reflection and response, and the use of media. I used two non-fictional text to teach this unit: *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglas* for the 8th grade and *Warriors Don't Cry* for the 7th grade. I kept the activities similar, changing them based on the context of the book. Through using a wide range of teaching strategies I was able to reach more students and I was able to grow as an educator by experimenting with strategies I was not previously as confident in using.

Wisconsin Teacher Standard Alignment:

This artifact aligns with Standard 4: Teachers know how to teach. *The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies, including the use of technology, to encourage children's development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.*

A teacher, who knows how to teach, knows how to use a variety of teaching methods to better serve each student in their class. That is why my Social Injustice Unit Plan that I created for my 8th grade students fits perfectly with this standard. As I progressed throughout my student teaching, one of my weaknesses was using technology consistently. When creating this unit, I wanted technology to be a primary focus. Each student was responsible for making their own weebly site, comprehensive with their social injustice topic. Many of the students had used weebly before and others had not. Students who were familiar were able to help me become more confident in using it and they were also able to help their classmates. Part of knowing how to teach, is learning from your students.

For this unit, I also tried a variety of reading comprehension strategies because the text we read, *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass* is higher than grade level for most of my students. I began having them read in groups, followed by individual reading and response worksheets. Many students seemed to be missing key elements of the story through this. I decided to read aloud a great deal of the story to the class and discuss as we went along. Not only did my students spark incredible discussion, but I was also able to get my strong readers and my lower level readers on the same page which was one of my biggest goals in teaching this year.

Overall, teachers who know how to teach also know the strengths and weaknesses of their students. This unit would have looked very different if my students were different. I designed it strictly based on the needs of the specific students in my classroom. I knew that reading

comprehension was a weakness and I knew that technology use was a strength. I focused heavily on these two elements to best serve each student within my classroom.

This artifact further aligns with:

Standard 1- Teachers know the subjects they are teaching.

Standard 3- Teachers understand that children learn differently.

UW-Platteville School of Education Knowledge, Skill, Disposition Statement Alignment:

This experience aligns with KS1.e. *Designs Coherent Instruction*. The candidate, with appropriate student input, has the ability to develop relevant, goal directed, engaging, clear, and varied, learning activities that progress coherently and produce a unified instructional setting that reflects recent professional resources.

This unit plan is comprised of lessons that I feel address a broad range of learning styles. The goals of each lesson are clear and direct and each address the common core standards stated in the beginning of the unit. Through the use of reading comprehension activities, quizzes, website checkpoints and discussion, I was able to see how each student was progressing throughout the unit. Significant class time was allotted to complete each activity and for students to ask questions and receive help.

I was able to use my cooperating teacher as a resource throughout this Unit, as she has taught both texts in the past. She was able to encourage me to use different media resources in order to better engage the students. I was able to directly tie my reading lessons into my writing lessons in this unit which allowed the students to make more connections and stay on track.

Through developing a clear unit plan, I was better able to stay focused and organized as a teacher. I was able to address the students' questions better and I could see more progression than in past units. I plan on collaborating with the Social Studies teacher in the future for historical non-fiction texts to really allow students to make a deeper connection.

Secondary Alignment: KS3.c. *Engages Students in Learning*. The candidate has the ability to engage students in the learning process by linking appropriate content, based upon suitable instructional materials and resources, to students' knowledge and experience, being certain that all students are cognitively engaged in the activities/assignments and that the students actively contribute to the content design. Instruction is highly coherent and appropriately paced for all students and allows for reflection and closure as appropriate.

Personal Reflection:

What I learned about teaching/learning from this experience

I learned that it is important to continue to learn as a teacher. Trying new things helped me to grow and reflect and work outside my comfort zone. Through this, I was able to connect with so many of the students in my class, who all have broad learning styles. Through discussion and reading aloud I was able to reach students who struggle with reading comprehension. By implementing weebly and having the students create their own websites, I was able to have students make a classroom project about history relevant and useful in their everyday lives. Many students, who have struggled with writing in the past, connected with this activity and enjoyed putting their writing into a more useful format. Overall, I learned that I can learn so much from my students. I was uncomfortable with certain teaching techniques, but my students adapted and were able to help me along. Their input and knowledge made me realize how important it is to get out of your comfort zone as a teacher and that is what I will continue to do with my future units.

What I learned about myself as a prospective educator from this experience

I learned that as a teacher I need to take opportunities to use different teaching strategies. Not only is this beneficial for the students who have a variety of learning styles, but it is also beneficial for me to become more confident in my teaching abilities. Using media is something that I struggle to remember to incorporate on a daily basis. For this unit, I made that a priority and a goal. I became so much better and comfortable using things like weebly, where I had the students create their own website. I also saw the importance in using things like youtube and powerpoint for educational purposes. My students were engaged and really connected with what we were doing and they taught me a lot! I will continue to use media on a regular basis in my classroom after this positive experience.