

Luke Swanson
A35878148
TE 804

Teaching Analysis
Democracy in Action: Inquiry and Discourse Unit (Weeks 1 and 2)

Paper: Lesson Analysis

Over the past two weeks I have critically analyzed my teaching style and practices within my unit on Democracy in Action: Inquiry and Public Discourse. I have tabled the structure and lesson design of 10 unique lessons looking at the day to day routine of my class. While it is often hard to look critically at your own practices I have found this assignment beneficial in looking at my teaching from an “outside” perspective.

As a teacher I strongly believe in a giving my students a diverse education. I am a firm believer in student lead curriculum in which the teacher adapts curriculum to meet the needs of classes full of diverse learners and styles. Teaching the multiple intelligences should not only be done from day to day but also within activities in a given lesson. To meet the needs of 30-35 students in a public education classroom teachers’ must be diverse, adaptive, and constantly striving to find new ways for students grasp a topic. A diverse education not only means incorporating different learning styles, but also means integrating a wide variety of resources that allow students to grasp topic in a variety of ways.

My teaching style emphasizes skill building, teaching students the tools and abilities they will need at the next level of their lives. While there is an emphasis placed on the standards and making sure that they are covered my primary goal will always be teaching skills. In order to prepare students for adulthood, college, trades, citizenship, etc. teachers must not only teach curriculum but also tools that students will use throughout

their life to become successful individuals. While the text book is a tool that can be a valuable guide to students, teachers should continue to challenge students with supplementary resources. This translates into bringing in articles, videos, internet clips, games, homework assignments that test students to think about the curriculum in the “real world” around them. These outside resources also emphasize analysis and exposure to artifacts they will see in their daily lives. In the social studies especially analyzing resources a citizen sees on a daily basis prepares students for citizenship.

Generally, the strategies I used throughout this two week period reflect my goals and beliefs as a teacher. I have color coded my table to correspond with the various multiple intelligences. This coding reflects my belief and constant planning to include multiple learning styles within each and every lesson. While this is a goal I will continue to improve upon throughout my teaching my planning has always included taking into account multiple intelligences. However, there were some areas within these lessons that could be improved upon in order to meet the needs of each and every student within the class. First, I have noticed that there is an over emphasis placed on the linguistic intelligence. While I strongly believe that the social studies should be a reading and writing intensive course I will push myself to think about different ways to convey then just written form and lectures. I recognize that most teachers rely on linguistic teaching and some students have a distinct advantage in these areas. This overemphasis on the linguistic intelligence in this unit stems from my goal of creating student analysts who can interpret and understand texts they see in their daily lives. My overarching goal of aiding students in understanding the world around them contributes to this overemphasis on linguistic education. My other fear is that certain students will be more naturally

interested in areas that their learning styles are more conducive to. For instance the first week of this period was spent outlining political parties and the political spectrum. Students who were linguistic and spatial learners generally had an easier time grasping this material. Whereas the second week a great deal of time was spent with the logical-mathematical intelligence analyzing and using reasoning to decipher bias media articles, videos, propaganda etc. While this inherently also includes linguistic intelligences these activities were more closely associated with logic and reasoning.

While I strongly believe that my class room encourages the use of a variety of different learning styles this reflective activity has caused me to think about how I position students in my classroom. I have found that while in most lessons I include a variety of activities more could be done to encourage more inclusion. By placing emphasis on reading, writing, and understanding as a result I am making this class much harder for students who have difficulty with reading and writing. This fact does not discount the importance of reading and writing to the social studies, however it is something to keep in mind when preparing lessons.

As a teacher I find it very important to make what I value in the classroom explicit to my students. I am constantly explaining my rationale for different lessons to them in an effort to show them the importance of what they are doing. In this two week period we spent a great deal of time talking about how important understanding the political spectrum was. For these students to be able to make informed decisions in the voting process they must first understand their values and beliefs. For the activities surrounding the issue of propaganda and media bias I explained to the students on a daily basis that these lessons were designed to give them the tools to be able to analyze bias in

the media and how it affects society and voters. When they are of voting age (which is rapidly approaching) they must have the tools to be able to critically analyze messages that are trying to influence their opinion. These activities are all strongly tied into my fundamental beliefs of creating student analysts and well informed citizens.

Another interesting aspect of this reflective assignment is how it forces one to think critically about how power and authority are structured within the classroom. This issue of power and authority is one I do not take into account enough when I am planning my day to day lessons. However, it is very important to my overall goal of student lead curriculum design. I strongly believe that teachers should express lessons and ideas based on what makes sense to the student. In other words constantly asking the question, *how can I help the students understand this?* This classroom structure allows for power and learning to flow between teacher and student, student and teacher. Power and authority are however strongly taken into account through classroom structure and organization. In regular lecture seating students have assigned seats based on where “I” the teacher thinks they will behaviorally and intellectually perform the best. For special needs students, behavior problems, and different personalities student placement in different locations allows for a structured environment. This power and authority structure is also used in dividing up students for group work. Placing students in different groups based on who will work together cognitively, behavioral, and for students with different knowledge levels also encourages a positive learning environment. Learning is also distributed evenly between teacher and student within other classroom settings. Using discussion, student opinion, student experience, etc. the classroom inevitably moves toward a social learning environment in which growth takes place between teacher and student. Under

this model students become teachers as well facilitating their own discussion and learning.

The issue of empowering, silencing, disregarding, and challenging students is one that is always present within a social studies classroom. As an educator of civics I am constantly dealing with “hot button” issues, controversy, opinion, etc. which make it difficult to stay neutral/unbiased as a teacher. When selecting sources the idea of where you get them from, how you use them, and what your students inevitably get out of it should always be present within your mind. Your rationale when selecting issues and resources should always be incredibly important. As a teacher I have found it very difficult to keep in mind that no matter my own political beliefs I must present issues in an unbiased fashion. Reflecting upon the first week and our exploration of political parties/political spectrum I believe I did a good job of presenting each side fairly. While at times it was difficult to remain neutral based on personal beliefs I constantly reminded the students that in order to comprehend how you feel about an issue you must understand both sides. In reflecting upon my teaching I have also begun to think the resources I chose to use. Through stepping away from the textbook and using primarily outside resources a goal of mine was to find fact based information that would not be slanted (if that’s possible). To help me in this task I used a lot of resources my mentor teacher had acquired and presented to fellow teacher on both sides (liberal and conservative) in the interest of fairness. While it is difficult to reflect from an unbiased perspective I expect to improve the resources I use in the years to come based on what works well for students.

This reflection and lesson analysis has been a valuable experience in looking back to improve my teaching practices for future classes. It has allowed me to reflect looking at real data to establish how and why I teach. It is fairly easy for me to express my own teaching philosophy based on how I envision education to take place in my classroom, but this lesson allowed me to reflect on whether I was actually teaching in that way. While I do believe I am living up to my philosophy or creed there are many areas that I can continue to improve in the years to come. Most importantly continuing to listen to the opinions of my students about what will help them grasp concepts based on their own prior knowledge. I am a strong believer in the constructivist approach to education and using this tool will help me select methods that students grasp well. Second, continually reflecting upon the resources that I use from the “student perspective” asking the questions *What are they getting out of it? What do I want them to get out of it? What opinions does this marginalize, change, alter? When they leave at the end of the hour how will their opinion have changed?* Lastly, reflecting upon my rationale and how I am teaching. *Am I doing the best job that I can to present information in a student centered way?* It should therefore be my goal to create lessons that are inclusive to different learning intelligences and students. To answer this question I will ask myself *Am I meeting the needs of special needs students and those that are having trouble with the curriculum?* Which may be the most difficult thing to do as a young teacher in a classroom of 30-35 students. In essence I believe it should always be a teachers’ goal to challenge themselves to be forward thinking and improve their curriculum. Reflection and analysis such as this will always be a valuable tool for this.

Table: Two Week Lesson Period (3/15 – 3/26)

Key

Multiple Intelligences

Linguistic intelligence ("word smart")

Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")

Spatial intelligence ("picture smart")

Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")

Musical intelligence ("music smart")

Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")

Intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart")

(Note: multiple colors indicate the incorporation of multiple intelligences within the activity.)

Administrative Time

Mon. (3/15)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Handed two make-up exams to different students who missed the original exam date on the previous Friday.

Lecture: (15 min.) The Political Spectrum – Introduction to the political spectrum and concepts of liberal and conservative.

Discussion/Discussion: (5 min.) Labeling and explaining the visual political spectrum.

Individual Work/ Reading/ Analysis: (25 min.) Political Spectrum Quiz – Where do you fit in on the political spectrum based on your beliefs?

Tues. (3/16)

Administrative Time: (2 min.) Attendance problem where student came in late to the previous days class and was marked absent.

Lecture: (20 min.) Conservatism – What it means to be a conservative.

Discussion/Discussion: (10 min.) Placing conservatives on the political spectrum.

Individual Work/ Reading/ Analysis: (20 min.) Conservatism packet with guided worksheet.

Wed. (3/17)

Administrative Time: None.

Lecture: (20 min.) Liberalism – What it means to be a liberal.

Discussion/Discussion: (5 min.) Placing liberals on the political spectrum

Individual Work/ Reading: (25 min.) Liberalism packet with guided worksheet.

Thurs. (3/18)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Handing out work missing work to a student who was ill for a week. Collect two late assignments.

Group Work/ Reading: Democratic and Republican Parties informational packets group work. Groups work together filling in a chart explaining where each party stands on different issues within society.

Fri. (3/19)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Collect late assignments from students who were ill on class days this week. Discussion with student about missing assignments and checking in when they get back from being ill to see what they missed.

Reading: (25 min.) Class reading, article about third parties and their impact on the American political process throughout history.

Lecture/ Lecture: (20 min.) Outline the largest and most influential third parties, where do they fit into the political spectrum?

Mon. (3/22)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Collect late assignments from students who were ill on class days last week.

Written Response/ Analysis: (15 min.) Based on your personal beliefs, do you consider yourself a liberal or a conservative? Do you identify with any parties? Explain your answer based on what you have learned.

Discussion/Discussion/Reasoning: (30 min.) Using our responses and referring back to the following week, where do we place ourselves on the political spectrum? How do we know that we belong there?

Tues. (3/23)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Collect late assignments from students who were ill and explanation of make up work for students who were out the previous day. Explanation of take home assignment to bring in a media biased news source.

Lecture: (20 min.) Propaganda in politics and the media, how does it influence voting?

Individual Work/Music/Visual: (30 min.) Students investigate different media sources including music, commercials, news articles identifying their message and bias.

Wed. (3/24)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Collect late assignments from students who were ill and explanation of make up work for students who were out the previous day.

Group Work/Discussion/Analysis: (45 min.) In groups students analyze different media sources and identify their bias. They will begin to think about how this bias affects voter behavior.

Thurs. (3/25)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Collect late assignments from students who were ill and explanation of make up work for students who were out the previous day. Discussion with late student about getting to class on time every day.

Lecture: (20 min.) Why don't more Americans vote?

Individual Work/ Reading/ Analysis: (25 min.) article and statistics for why more Americans don't vote. Students will read and analyze the statistics answering questions.

Fri. (3/26)

Administrative Time: (5 min.) Collect late assignments from students who were ill and explanation of make up work for students who were out the previous day.

Video/ Video: (45 min.) *Hacking Democracy*: (2006) HBO – Film discussing e-voting and voter irregularities in the elections of 2000 and 2004. Students will begin to think about how “unfair” voting practices contribute to non-voting in America.
