

Overview

- My plan is to teach students to learn and develop a group story to build an understanding of commonality, improve co-operation and develop community.
- To build a sense of community through collecting and telling stories of other cultures
- To use story and imagination to make students realize they have power to change the world

Context:

My grade 4 students learn to work together through a Survivor game I invented (based on the TV show.) They learn to co-operate, understand each other, solve problems, and resolve conflict. I plan to use elements of storytelling and story making to enhance the process of community building. By using storytelling and story making, I hope to improve self-confidence, develop a sense of community, build tolerance, and create empathy and understanding. The elements of story allow students to safely explore the roles of different characters and wear other shoes. Thereby students create a broader platform, to understand what it is like to be someone else.

My objective is to help my students learn to trust themselves and others. As well as create a community in my classroom that takes care of themselves, each other, and the world.

Rationale

- My rationale for creating a story of origin is to improve a sense of group community and belonging I found in our group work (in class), and based on readings by Mara Sapon-Shevrin. I feel that all children will be able to participate in this project, and have something to contribute. I feel that the scaffolding of differently-abled students will create more success and comfort with power sharing. Many students have great ideas, but often cannot write. Others can write, but have trouble organizing their thoughts in a cohesive way. This way, everyone has something to contribute. And they share the same story.
- My rationale for having students gather, collect and retell stories from other cultures is to have them find connections between other groups. Many of our students are very gang oriented. Territory, street credit, and image, becomes a motivating factor in kids lives. They need to see that we are not as different as they think. The people in the east side are the same as those from the

west side. So too, children from Afghanistan want the same things as kids from Thompson. I hope to help kids rewrite the stories they tell each other, in an attempt to put an end to violence.

- My rationale for finding an object that can change the world is an extension of the above noted premise. Most of my students don't believe they have power over their own lives. They feel powerless. Powerlessness leads to hopelessness. Kids need to feel they can help others. They need to know they can change the world. The process of getting them to think about these things creates the idea that we can become better. Since they will already understand other cultures are not so different from them, they will soon realize everyone is worth helping.

This project is significant for many reasons. First, my students feel alone. Developing a story through groups, makes them more connected. Last year, I had my students make shelves in Science. My kids never fought, they worked together. And they were all so proud of what they built. Stories can provide the same experience. A sense of accomplishment is truly a gift.

Second, many of my students need to develop empathy and compassion. In one of the counseling books I read, it tells you to say to a client, "How do you think someone feels when you punch them?" I have had kids say to me, "I don't care how they feel." And they mean that. So, kids need to realize the world is bigger than them. Connecting with other cultures and promoting similarities is a way to do that.

Third, kids need to realize they have a responsibility for others. If they don't like something, they need to change it. That includes world peace. Knowing you can positively change your situation is the passport to a better world for everyone.

Plan

A. Survivor

- Students are assigned groups at random, thereby creating a homogenous group. Students will have strengths and weaknesses. Each will be able to help the others, to create community, and make everyone successful.
 - Kids need to create a group flag, handshake, name and a story of origin¹.
 - This process will be a short writing exercise – like we did in class. The children who cannot write, may draw the items or objects.
1. Kids will start by thinking of a fun place they played
 2. Visualize the scenery and come up with descriptive words to describe this place.
 3. They will then describe this place to their group members, who will also describe theirs.
 4. Next the kids will come up with a food they love
 5. Then they must come up with a tool that will be useful in the jungle, or forest.
 6. Next they must find an animal whose skills will help them in the forest.
 7. The kids must draw pictures of each of these objects in their jungle passport.
 8. After they have all these items they must take turns discussing and sharing these items.
 9. They must explain to their group why they chose these items, and how they are good for survival.
 10. Next they must start with their animal – draw a picture and use descriptive words to describe him, using sight, smell, taste, touch, etc. Answer the question, why is this animal the best survivor?
 11. Then do the same thing with the food, tool, and finally the place they chose.
 12. Next they discuss all of these items with their group.
 13. They create a character or story based on the items and animal and describe it
 14. describe how the animal can find the food
 15. Describe an evil monster who lives on your island
 16. how does the hero use the weapon
 17. why is your monster after the food
 18. What happens to the hero that he needs to survive?
 19. What happens to the hero when he finds out his food has been stolen
 20. explain where the monster lives

¹ Based on Class discussions and activities

21. describe how the monster stole the food
22. write an ending
23. write 3 object that will help you get your food back
24. what are some things the monster would be good for if he were nice²

Students will first discuss these things orally among their group several times
Then they will write them down in their journals

1. Next, students will:

Brainstorm ideas and help each other if they get stuck.

They will each take turns explaining and working with their story orally.

Once they have done this, they will need to create a story of how the monster became good and how the survivors (students) were the result of the hero's sacrifice.

In addition to these exercises I will do the activities we did in class to help increase students ability to understand and tell stories.

- Viewing of the room and others
- Circle-bowing exercise
- Playing games -imagining

² Adapted from class activities by Laura Simms

Object that can change the world

Students will have been introduced to a great deal of stories by this time on peace building and conflict.

1. I will read the Breadwinner – About an Afghan refugee

- Discuss war – pro's and con's
- Develop understanding about being in war
- Discuss gender issues relating to belief's and customs
- Extend with our own beliefs about gender
- Our beliefs about war.

2. Read Ishmeal Beah's book A long Way Gone

- Discuss what war would be like as a child
- What are the good and bad things about being a child soldier
- Why does this happen
- Develop a collage of war and peace
- Research some peace makers in our world Martin Luther King Jr. Gandhi, Rosa Parks etc
- Discuss what peace means
- How can peace be attained
- Why do I want peace
- What would peace in my life/world look like

Object Story:

1. Next students must think of their favorite childhood object.
2. List all of its characteristics i.e. it can bounce, shine, spin etc.
3. List all the characteristics of what it would take to bring peace in the world.
4. List all of your characteristics that can help bring peace in the world.
5. Imagine a gnome appeared and said they would enchant the object so that it had magical power. What power would you choose?
6. How can you use that power to change the world and bring peace to everyone?
7. Tell a story of how you bring peace to the world using your gifts and the gifts of your object.
8. Retell-Then write your story.
9. We will add these stories together and make a class book of how we can save the world.

Build and collect stories from other cultures.

Adding to the student's curiosity from these stories, found in other places in the world, as well as the children's interest in people we sponsor from other countries through Kiva, the students must collect, learn and tell the class stories from other cultures.

Throughout the year, I will tell stories, and use ideas like:

- the origin of your name,
- your most embarrassing moment,
- your happiest moment,
- your favorite birthday/Christmas present

Students will develop an appreciation and understanding for stories and help build community.

The next step is to understand and appreciate stories from other cultures.

- Students will use the internet to find stories, myths and folk tales from other cultures.
- Each student will read and select one story to retell orally
- Next, they will learn how to flesh out the story by remembering
- Character- setting –plot-conclusion

Note: These elements of story will have been discussed and practiced many times before we do this exercise. Students will know and understand these elements of story. Below is an example of a story we will use in our class. (taken from Tolerance.Org)

The Fighting Mynahs: A story from Hawaii

by Leslie Ann Hayashi



Illustration by Calef
Brown

One early morning before the dew disappeared, two large mynah birds spied a ripe mango hanging from a tree. Sheltered from the hot sun, nourished by the rain, the fruit was perfect — a shining jewel fit for a king or queen.

The first mynah, an older bird who had survived many storms, moved toward the mango, cawing, "I've lived longer than you. I will eat this perfect fruit!"

Having never lost a fight, the second mynah answered, "I will rule after you're gone so the mango should be mine!"

"You're old and can learn no more," replied the younger bird, pushing out his chest.

Rising into the air, the mynahs challenged each other again and again, making a huge racket and stirring up dust and small stones.

In the midst of their battle, a mother and father sparrow pecked small pieces from the mango to feed their large hungry family. Flying back and forth from the nest to the fruit, the sparrows carried piece after piece into their fledglings' open mouths. Finally the children were full and fast asleep.

After hours of squabbling, the mynahs collapsed, tired and hungry. As they turned to look at their prize mango, much to their surprise, they saw hardly anything was left.

Childhood friends Leslie Ann Hayashi, the author, and Kathleen Wong Bishop, the illustrator, realized a lifelong dream when they collaborated on Fables from the Garden (University of Hawai'i Press, 1998, ISBN 0-8248-2036-3

These stories will provide the vehicle for discussion about peace, community-building and acceptance.

After each story that is told, we will talk about:

- What do you think about this story?
- What does it remind you of?
- What does it make you think of?
- What was the problem in the story?
- What could be the solution?
- Do you have a time where you fought over anything with someone? Or had a similar problem
- What can these stories tell you about the people who made them up?
- What problems may these people face?
- Are they real problems?
- Do you have they same kinds of problems?
- Are they like us?
- How are they like us?

This will lead us into our own story sharing and discussion about fighting with others.

- How was the problem solved?
- Could it have been solved better?

We can make a chart/book/pictograph etc. about ways to solve conflict. It can hang on our class wall.

This chart can be used during council to solve problems that arise.

My hope is that students will:

1st -be able to get along with others, and solve their own conflict

2nd -Learn to see that we are all alike, wherever we are.

3rd – become empowered to make the world better

References

Laura Simms and Jessica Senehi class activities

Mara Sapon Shevin "Introduction to Civics-An Agenda For Our Schools" *In Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative Inclusive Classroom Communities*. Needham Heights, MA:Allyn and Bacon,pp. 1-14

www.tolerance.org