

Overview

The grade one Social Studies unit I Belong will be looked at in the context of storytelling and peace education to build a classroom community. Students will create a booklet titled “My life story in grade 1” as their life is always changing and this will share what it is like right now. They will complete the unit by telling a personal story to the class.

Grade level: A grade one classroom with an equal number of boys and girls.

Time of year: This unit will occur in the first few weeks of school so the students and teacher can learn about each other.

Larger purpose: To create a community where students have an understanding of their classmates and teachers lives and stories. For all the students to be proud of who they are to tell their stories with pride and to have a receptive audience who values and respects them. To create a sense of community in which students feel safe and secure which in turn will create a peaceful environment for all to learn.

Specific Learning Outcomes from the Grade 1 Social Studies Curriculum

Personal Identity

KL-007 Give examples of groups with which they identify.

Cultural Expressions

KI-009 Describe ways in which their families expresses its culture and identity

VI-003 Respect the stories, traditions and celebrations of others

VI-005 Value the stories, languages, traditions, and celebrations of their families and communities.

Connections to the Past

KH-017 Give examples of traditions and celebrations that connect them to the past

KH-018 Identify family connections to previous generations

VH-009 Value stories of the past as an important way to learn about the present.

Rationale

Personally

This unit is trying to incorporate the theories and ideas from this course into the curriculum and system that we are required to work in as teachers. Trying to bridge the ideas, curriculum and my personal teaching style is the basis of this unit. Bringing these together in a way I feel comfortable and willing to try will ensure that small changes will occur over time. I personally believe if I choose a unit that is completely out of my comfort zone I will be less likely to use it and my students will not benefit. I believe small changes in time will improve my teaching and will challenge me to look at what else I can do to improve and incorporate new ways of learning into my classroom.

Professionally

The “I Belong” unit is completed at the beginning of the school year. Students and teachers will all share stories about themselves. As the year continues the students will be creating a variety of different stories. The I Belong unit is being used so that a classroom community can form enabling students to learn about each other, and feel safe and secure in their environment. As Mara Sapon Shevin writes “the ideal is a place in which students feel comfortable showing themselves-in all their complexities-to the teacher and their classmates” (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 35).

After participating in the I Belong unit to develop a classroom climate, I would like to challenge the students, at an age appropriate level, to be more thoughtful and reflective in their storytelling. During the storytelling at the beginning of the year I would like all the students to realize that everyone has a different story. As well, I believe hearing students stories at the beginning of the year can give the teacher great insight into the life experiences of the students. This can help in planning units and lessons appropriate to their level and needs. As well the teacher can tell stories of his/her own life to the students to show what experiences they have had in life.

The stated specific learning outcomes are being approached in this way because I believe students learn from looking at stories in a variety of ways. These stories can include reading them, viewing them, hearing them and writing them. Stories will activate their minds for deeper thinking and problem solving. Incorporating stories into the I Belong cluster has a natural fit where a variety of stories telling strategies can be used to accomplish the specific learning outcomes.

The Plan

The theories used in the following plan include incorporating the multiple intelligences through providing a variety of activities. As well the lessons are at an age appropriate level in which they will be scaffolded to meet the needs of the specific group of students in the classroom. The unit requires the students to tell one story about themselves at the end of the unit. This is done to help the students begin to feel comfortable talking in front of their classmates and for them to work on their presentation skills.

Each lesson does not have a specific amount of time allotted to it as every class will move at a different pace and until the teacher understands the dynamics it will be difficult to determine how much time will actually be needed.

The workbook the students will be working on with this unit plan is attached.

Lesson 1

SLO

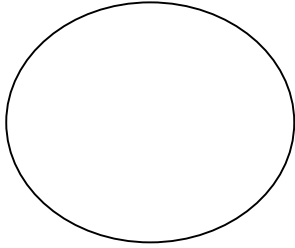
KI 007 Give examples of groups with which they identify

Activate: To begin this lesson the teacher will read a book based on differences and similarities.

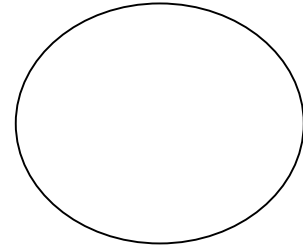
Story books intrigue children and they love listening to adults read. Hearing how the characters in the book are different could provide the students with some ideas on how they are similar to one another and how they are different. The book *We're All Special* (Maguire, 1995) could be used to identify a wide range of differences (cited in Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 42). Many books related to this topic can be borrowed from the library and put into the classroom for the students to read and look at throughout the unit.

Acquire: To begin thinking about how the students are the same and different they will have two circles, one being the similarities and the other being the differences. The class will discuss how they think they are the same and how they think they are different from each other. They could use ideas from the book in the activating strategy to begin the discussion.

Similarities



Differences



The teacher can help guide the students if they are having trouble by talking about

Differences

Age

Gender

Size

Likes and dislikes

Countries they come from

Languages they speak

Brother and sisters

Similarities

The grade they are in

The teacher they have

The school they go to

The needs they have: shelter, food, water

It is essential in an activity like this to be sensitive to student's perceptions. When doing this the teacher needs to reinforce that these are differences and similarities and they do not make you better or worse than someone else. It is important for students to realize they are similar and different to other people but they have to have an understanding and respect for one another. This can help build community by gaining a better understanding of each other.

Apply: The students will complete a page in their My life story book in grade 1. It will require them to write one way in which they are similar to others and one unique quality about themselves. They will then represent this in a visual way as well. They can draw ways they are similar or what is special about them, or they can make a collage. A few ideas will be shown and it will be the student's decision how they want to represent it.

As a lead on to this the class will look at the different types of families and complete this activity in their booklet as well.

Mara Sapon Shevin provided the following titles to look at and see the variety of families we have.

Celebrating families (Hausherr 1997)

Families are Different (Pellegrini, 1991)

Who's in a family (Skutch, 1995)

Sam is my Half Brother (Boyd, 1990)

Diana, Maybe (Dragonwagon, 1987)

(Cited in Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 43-44)

Lesson Two

Family Traditions

KI 009 Describe ways in which their family expresses its culture and identity.

VI 003 Respect the stories, traditions and celebrations of others

VI -005 Value the stories, languages, traditions and celebrations of their families and communities.

Activate: To begin this activity a variety of books from different religious, national and cultural holidays will be put on the floor for the students to look at. This will allow students to recognize and see different holidays celebrated by different groups of people. This is an extension to the activity completed the previous day reviewing different groups we are in and how these groups are similar and different.

Looking at the stories and pictures will hook students into hearing about different holidays and celebrations they have in their own families.

Some examples of holidays that would be represented would be Halloween, Christmas, New Years, Hannuka, Diwali, Valentines, Saint Patrick's, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Teacher's Day, Loy Krathon, Ramadan, April Fools, Kwanza, game night, movie night and any celebration that someone celebrates or knows about in the classroom will be accepted.

They will have a short discussion on some of their own holidays and some of the different holidays they have seen in the books. These books will be left in the library so that they can continue looking at them and see different cultures and groups of people.

During the activating stage the teacher can play Stand up/Sit Down with the students focusing on the specific holidays they have looked at. The teacher will say stand-up if you celebrate Halloween and continue with other events that were discussed. This will be great for the kinesthetic learners as they will be moving around (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 51).

Acquire: To gain an understanding of specific cultural groups the teacher will tell an aboriginal story. The reason an aboriginal story is being chosen is because those were the first people in Canada and they use more of an oral history to pass down the knowledge. This will be especially important if you have Aboriginal students in the classroom.

If possible an Aboriginal elder could be contacted to come in and tell the story. If that is not possible the teacher can tell the story and explain where it came from.

One Possibility is the following:

The Dream Catcher

A spider was quietly spinning his web in his own space. It was beside the sleeping space of Kiikum, the grandmother. Each Day, Kookum watched the spider at work, quietly spinning away. One day as she was watching him, her grandson came in. "Kookum-iiya" he shouted, clanking at the spider. He stomped over to the spider, picked up a shoe and went to hit it.

“No-keequa”, the old lady whispered, “don’t hurt him”.

“Kookum, why do you protect the spider?” Asked the little boy. The old lady smiled, but didn’t answer. When the boy left, the spider went to the old woman and thanked her for saving his life. He said to her, “for many days you have watched me spin and weave my web. You have admired my work. In return, for saving my life, I will give you a gift.” He smiled his special spider smile and moved away, spinning as he went.

Soon the moon glistened on the magical silvery web moving gently in the window. “See how I spin?” he said. See and learn, for each web will snare bad dreams. Only good dreams will go through the small hole. This is my gift to you. Use it so that only good dreams will be remembered. The bad dreams will become hopelessly entangled in the web

(Athabasca Tribal Council., 2001).

Apply: The students will write about (with assistance since it is the beginning of the year) a family tradition that they celebrate. They will describe why they enjoy it or don’t enjoy it. They will draw a picture.

The students can choose something their family does like family game night, a religious holiday or a national holiday. It is open to the students to decide what they would like to share.

Extension: The students can talk about good and bad dreams that they have had. In addition they can make their own dream catchers to put in their rooms.

Lesson 3

SLO

KH017 Give Examples of traditions and celebrations that connect them to the past

KH 018 Identify family connections to previous generations.

Activate: The students will sit on the carpet and play charades using different holidays and celebrations discussed the previous day. This will lead up to the next activity in which they will be put into groups and they will have to role play and tell a story about a specific holiday. These will all be holidays some students celebrate in our classroom.

Acquire: The student will act out a holiday in a role play. They will make up a story and the classmates will have to guess which holiday they are representing.

Students will take their My life story in grade 1 book home and interview their parents about a family tradition/celebration they have as well as ask how they were given their name.

Lesson 4

This is a culminating activity in which each student will present a story about themselves. They will each be telling the story of how and why they received their name. This is a very directed presentation because it is the beginning of the year and it is important for students to feel successful. As well everyone has a story as to how they received their name. (We did this activity in class and it was amazing the stories people shared.)

Activate: To begin this less the teacher will tell the story on how he/she received their own name. The teacher is a part of the classroom community and it is important that they share a little about themselves.

Ms. Muzyka

My grandparents came from the Ukraine and so my name is Ukrainian and it mean music. My first name Chantal was given to me by my parents because they really liked the name when they heard it.

Acquire: The students will practice their story with a friend so that they are comfortable saying it in front of the class.

Apply: The students will present the story on how they received their name to the classroom.

Final class project for the unit

The students will take home the following question to answer with their parents. How did you come to be at _____ school? Some will describe that they moved here from another country, others will have lived in the neighborhood their entire lives. Each story is just as important as the next. All the students will write the stories with their parents and a picture of them will be included. This will be made into a classroom story which will represent all the students in the class.

When the book is complete the teacher can read the stories and the students can guess who it is. (This idea is called Who Is It page 40 chapter two Mara Sapon Shevin)

Final Thoughts

With the activities in the I Belong cluster the ultimate goal is to create a safe community by building the key foundations of what Mara Sapon Shevin state are the foundations to community.

Security- “allows for growth and exploration” (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 16)

In this unit this is provided through slowly getting to know each other and having some knowledge about the people they spend all day with. Getting to know your classmates will create a sense of comfort and security in your surroundings.

Open Communication- “students share freely what is happening, what they need and what they are worried about” (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 16).

This type of communication will be encouraged in discussions. Students can feel free to talk about any issues that they may have. As well in this unit and in the classroom many different forms of communication will occur. The students and teacher will use oral communication in discussions and presentations. They will also use visual communication in their workbooks representing their celebration, family and similarities and differences. The students will use non-verbal communication in

the charades activity as well as in the role play. Lastly they will use written communication in the workbook.

Mutual Liking- “students are not forced to be friends, but the entire classroom is structured so that students learn to see and appreciate their classmates well.” (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 17)

Throughout the year the students will be placed in numerous different groups to accomplish different tasks. This will require that they work together and have a mutual liking so they can accomplish the goal. In this particular unit the students will be placed in small groups during the role play activity and they will be required to demonstrate one of the celebrations.

Shared Goals or Objectives- “students work together to reach a shared goal or objective” (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 17).

The class will have a final project and the goal will be to create a classroom book. They will all have to contribute in order for it to be complete. It will require that they encourage and help each other remember to bring in their own story. If a student cannot complete it at home the teacher will assist to ensure everyone is included in the book.

Connectedness and Trust- “people feel a part of the whole. They know they are needed, valued members of the group” (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, pp. 17).

During the discussion on how they are similar the students can see that they are connected. They can also feel trust and connections when others tell true stories about their lives. Having the privilege of hearing these stories can bring the students closer together due to a mutual understanding.

Community happens in small baby steps but taking the time to build it early in the year will allow a safe environment where students take risks. This means more meaningful learning will take place.

Incorporating a variety of story telling strategies will help create and make the community in the classroom stronger.

This unit incorporates my own teaching style along with the new ideas and theories from this course in the context of the system teachers work in. I believe this plan is possible and after completing it changes and alteration can be made to make it stronger and more beneficial for both the students and teachers if needed. Every group of students will be different and thus the activities may change and the outcomes may be different but that is the joy of creating new communities every year.

Works Cited

Sapon-Shevin, Mara. 1999. "Schools As Communities In Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 15-33.

Athabasca Tribal Council Administration. (2001). The Dream Catcher. Available:

<http://atc97.org/kids/stories.htm>