

21: 8th SocialStudies CostCauseCivil Lead PostInt

Speaker 1: Try to lay it out early. Here's what we're doing, here's why we're doing it, here's where it fits within the scheme of your life. Here's the value of it for you. It's not just this lesson. Yes, you have this assessment coming up later, but here's why I'm teaching it to you. I don't want to give you something that's just a lesson or a unit's worth of knowledge, but something you can hopefully take the rest of your life. My goal is that the meaningfulness comes out that way. They hear it when I say it, but I hope that they understand it when they do it. The first time they're watching the news and start thinking for themselves, or I remember I went through this thought process, or I saw these stats that reminded me of this. If they can apply whatever we're doing in there to something they're doing in their life, home run. That much more meaningful to them and to us.

The writing. I think the pre-think at the beginning. The questions get them going, and then the questions at the end, the formal assessments at the end, I think is the best way for them to synthesize everything that they've done today, because again, it becomes practical. Now it's not just pictures and numbers and video. Now it's something we need to put all together, and put some thought to it. Now the goal is when I go back and read this, hopefully there's some quality to those thoughts. We'll see.

This one ... huge. Really, any good lesson takes a lot of planning, but stations especially, planning-heavy. The nice part is, with something like this, you do it once, you do it well once, you can modify, and we were talking before about things we would [00:02:00] add to our lesson to make it better, primary source, maybe a letter from somebody, an actual soldier, would make it better, but that's a five-minute tweak, ten minutes' worth of finding the information and tweaking it in. We spent the better part of two and a half hours planning this unit originally, this lesson originally, and we put a lot of thought into the questions we were asking, and the order we were asking them, and how it gets more difficult as you go on.

Organization was key to this entire lesson. It allowed us to kind of step back. I heard a really good line from my master teacher, you know, you did a good job when the kids stop asking questions. It doesn't mean they stopped working, it just means the understand, and they can do it themselves. I think we've given them those skills to do it themselves, at least, for this lesson. They could form questions, they could answer the questions, they could critically think for themselves. Some kids needed a little clarification, but it was hands-off, and that comes from the planning and the organization we had going into it.

Those routines, those norms we had set up all year long, allowed the lesson to run. They allowed us to step back. If we were managing behavior, this lesson's so much less effective, but because kids know what's expected of them at this point in the year, that we're April, six months in, seven months in, their expectations are normal, or their expectations are clear. They know what's expected of them, what's from us. At that point, management's easy because we have a solid lesson, their general expectations are normal, we line out lesson-specific expectations, and we just let it cruise, hit play.

I mean, maybe I'm a little biased to answer the question. I hope it was great. From what I saw, I saw the kids were excited, they were into it, they were asking a lot of questions. It was early morning, so they were a little dead, but even as the lesson went on, and they saw more, they got more engaged, and the more they were exposed to, the more they were ... [00:04:00] willing to react to it and kind of open themselves and put some thought to it. I think as you see that on the video, as the lesson goes by, the energy level picks up, the talking picks up. I think that proves that student engagement was high.

I don't know. All year long, we drive home that whatever we're teaching in social studies is not just for this class, but you're taking it with you the rest of your life. A lot of you might ask, oh, when am I ever going to use this math again? You know, and there's some jobs or some lifestyle where you might not use calculus or even algebra, as long as you add, subtract, multiply, and divide. Not to devalue what's learning there, but social studies is one of those curriculums where it's lifelong. The lessons that can be taught here, and it can be just as bad, if not worse. I don't remember most of my social studies classes, and that's why I wanted to be a social studies teacher, so it became meaningful to them.

I'm really hoping that we're giving them some skills that they can take with them, even if it's just some thinking strategies or a graphic organizer they use in high school, or to be a better writer, or a thought process they use in college to write an essay. I'm really hoping that what we give them, these tools that we're giving them, because we're trying to teach them skills, not always content. I think Nicole's and my main goal is to give them a skill. Every lesson, we're trying to give them a skill to take with them, and not just a content, a date or a name. While those things are important, a skill is so much more.

I'd like to continue to get more reading and writing out of it. We try really hard to push that. The writing at the end of it, if I had more time, if I had five more minutes, I would have loved to show the questions they came up with, have them answering their own questions, so then it becomes them driving the lesson. As much as I love [00:06:00] to hear my own voice, if I can talk as little as possible and hear them as much as possible, that's a home run for me. It's a student-driven lesson, that's the perfect lesson. The co-teaching helps, for sure, especially when you have a good balance.

"Teacher-2" and I work really well together because we offset each other. I tend to be a little bit more on the creative side, and I can come up with some fun ideas, but I struggle with the A to B. How do I take this idea and make it practical? That's where she's killer at. I came in like hey, I've got this great lesson idea, but I'm not sure how to formulate it. She's like, let's just plan it through. We started with a question. What do you have for ideas? I know I want Gettysburg in there, I know I want them to see a little bit of shock and awe, like what it looks like. I want them to see statistics and some kind of video, maybe, how it broke down Southern will to fight.

Then it became, now it's going to run down to Sherman's March, or I've got pictures of the medical procedures that were happening and soldiers and different ways that people were dying of casualties during the war. Then it became questions, and it just

starts rolling. IF it wasn't for that co-teacher, this would have been a mediocre lesson, at best. I would have given them one of these pieces of material, had a handful of questions, and kind of meandered my way through it. Having a co-teacher sometimes allows you to have more purpose and more direction, and just another way to approach a problem. Thankfully, having her on my side allows me to think of more than one kind of student.

Sometimes the teachers, I think the cliché is that you tend to teach to your learning style, especially Ms. [00:07:41] being a [sped 00:07:43] teacher, it's ingrained in her to think of all of these different kinds of learners, because that's what she deals with on a daily basis with her specific group of students. It forced me to think outside my box, outside my comfort zone, and I think we made a really well-rounded lesson [00:08:00] that applied to all students. I don't think without her being here and going through that thought process with me, we wouldn't have had this kind of quality lesson.