

21: 8th SocialStudies CostsCausesCivil Co PostInt

Speaker 1: My lessons always start off with just reviewing what the point is at the end of the day. Especially at the Middle School level, the "Why" is so important to our students, and if can give them a valid reason for why, they'll do almost anything to achieve it. They just want to know, why are you making me do this, why I'm I here? All those great questions, and the best that we can answer that, is always the goal. Every lesson is started off with explaining to them the purpose. If we want the investment, we have to show them why it's important to be invested.

I think it's a lot of the stuff that we talked about with the a lot of movement, a lot of ... it's like structured chaos almost. When you walk in, they are like why are the kids walking everywhere? They're walking they're with purpose. They're going to an activity, the movement keeps them involved. The structure of like a time limit and knowing, "Oh I only have this much time." You want to give them, just enough time, but not too much to push them to work that whole time to the best of their ability. I am not a believer in sitting down and scripting lessons or anything, but the idea of planning a lesson to the minute, and using every instructional minute that you have in a class, also you get that enthusiasm from the kids.

When they feel like "Oh we have to get this done, we have to get this done." They're on it the whole time. They're working the whole time and the period is over before you know it, and they get to all of your objectives and they're excited they do it too. The better planned it is, and the better you know your students, and how long it's going to take them to do something, the easier [00:02:00] the day goes. It's like this session lessons are so great. You put in all this work upfront and then we get the time to go around and talk with our students, and see what they're thinking and it's really ... the goal is to not have a teacher involved. You want the teacher to let the kids learn on their own and help each other learn. The more we can do that, the more hands off we can get, the better.

We always aim for a lot of collaborative sitting for sure. It's pretty interesting the sitting in this particular classroom changes multiple times in multiple ways, depending on the class period and the activity. We do like a debate setting, and the kids come in and all the desks are lined up facing each other. They come in and they get themselves in debate mode, they're like ready. They're looking at their peers, they're ready to argue with them respectfully of course. You put it in groups like it is today and the kids know that it's time to be collaborative. They're ready to work and accomplish things together.

We also work on sort of a U-shaped circle plan, and that's when we're doing more discussion. It's kind of cool, the kids walk in knowing what that day's expectations are just based on where they're going to be sitting. It's worth it to move around the desk, where you try to give them as much freedom as possible for where they want to sit, and it creates a lot of responsibility for them, so that's really good. Sitting is huge, just the way that you arrange students. The more inclusive you can make it, putting our special education students in the mix of everyone else. I'm a full believer in the fact that you set

higher4 expectations, kids will achieve them. All the tools that we can give for that, including the collaboration and just arrangement of the room.

At [00:04:00] this point in the school year, we're in our fourth quarter. Our students manage themselves. We do a lot of upfront work and culture building and really clear and explicit instructions. When we're here at this point in the school year, there's no question about what's expected when you walk into the class room. You're expected that you're respectful, you're expected that you're on task. You're a learner, you're a student, your job is to be a student and so the more that we can put that upfront work in, at the beginning of the school year, the easier this part of the school year goes.

Then we got to do these lessons where we going to interact and it's one of those things that I remember, when I first started teaching I wanted control over everything. I wanted like this student sits here, and this student sits here. I'm not going to let them have their desk be next to each other, because they'll just talk. If we can provide that engaging atmosphere, we don't have to worry about management because they want to be there and they're trying to learn.

At this point it's very little of us, you'll see the students catch each other like, "Oh no, don't put a weight on it, like no book in the shelf, the class isn't over, what are you doing?" They'll catch each other doing it. That's what we're looking for, is that community feeling.

I think it was really great. Our students seem to enjoy themselves, I love getting to the end of a class period and hearing comments, that are like, "Oh class is over?" They don't even realize that they've been here for 45 minutes, or they don't want to leave. While some of the materials weren't the best for each kid, they each had something here that they liked. For some of them, it's just getting to the end where we got to share our questions and discuss with each other, and for others it's that independent working and sitting and looking at the resources and reflecting with themselves. I think that as long as we don't do one activity for too long and we try and fit as many different types of activities into a [00:06:00] class period as possible, we can keep engagement for a pretty long time even on our block schedule, even on our hour and a half class periods.

It's all about movement, and just a lot of planning. There's a lot of upfront work that goes into like, Well what if we do this and then you kind of realize, that's going to lose them and there's nothing you can do at that point. It's a lot of up from where it gets a lot of putting in movement and different types of resources and learning styles and knowing our students and ourselves as teachers. Especially as a core teaching team, it's really important that we recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses, because while I tend to be more analytical and I'm always looking it like, "Oh no, one of my special education students is going to do this.? Mr "teacher" is a lot more creative. His lesson ideas are great and then I can bring it down to the everyday life, and break it down minute by minute, and we balance each other really well in that way.

Hopefully in the way that we explained it to them. Their biggest thing is they know they're accessed regularly in here. There's at least one essay somewhat of assessment a

quarter, and they know that if they don't pass that, they're not passing the quarter. It's very important to us that they're developing great student skills and great argument skills and if they can't prove that they're showing up everyday and developing those skills, at least growing, then we don't feel comfortable passing them up to the next grade level.

For them they know that that summative is really the [NLB offer 00:07:45] whether we think they're ready. Every time we introduce a lesson like this we're always explaining to them, how it fits in to our expectations for where they should be at the end of the quarter. They [00:08:00] want to work hard because they love seeing that growth, and so far, if we can pump them up, and tell them like if you put in the effort, you will get a good grade. You will see growth, it doesn't matter where they start at, at the beginning of the year. It doesn't matter what their reading comprehension level is, or how eloquently they can speak in class. It's all about that hard work gives them results, and so the more that we can emphasize that, the more that we can emphasize it's not about where you started, it's about where you're going, the better results we see out of our students.

I think that like I said earlier, putting a little bit more text in it would be great. I think that our students are ready for a little bit of a higher level, amount of rigor in this lesson as well, and getting to more of that discussion piece, would be where I want to go. Right now it's broken down, they have 7 minutes at each station. It on leaves us like 5 to 10 minutes of the end of classroom discussion. I really like them to be able to interact with each other as much as possible, so if we can fit in a little bit more of that discussion piece and that collaboration piece, that would be ideal.