

8th_SocialStudies_CivilWar_CoTeachPreInt

Speaker 1: A lot of our instruction is based on reading and writing. Common core is looking for that in social studies. This lesson in particular is one of our scaffold-ed lessons that builds into the bigger essay. Everything that you've seen is a section where we're just trying to get our students to be able to write their essay. This lesson in particular is not the most fun for our students. They are sitting down and working on graphic organizers, but it's very important that we teach them how to organize their ideas, otherwise we end up with a little bit of chaos in their essay, and while they may not use a graphic organizer by choice later, we can definitely develop those skills of chunking their big projects so that they are ready to do it on their own later.

The biggest thing that we're doing is that we do a scaffold-ed writing all throughout the year. Every quarter we add a piece to their basic 5 paragraph argumentative essay. This essay in particular, we're focusing on the idea of counter claim and then using evidence as a rebuttal to knock down the other sides opinion basically. We've been doing a lot of work on that and this lesson in particular is the last one of the year that we get them to write that full essay, a full introduction with hook and all of the good stuff that we're looking for in our English teacher wants. We work a lot across curricular to make sure that our language is the same with her and right now, counter claim is the hardest thing for our students. They don't get the idea of acknowledging another person's point of view in their writing. This part is very, very important because they're expected in our 8th grade standards, to come out of 8th grade being able to write [00:02:00] an argumentative essay with counter claim and citing evidence from the text to knock it down.

They always have to have their graphic organizers checked by us before they can move onto their rough draft. We also in our writing process include a peer review. It's really nice for us because we don't have to be reading 16 drafts of something and it also really benefits the students because they're really responsive to their peer feedback, so if we can actually encourage them to do that, we get really great results and they make some good improvements to their writing and also our students are reading other students writing and seeing what common mistakes there are and what they can do, maybe they will see something great in an essay that they read and apply that skill to their own essay. The final assessment is the summit ave argumentative essay. They turn that in a couple days from now, so all this work and like 3 week's worth of lessons building up to this overarching summative assessment are just... We assessed all along the way and we feel like they're ready based on that, and we usually got our instruction based on our formative assessments that we do along the way, so hopefully we get what we're looking for.

They've done this lesson before so they know the expectations. As I said before, we're at that point in the school year where we shouldn't really have to. Having two teachers in the room is really great and we usually discuss together what problems we foresee happening so we can kind of nip them in the bud and not have to worry about it as much during the lesson.

Our overarching question that I'm sure you've heard a million times by being with us now is, should Lincoln have let the Souths decide? Our students have looked at all sorts of evidence from different sides, and at this point most of the questions have been asked [00:04:00] and not all of them answered because we're not always answering all of the questions. Some of them don't have answers. They are spending today finding evidence to answer that overarching question and then they decide should he have let them succeed or should he have not? And then back it up with evidence, so that's our biggest question today. The other questions are going to be a lot more particular in regards to their writing. A lot of question like, did you use this? A little bit more like level one, just checking in with them but hopefully getting to that overarching question.

It's a little bit hard because writing instruction in general we used to get a lot of eye rolls from our students the minute we say you're going to have to write an essay or here's another graphic organizer. While the lesson in an of itself isn't extremely engaging, what we've noticed is giving our students these skills all throughout the year has given them confidence in their writing and their abilities, so we don't get the eye rolls as much.

If we can give them the skills to do well on this, it might not be their favorite lesson because no one's favorite lesson is writing an essay, but we get a lot less complaints than we used to and a lot better writing just based on all of the work that we put in with them, so it's not exactly you're funnest lesson. They're not rotating through stations or seeing any cool videos, but at the end of the day we just give them a lot of why it's important. It's a lot of you will use argumentative writing for the rest of your life. Every job you apply to is going to want a cover letter where you have to argue for why you deserve the job. Every college admissions is going to have an essay for why you deserve to be in that college. The more we can just give them the why, it might not be super exciting but at least keeps them engaged in what we're doing.

As an inclusion teacher, I'm obviously always very focused on my students [00:06:00] [inaudible 00:05:59] and many of them have a lot of accommodations that if you look at them are actually just best teaching practices. A lot of use of graphic organizer, chunking of information, providing them guided notes, those type of things. We've found like as my gen ed counterpart and me, we've found that if we just do those things for all of our students, it's beneficial to all of them, because no one is going to not benefit from more organization and more strategies that they can use for writing. This one, while we force them at this point to use those skills hopefully it's developing the use of graphic organizers, the idea of citing evidence, they're using that later in life and we're just giving them the skills now. It's really important for all of our students to be provided with these concrete things that can organize their ideas and make sure that it fits what we're looking for in our rubric. If they follow all of our steps, there's no way they can't do well on the assignment.