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Secondary Social Studies Newsletter

Vocabulary Instruction

Assessing Vocabulary Acquisition

What does it mean to know a word? A learner may be able to supply a synonym for a word but not know how to use it.

When considering what kinds of assessment are appropriate, first consider the kind of learning that is the goal.

A multi pronged approach to vocabulary assessment will be more information than simply asking matching or multiple choice questions.

- Students match the word and definition then give an example of how each word can be used

Urban - Characteristic of a city

Suburbs are often a feature of urban sprawl

- Students answer true/false questions then explain why they chose that answer

True - Seniority is related to time

Someone with more work seniority has been at the job longer

- Students answer example/non-example questions by distinguishing between an example of a word and a non-example of a word. Both present situations that have similar features and require students to focus on the meaning of the target word.

From Beck, McKeown and Kucan "Bringing Words to Life"

First Days of Class

Get to Know Your Students

- Use [Historical Would you Rather Questions](#) to give students the opportunity to talk more candidly about history and gauge what students know coming into the class. Students can even come up with their own history focused would you rather questions.
- Use the discussion board feature in Canvas for students to introduce themselves. This has the benefit of the teacher being able to read through discussion posts after class so as to start remembering names and learning a bit about students. Discussion board conversations can consist of a would you rather question, ask students to post a picture that represents them and explain why they chose the picture, or ask students to introduce themselves and share their goals for the semester in your social studies class.
- Use [Flipgrid](#) to have students record a short video introduction for themselves. Prompts for student videos can be similar to the Canvas discussion board topics. This has the benefit that you can look at the videos after class to start learning who students are plus start to connect faces and names.

Teach Students How to Learn

How can we help students figure out their role in the learning process? Even if we are the best teachers on the planet, if students do not come to class prepared to learn efficiently and independently, we will never see the kinds of learning gains that are possible.

As teachers we can tell students that they need to change their study habits but how can they know how to go about making that change. Imagine if someone told you that you will go to another planet so you must breathe differently. That is similar to telling a student to change their study habits without giving them guidance on how their study habits could be different and what steps to take toward making those changes.

Students in your class are doing the same thing they have done in past classes with reasonable levels of success. They have passed classes up to this point by following that same course of action so naturally they are repeating those actions with the expectation of the same reasonable level of success. This is why it is beneficial to occasionally address with students the topic of strategies to improve their learning, especially metacognition. The first step is to empower students to be active partners in the learning process by making them aware of the specific goals of activities.

- Think about when you assign reading to students, it is often interpreted as their eyes should fall over every word in the text while thinking about other things.
- When practice tests are assigned students spend time memorizing specific information required only for the questions on the practice test.

We must be very specific about what we want students to do and the reason behind the activity. This does not require reinventing your instruction just adding some specifics to the information you provide to students.

Look at your lesson for tomorrow, the objectives you are providing, the directions you are providing for the activities. Is there room for more specificity? Is there room for more clarity about why students are going to do that activity? This information will allow students to do their work for your class with more focus and efficiency.

From Stephanie McGuire, "Teach Students How to Learn"

Essential Questions

Economics Principles/Supply & Demand

- What impact does scarcity have on the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services?
- How does something acquire a value?

Imperialism

- Why might some nations prefer to remain isolated from the rest of the world?
- Is there justifiable imperialism?
- In what ways do economics factors drive political and economics decisions?

World War I

- What defines one's national identity?
- Can the outcomes of war ever justify the loss of human life or social disruption?
- Was it possible for the US to maintain neutrality in World War I?

Indigenous Societies

- What does it mean to be 'civilized'?
- Are modern civilizations more 'civilized' than older ones?

Early Civilizations

- How did Hammurabi's Code affect the rights and responsibilities of the citizens of Babylon?
- Why do people create laws?

World Religions

- What does it mean to be religious?
- How does religion impact society?
- To what extent, if any, does religion impact government?
- When are differing beliefs beneficial?

Greece / Rome

- How do Greek myths and literature still influence our world today?
- How did Alexander the Great change the lands he conquered?
- How did the geography of Greece both help and hinder its development?
- What ideas from the government in the Roman Republic influenced the government of the United States?
- How do Roman accomplishments continue to impact our lives today?

Industrial Revolution

- How did the Industrial Revolution affect the rights of workers?
- What were the results of increased labor demands fueled by industrialization?
- What are some of the benefits of an industrialized society and how are they achieved?
- What social, economic and political problems created a need for reforms in this era?
- Does government have a responsibility to help the needy?

Resources

Imperialism

[ABCs for Little Patriots](#)

A children's book from Britain during their imperialist period

Industrial Revolution

[Child Labor in America](#)

Library of Congress organized photographs from Lewis Hine documenting child labor in America at the beginning of the 20th century

Maya/Aztec

[Conquest of Mexico Compare and Contrast Exercises](#)

From the American Historical Association primary source documents that recount two versions of events for several events that occurred during the conquistadors exploration of Central America.

World Religions

[World Religions Lessons and Resources](#)

Website with a wealth of information, videos, articles, etc on all the major religions

World War I

[Price of Freedom: Americans at War](#)

From the Smithsonian Institute, online exhibits for the major American Wars from the American Revolution to the present

[Great Migration: African American Exodus from the South](#)

Article with data showing the numbers of people involved in the Great Northern Migration and explaining the significance of the event

Historical Thinking Skills

Continuity and Change Over Time

“The ability to understand that some concepts, ideas, beliefs and other historical factors have remained constant whereas others have changed, makes the historic landscape continuous rather than simply segmented into unity to be momentarily learned.”

It is essential for students to gain a sense, ask questions and draw conclusions about change and continuity over time. If they leave class with the notion that people in the past were less intelligent than we are or that the past is just a stage play in which current people debate ideas then we have not assisted them in understanding the past as both a foreign country and one that has direct connections to the present day.

A way to introduce the idea of continuity and change over time is through the pledge of allegiance. Saying the pledge has been such a customary routine in the lives of students so the realization that it has evolved creates a great deal of cognitive dissonance. Showing students the various iterations of the pledge accompanied by the rationale of why it changed shows them that the past and the present are vastly different places. [The short pledge we recite has a long history](#) is an article from the Washington Post which briefly reviews the changes the Pledge of Allegiance has experienced.

There are many topics in current events that lend themselves to examination of continuity and change over time as history is being co-opted for political purposes all the time. Some potential topics include the debates over naming schools and military bases after slave owning presidents. These topics provide tangible connections to current events such as the violence that occurred in Charlottesville surrounding the removal of the Robert E Lee statue.

For this type of lesson students are provided several sources that consider the events or person being examined from a variety of perspectives. Students read the sources and identify how it depicts that event or person while considering the subtext of the source and how that would influence perspective. Students consider the event or person in the context of the time period to recommend if the event or person merits commemoration and/or is being portrayed accurately in their legacy.

From Bruce Lesh, “Why Won’t You Just Tell Us the Answer?”

Engagement Strategy

Video Response

To diversify the product which students create, moving from the standard written paragraph or in class discussion response, consider using a tool like FlipGrid to allow students to record themselves talking in response to a prompt. This format is one that students who enjoy social media usage will identify with and it allows students to formulate their response without the time pressure of an in class discussion and it gives them the opportunity to talk through their thinking which can challenge .

Some potential classroom activities that would lend themselves to the video response format include:

Reading Response - Students can record their thoughts about the content of a secondary source reading including commenting on the author’s bias, if they agree or disagree with the author’s thesis, etc.

Applied to Primary Sources - Video response can be applied to the [C3 Inquiry Lessons](#) so that students record themselves explaining their answer to their assigned supporting question based on the documents that accompanied that supporting question. Students can watch the video responses of their peers in a virtual gallery walk in order to jigsaw the information needed to discuss the compelling question of the lesson

Share Passages - After reading current events students can share passages from the news article/video that are evidence of bias or evidence of manipulating the delivery of information to make it fit a certain narrative

Compare Points of View - Students look at two different accounts of an event and record a description of how to points of view differed and explain the motive behind those different perspectives on the same event

Explain Connections - Students are given a series of events and explain how those events are connected. What common threads existed between those events and/or how one the effects of one event were the causes of a subsequent event

Apply Past Solutions to Present Day Problems - Look at how government leaders of the past (Emperors, Caliphs, Kings, Dictators, etc) solved problems of society and civilization. Students record themselves applying those solutions to the present day to determine feasibility and evaluate if those solutions are applicable in the present. For example: Suleiman the Magnificent’s millet system applied to modern issues of diverse societies.

Professional Development

Immersive Digital Learning in the English, History and Science Classroom

Cullowhee, March 13, 2018 to March 16, 2018

Imagine a classroom where digital learning is already immersed into every aspect of the curriculum. Educators today have so many components to consider when creating a lesson, including: content, assessment, collaboration, and digital technology. Learn how to create a learning space where digital tools are seamlessly integrated. Investigate a variety of digital tools and see example lessons for the English/language arts, history, and science classrooms. Inspire your students to become more engaged by creating an immersive digital learning environment.

Integrating Technology

What If Project

Counterfactual or alternate history is a fringe topic amongst academic historians. However, as a class activity it opens up the world of history for inquiry, investigation and creativity. The What If? project is focused on the specific engagement of the student with a deep investigation of the historical record. The steps which take the student through the exercise is challenging, couched in research and steeped in creativity.

The setup for this project can take two different approaches:

1. Students look at the history they have studied in the course and identify a point of divergence at which they evaluate how events might have transpired differently and what would be the effects of that divergence
2. Students are given a list of questions about alternate history and determine how that change in events would effect subsequent events and potentially the present

Example questions:

- *What if the US had received advanced intelligence about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?*
- *What if the Nile River had dried up thousands of years ago?*
- *What if Henry VIII had stayed married to Catherine of Aragon?*

Student projects could include the creation/ alteration of primary source documents to show the change in the historical record that occurred due to the change in events.

Students can share their alternate history in whatever format they feel like fits best. Some possibilities include:

- video explaining what happened
- interactive timeline showing the change of events
- podcast interviewing a historian recounting the alternate history and events.

Newsletter Input Survey

In an effort to make the newsletters as useful as possible I can use your input to answer three questions:

What topics would you like to continue?

What topics not discussed would be beneficial?

Is the pacing correct in the newsletter?

Go to the [Social Studies Newsletter Survey](#) and let me know so I can adapt according to your needs.

Miscellany

In the 1790s in the United States, the average American over the age of fifteen consumed almost six gallons of pure alcohol per annum. The modern figure is 2.8.