

Grade 6 Social Studies: The Key Understanding was the Interconnectedness of a Decision and Its Consequences

by Aubrey Linen

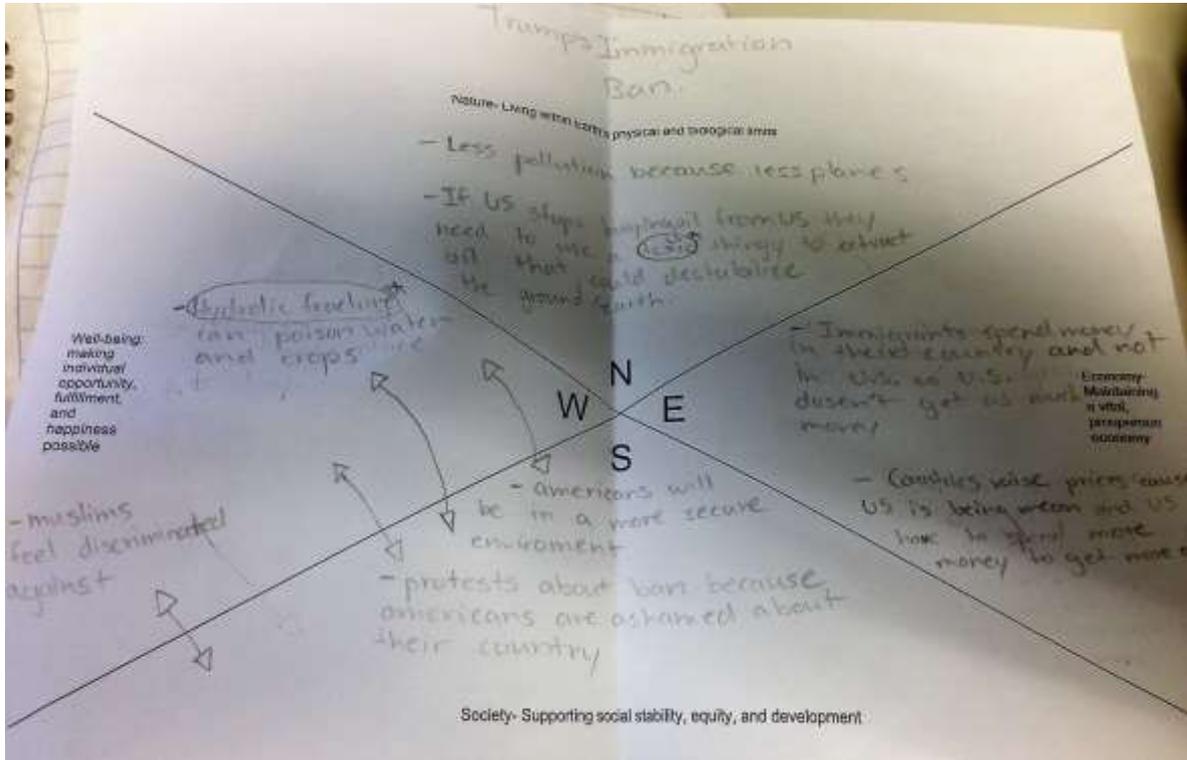
Tool(s) used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Compass • Systems Mapping
Purpose of using tool:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesizing Thinking <p>Overview: Used the Compass tool on 3 occasions. 2 of them were to help kids see the far-reaching effects of decisions made by leaders- most recently the immigration ban from Donald Trump. the third application was as part of an assessment where I was hoping to see kids be able to realize the effects of a particular cause and their varied nature.</p>
Context of lesson/case study:	Social Studies current events
Participants (# and description):	100+ kids
Topic, Theme, or Key Understanding of unit:	The key understanding was the interconnectedness of a decision and its consequences.
Length of unit/project:	3 lessons
Resources/materials & setting required:	Compass tool, CNN!0 for background information and discussion.
Lesson Plan/Description of the Project:	
<p>We discussed the specifics of Donald Trump's immigration ban. I re-introduced the kids to the tool- asked about its purpose and its particulars. After eliciting responses, I shared a personal anecdote about my feelings related to the ban. I asked kids if this fit anywhere in the Compass, after the response, we went on to discuss other scenarios, groups of people affected, economic and environmental consequences. After each of the mini discussions, I would elicit wherein the compass it fit.</p> <p>On the previous occasion when we used the tool- we went on to diagram the systems. There I asked the kids to identify causal relationships between effects using arrows.</p>	
Reflection	
Plusses:	
<p>I was happy with the connections student made between effects and I was also happy with the tool's ability to allow students to see the far-reaching effects of one decision. In my mind, this is the most important first step in system's thinking and I like the easy and natural way that the compass tool enables that.</p>	
Challenges:	
<p>Even after the level one course, my feeling was that I did not have enough of a handle on systems thinking and the tools to teach it. I felt like the information came so hard and fast that my brain had not had time to synthesize it, only acknowledge that it had made an appearance.</p> <p>As far as the lesson goes, because I have 5 sections, I was able to refine it as I went along. I found that I needed to spend more time talking about the purpose of the tool as an effect recorder. I needed to be more explicit about the different points of the Compass and what fits in them. As far as the systems mapping exercise, I found that once the kids were keyed into the details of the Compass tool, the causal mapping</p>	

between effects became clear for them, but I was and am struggling now with how to extend that exercise into a lasting knowledge.

Suggestions for other practitioners and educators:

It is important to begin, despite inevitable failings and imperfections. I think systems thinking is something that by definition, becomes clearer as you immerse yourself in it.

Evidence and Resources:



Case study submitted by: Aubrey Linen, 2017, while serving as Grade 6 Social Studies teacher at American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C.