



Grade 5 Social Studies: Ancient Greek Civilization

(Submitted by Amy Suhr, 2018, while serving as Grade 5 Teacher at Discovery School, Honduras)

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| Tool(s) used: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Compass • Triangles Game |
| Purpose of using tool: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating Questions • Synthesizing Thinking • Guiding Discussion <p>Overview: The Sustainability Compass was used to analyze the elements of Ancient Greek civilization and how they were interconnected, including cause and effect relationships. The main purpose was for students to gain an understanding of the many facets that contribute to the building and maintenance of a major civilization.</p> |
| Context of lesson/case study: | 5th grade Social Studies class |
| Participants (# and description): | 15 students, Grade 5 (ages 10-11) |
| Topic, Theme, or Key Understanding of unit/project: | Ancient Greek Civilization |
| Length of unit/project: | 4 weeks |
| Resources/materials & setting required: | Non-fiction texts and articles, poster paper, markers, notes taken, slips with elements of Ancient Greek society which we had already learned about |
| <p>Lesson Plan/Description of the Project:</p> <p>Day 1: I had prepared slips of paper after brainstorming with the students things we had learned about Ancient Greece (Agora, Olympic Games, Mountainous land, etc.). I then handed out the slips of paper randomly. Students decided which Compass point best corresponded to their slip of paper. With four corners of the classroom assigned to each Compass point, students moved to the corner with the Compass point they chose for their item. Then each student explained and justified their choice, and taped their slip of paper on the large Compass poster at the front of the room. This led to great conversations, especially when an item could fit into more than one Compass point.</p> <p>Because we had a lot of strips, we had to do this process twice to get through all of the ideas.</p> <p>Day 2: Each student made their own copy of the Compass we constructed in class the day before. Then they were divided into groups of 3-4, and discussed connections they saw between items on the Compass, drawing arrows to show cause/effect relationships, and writing along the arrows an explanation of the relationship (i.e. "mountains" was connected to "independent city-states" because the terrain made travel between cities difficult, and as a result, cities became independently governed "city-states."). A 10 minute timer was set, and students discussed the relationships that they saw, making notes on their own Compasses.</p> <p>After 10 minutes, we came together as a whole class to record relationships and connections on our class poster, which again stimulated many meaningful conversations about the relationships within Greek civilization.</p> | |





As a final discussion, I asked students to reflect upon how the Ancient Greek civilization was like a system, and how the Compass tool helped them to see the parts of the system.

Reflection

Plusses:

As the students were working in their groups to look for connections, I was amazed at the depth of thinking in their conversations! Being able to listen to small group conversations allowed me to hear the thinking of students who normally wouldn't participate in a whole-class discussion without prompting. And it was so inspiring to hear the "passion" with which they defended their ideas!

Challenges:

Time! While I would have loved to let conversations continue with further (and deeper) connections, our time limitations cut some important discussions short. Next time I may add another day to this activity to allow students' thinking to take on a life of its own. I would also explore more explicitly the specific causal nature in some of the relationships, as well as relating the Greek civilization to other civilizations studied and the concept of civilization in general.

Suggestions for other practitioners and educators:

The small group discussions were powerful... most educators know this already so I'm sure this is nothing new. But you learn so much about where students are in their thinking when you "eavesdrop" on their conversations with each other!

Evidence and Resources:



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