



BLOSSOM (ING) AWARENESS: THINK GLOBALLY, MON—ACT LOCALLY, BRO: DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Level: middle and high school
Course: bilingual, ESL, social studies,
language arts

Methods

Lecture, reading, writing, cooperative learning, hands on, dramatization, multiple view points, debate, discussion, synthesis, critical thinking

Rationale

1. A Rastafarian woman in her 50's from Watt Town, Jamaica wants to organize the women in her town to form a crafts cooperative to help alleviate the poverty due to high unemployment. She has lots of constructive ideas but she is fighting apathy and hopelessness among her own neighbors without having any clear direction herself about how to organize to get the initial few successes she needs in order to convince others to try "what's never been done that way in the past". Her second dream is to convince Kaiser Bauxite U.S.A. which is strip mining in Watt Town to feel more responsibility for the area by beginning a reforestation program. She would encourage them to take more interest in the local school. Rather than provide the traditional basket of oranges to each student at Christmas, she feels the time has come for Kaiser to donate computers, invest in the library, establish scholarships for deserving students and match funds to make available training for teachers, community workers and students that might be interested in a career with Kaiser.

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2. The Julius E. Sprauve Junior High is located on the island of St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The staff and students are predominantly West Indian and the school appears to have the normal ups and downs of most junior highs, and is just beginning a computer program which links it up to other schools on the U.S. mainland. As part of my unit I would like to be one of the schools they have an interchange with. The poverty and exploitation of West Indians on their own island by their own politicians and the too rapidly expanding influx of off islanders who are buying up the land and changing the composition of the island is creating an anger and racial tension almost mirroring the situation in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Many decisions are being made, without much thought to future consequences to the environment, which will affect the world these young people inherit. It would be positive to get these students to start thinking about how they can rechannel their anger and organize effective campaigns of letter writing, economic clout and unity in behalf of a common good or goal.

3. My teaching assignment for the past three years has been to work exclusively with monolingual (Spanish) 7th and 8th grade students from Mexico and Guatemala. They are segregated from the main student body due to "problems" with scheduling, and the general atmosphere in both school and community has not been welcoming. They bring the experience of economics forcing migration, finding a job without the luxury of considering the environment, knowing the benefits as well as the disadvantages to their countryside of the maquiladora system. Each year the students have participated in a classroom service problem. The Jamaican project would be even bigger, teach them fundamentals about how to go about negotiating for themselves, yet not further alienate them from the community by giving the message that they were better than the community and had to do their "good deeds" there. For their part they will get lots of publicity and affirmation and the opportunity to work with new technology, hopefully alleviating some of the stigma of being kept apart from the rest of the student population.

Lesson Overview

This unit will :

- * improve reading and writing levels
- * make practicing for state writing sample more relevant
- * expand geographical knowledge
- * augment research skills
- * replace parochial with global outlook
- * foster the growth of social consciousness
- * give students the chance to feel empowered

The purpose of the unit is to get students to look for the commonalities in apparently disparate situations. What are several challenges that New Mexico, St. John, Jamaica and Mexico face in common and how do they affect our little world?

- * balance of population makeup shifting to newcomers
- * tourism is an important industry
- * politics don't always serve the people
- * traditional way of life is changing
- * family land being sold and lost, resentment and anger growing
- * outsiders are the owners of businesses; locals work the service jobs

- * what initially attracts outsiders is being destroyed by outsiders
- * increased population straining resources and destroying natural tourist attractions
- * do people chose ecology and their children's future or jobs and their children's survival?
- * do businesses have an obligation to the community?
- * who are the watchdogs for future generations? Will we give our young people a say in the planning or simply leave them holding the bag?
- * what are students learning as tools to help them make a difference?

I realize it would make more sense for each school to do their own local project, that I appear at first glance to be the only link between the three. But I don't see anything to prevent us from working together to help Watt Town if we look at it as a training model and follow through with what we learn here as a group and apply it later to our own local situation. My justification for going against logical procedure (from the local to the global, from the known to the unknown) is my feeling that if the Watt Town project were done first semester it could simply be a vehicle to MODEL the thought and action processes I wish to instill in my students. They would go along with this teacher-driven project as the quickest way to acquire some knowledge and tools.

Then during second semester they will launch off into the best way to learn —their own personal involvement, but with the difference that they will have some solid, learned principles from semester one under their belts.

For second semester the students will research what are the local issues they are interested in, being able to clarify to a greater extent why they are interested. They will use democratic process to chose one issue be it of service, preservation or controversy in nature and demonstrate more of an ability to justify their choice after having experienced the original Watt Town project. They will be more in charge of designing their own time frame, requirements and grading options in a realistic way after the first experience. Hopefully they will be willing to keep up the interchange of ideas, sharings of success and failure, brainstorm possible solutions with the other school as they compare and discuss their second project with each other through computer communication.

Time Needed

One hour or period daily for four weeks to teach skills and procedure. Then one hour weekly minimum until end of semester for correspondence, planning, logging, updating. If unit is extended into second semester there is a projected time of one hour each day the first week to decide on project and create plan, followed by minimum check in at teacher digression to monitor progress.

Suggestions for Integrating the Project with Other Subjects

ART

- * Make "press badges" or media I.D. tags for students to flash when they are out around campus preparing the video tape.
- * Large butcher paper mural with project theme worked in, used to decorate hallway or classroom or serve as backdrop to video segment or school news "spot." Some possible themes are:
- * Tourist theme - ocean, palms, houses, etc.

- * Ecological theme - native flora and fauna of area we're studying
- * Friendship - depiction of both pen friend schools "at work" in local setting
- * Before and After themes
- * Look at examples of "primitive" painting in art books. Do your own local scene in "primitif" style

LIBRARY

- * Teach about specialized reference books, including the directory that supplies names and mailing addresses for large corporations
- * Pull books (reference, fiction, non-fiction, biography, etc.) and make a display of books centered around our theme so students are enticed to pick one up and read it
- * Suggest other linkages within library that may be interesting for students to explore.

ESL

- * Prepare sheltered vocabulary to help students understand key words and concepts
- * Field trip to Post Office to have physical recall lesson on buying stamps, mailing letters, making change, asking for information such as price of stamps, expected delivery time, the merits of using aerogram, etc.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- * Map lesson
- * Mini-lectures on Ancient African Civilization, Colonial Slave Trade, Sugar Cane Production and Plantation System, Triangle Trade, Miscegenation, African Roots of Present Day Music, etc.

DRAMA

- * Skits acting out project related situations, with several varied "endings" so audience is presented with solutions from differing points of view
- * Dramatize an incident from a book you are required to read as an alternative to a traditional book report

MATH

- * Learn about time zones and write your own story problems
- * Learn how to compute distances on a map, change miles to kilometers and write a story problem about coming from Jamaica or Mexico to the US system
- * Check out the Converting Currency program on the WWW, get daily exchange rate through same program, and figure out how much you and your best friend will need to spend spring vacation somewhere.

SCIENCE

- * What happens to waste and garbage when a city does not plan on an extrapolating population?
- * What is a coral reef and how can it be thrown out of balance and die? How does erosion happen when a hiking trail is overused? What is and why do strip mining? Are there alternatives? What makes the alternatives feasible or not?

CAREER EDUCATION

- * environmental careers
- * travel agent
- * Waste management
- * Tour Guide, cruise ship
- * Hotel, motel, food
- * Politician

P.E.

- * do aerobics to different Caribbean rhythms (reggae, dance hall, salsa, soukous, samba, merengue, etc.). The students have to "invent" a move or stretch or step to fit the beat.
- * Learn a folk dance from the Caribbean (limbo, ra-ra, reggae step, bamboula)

ECONOMICS

Explain concepts like supply and demand, boycott, renewable resources, union, etc.

MUSIC

- * Listen to different Afro-Caribbean selections. Try and make connections with ultimate appearance in American rock or pop or jazz.
- * Learn some simple drum patterns using desk top or chair for drum. Perform mini-concert at the next assembly.
- * Get lyrics and group-sing some of the more well-known Jamaican songs. Discuss message - is it social comment, emotional, etc.
- * Write your own corrido or rap song about something in our unit. Perform in front of class for extra credit

READING

- * Check with librarian to see what's available related to our theme
- * Write a brief "mini-critique" of your book and tell why you recommend it or not, to the next student. Following student can add on to the "book review" and agree or disagree and so on.
- * Volunteer to read a short book or an interesting chapter to a younger class, or "peer tutor" or listen to a Chapter One student read part of your book.

COMMUNICATIONS

- * video tape mock interviews or skits with both (or several) sides of project dilemma presented
- * form a panel and debate project related issue
- * submit articles to school or local newspaper
- * contact local PAC channel and put together a live presentation or prepare a video
- * make an informative video presenting our community and out school for an out of state audience

- * film a “documentary” type video chronicling our step by step process with our unit project
- * research different opportunities during the year where you could showcase your video or send your articles off to completions or contests where you or the school could get recognition

Evaluation

Students will keep individual portfolios in the form of a 3 ring Binder (Log) to document individual progress and improvement. There will be several cooperative group projects, and one class-made video documenting the unit.