LESSON PLAN

Character(s) in History – A Biographical Investigation

Brentwood Middle School

Overview
This lesson enhances a common lesson about biographies and autobiographies by infusing it with connections to character education through the key elements of a newspaper.

Students will select a famous historical figure (Ben Franklin, George Washington, etc.) or more modern-day figure (Barack Obama, Martin Luther King Jr.) and research the lives of those individuals. Students will view teacher-selected samples of both biographical and autobiographical writing and will identify the traits that accompany each type of writing. Students will be required to research and read various types of biographical and autobiographical material written about their individual. They will then create a visual digital/poster board that showcases their findings in a newspaper format. Students will be given an outline for what must be included in the creation of their findings. Included in this outline will be key elements of a newspaper: Article, Epitaph, Obituary, Commemorative Stamp, photos, and captions.

Lesson Objectives
- Students will be able to define the literary terms of biography and autobiography
- Students will be able to define key terminology associated with newspapers
- Students will be able to distinguish between first and third person writing and the traits that accompany both styles of writing
- Students will be able to identify and define school’s core values
- Students will research lives of influential people throughout history and modern day
- Students will use research to make connections between school’s core values and how their chosen figure displayed the core values in their lives
- Students will create a visual digital presentation or poster-board displaying these findings
- Students will write five well constructed paragraphs reporting how each of the core values was demonstrated by their researched individual and make connections to their own lives
- Students will demonstrate oral communications skills by giving a presentation to the class showcasing their work

Materials Needed
- Teacher-selected biographical and autobiographical works.
- Student access to library and computer labs.
- Newspapers
- Handouts

Grade Level:
6-8

Estimated Time:
Two weeks

Connections to CEP’s Eleven Principles:
Promotes core values (Principles 1, 2, 3)

Connections to Core Values:
Perseverance, integrity, respect, kindness
Procedures

- Teacher should present the class with an excerpt from a biography.
- Teacher should showcase how the selected excerpt displays an individual that embodies one of the core values.
- Teacher will educate students on the various parts of a newspaper: Articles, Obituary, Epitaph, Commemorative Stamp, Photos, Captions, "Dear Reader" Letters, etc.
- Teacher will provide students with samples of newspaper articles. Preferably, articles that display individuals displaying connections to school core values to provide solid foundation of how articles should be written.
- Teacher will demonstrate how biographical information is written: Third person writing, interesting information about the individual, key events from the person's life.
- Teacher will provide sample individuals to begin the researching element of the lesson. (Teacher can select any famous individual for students to quickly research)
- Students will provide five facts about the individual’s lives and share out their findings. Teacher will reinforce proper researching techniques displayed, so students have a solid researching foundation.
- Students will begin to choose their specific individual to research.
- Teacher will provide proper time and resources for students to research their individual.
- Each day, class will focus on a key element of a newspaper. (Day 1 – Article/ Day 2 – Obituary/ etc...)
- Students will focus on events in their individual’s lives that display the core character values.
- Students will visually display their findings with either a digital storyboard or traditional poster board displaying all the elements of the project.
- Students will prepare an oral presentation of their findings.

Assessment

Each segment of the assignment can be graded individually. Students are graded on their well-written articles, obituaries, epitaphs, and captions. Grades are also given for student’s abilities to correctly research biographical information and make connections between individual’s lives and school’s core values. Grades are also received for visual displays and oral presentations.

Extensions and Adaptations

Students with learning disabilities can have modified assignments that may shorten the amount of information needed or have pre-selected individuals to research. It will be crucial for students to choose individuals that truly embody the values represented by the school. Teacher discretion on choices will be imperative.

Related Links and Resources

Parts of a Newspaper

Credit

John McCabe, 6th Grade Communication Arts Teachers