

Pre-Conference Form

Name: Andrew Androstic
School: Meadville Area Senior High
Grade: 10

Evaluator: Kenneth Wolfarth
Date: Dec 3, 2013 3:46 PM EST
Shared: YES

Comments for Teacher:

Andy I plan to come in and observe on December 12 during 1st period.

EVIDENCE OF DOMAINS 1 AND 4

(Evidence not required for each D4 component for one lesson.)

Domain 1

1a. Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy:

What is the content to be taught? What prerequisite learning is required?

This lesson will focus on the Mexican War (1846-1848) and Mexican Cession, key content for our unit on Manifest Destiny (westward expansion). In order to gain a complete understanding of this event, students have previously learned about the War for Texas Independence. Upon declaring independence (1836), Texas quickly requested to be annexed into the United States. The annexation of Texas (1845) is one of the major causes of the Mexican War. These will be two major objectives for students to learn in this lesson: 1) Explain the events that led to war with Mexico, and 2) Describe what lands the United States gained from Mexico and how they acquired this land. Students should understand by the end of this lesson that the United States went to war with Mexico over disputed borders and the annexation of Texas, and through the annexation of Texas, the Mexican Cession, and the Gadsden Purchase, the United States acquired all of what is today the American southwest. In planning for this lesson, it is essential to address student's misconceptions about the United States' actions throughout the 19th century. I have observed a tendency for students to assume the concept of "might makes right" in American history throughout my career as an educator - that is to say, as students taught in a somewhat egocentric system, students tend to think of their own country, the United States, as the "good guys" in all that we do. However, it is important for students, even in an American History classroom, to receive an education that addresses world conflicts. Students should understand the motives of all parties involved in a conflict (such as the Mexican War), and recognize that some decisions made are done for selfish reasons, and not for the best interests of all. Historians often point to James Polk's movement of troops into disputed territory as the immediate cause of this war. However, student's misconception is that the United States was simply an innocent nation defending itself. The goal is to have students consider both sides of the argument and form a decision of their own.

1b. Demonstrating Knowledge of Students:

Characterize the class. How will you modify this lesson for groups or individual students?

First period is an academic 19th Century United States history class. There are 24 students in this class, none of which require IEPs. There are, however, five students in the class enrolled in AM vo-tech, and these students are dismissed five minutes early to go to the vo-tech building. While no students have IEPs that require modifications, all students in the class work at varying paces on the assignments. A couple students have expressed difficulty with reading assignments, and some require assistance to consider analytical questions or interpret sources. With the attempts to "flip" the classroom this year, our learning menu helps to differentiate the instruction so that students can often choose the assignments that play to their strengths or offer them a greater comfort level. However, this is balanced by requirements within the unit for students to complete reading, geography, and primary source assignments. In this way, I ask students to step out of their comfort zone and attempt assignments that address common core and history standards, while also providing them flexibility in choosing how they learn the content. In addition to the differentiation provided by the learning menu, additional teacher-student interaction is provided to students who struggle with reading or analytical skills to help them gain the most out of the tasks assigned. Beyond interaction with students over their work in class, interaction has helped me to understand student interests and form bonds with some students. Added to these interactions, I provided students with a survey at the beginning of the year for them to express their interests, thoughts on school, and ideas for what has happened in classes in the past that they have liked and disliked. In this way, before work even began, I started to recognize students' interests, as well as their perceived strengths and weaknesses. All these things I do I hope make me a more insightful teacher that is capable of meeting the needs of all my students.

1c. Selecting Instructional Outcomes:

What do you want students to learn during this lesson?

There are two essential skills (objectives) the students should master by the end of this lesson. First, students should be able to explain the events that led to war with Mexico. Second, students should be able to describe what lands the United States gained from Mexico and how they acquired this land. In addition to these history based objectives that correspond to state standards 8.3.12.A (Identify and evaluate the political and cultural contributions of individuals and groups to United States history from 1890 to Present), 8.3.12.C (Evaluate how continuity and change has influenced United States history from 1890 to Present), and 8.3.12.D (Identify and evaluate conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in United States history from 1890 to the Present), common-core standards will also be addressed. These include: CC.8.5.9-10.A (Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information), CC.8.5.9-10.B (Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text), CC.8.5.9-10.C (Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them).

1d. Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources:

What resources, including technology, were considered for this lesson and rejected? Why? What resources will be used? Why?

To prepare for this lesson, textbooks and online resources were considered. In addition, through my years of teaching, I have built up a library of resources, readings, and assignments from which to pull information and help build student understanding. In order to accommodate my goals for the learning menu for the unit, which require a blending of sources including primary source documents, secondary readings, timeline construction, projects, etc., some cuts have to be made. Therefore, I chose to include a talking to the text reading assignment on the Mexican War, a timeline of the Mexican War, a map analysis assignment, and a poster project students could construct. This gives students the option of learning through reading, project based learning, using cause and effect relationships through the timeline to see the causes and effects of the Mexican War, and consultation of a map to recognize territorial expansion of the United States. Each of these assignment options will help students to understand the objectives for the lesson. However, additional assignments, such as primary document analyses that I have at my disposal I chose to reject for this lesson as they were not deemed to provide any greater understanding of the objectives. Additionally, while primary documents are crucial to the common-core standards, the other themes in the learning menu offer more appropriate opportunities to employ primary documents, especially to address objectives that require greater analytical thinking. Additionally, technology is always considered within my classroom, especially as I have access to a laptop cart the students may use. However, the use of technology is offered in moderation in this lesson. For the talking to the text assignment, computers are not needed. However, students may use the computers to search for information/images for either the timeline or poster at their own discretion. It is anticipated that some students will require technology in order to successfully complete the tasks of their choosing, but many students will not require them. Additionally, students are encouraged in my classroom to use electronic devices (only for educational purposes), and as many have the mybigcampus app, they may be able to consult sources on their devices. This means that they are using internet sources without the computers - some students in this class take advantage of this opportunity, but computers are almost always available for those who do not have access to these devices.

1e. Designing Coherent Instruction:

List very briefly the steps of the lesson.

1. Bell ringer - students will review some of the basic details of the Mexican War through a series of basic review questions to correspond with a short video clip we viewed in class the previous day on Mexican War. (video and review quiz found at <http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/the-mexican-american-war-treaty-of-guadalupe-hidalgo-the-wilmot-proviso.html#lesson>).
2. Teacher will check status of students in their work on the learning menu and remind students of due dates for assignments
3. Students chose learning options from the learning menu and see teacher to receive resources required for the completion of their tasks. Students will also access textbooks and laptops as needed at this time.
4. Students will work in groups, individually, or in pairs to complete their assignment options and meet the objectives for the class. As students work, teacher will move around the room offering assistance and helping establish critical thinking for students as needed to enhance their understanding of the objectives.
5. Students in this class move at different paces - some students will struggle with these tasks, while others will move through quickly and wish to continue on to the assignments for the next theme in the unit. Still others have moved at a pace that has put them beyond the tasks for the day already, and are already working on further assignments. I will try to accommodate these students as well by provided them the resources needed to continue through the learning menu.
6. As class time nears an end, I will remind students in vo-tech to begin closing up resources, and will touch base with them to be sure they have completed their tasks and understand the objectives (approximately 7:23). This process will also happen with students not in vo-tech before they leave (approximately 7:28).

1f. Designing Student Assessments:

How will you measure the goals articulated in 1c? What does success look like?

Formative assessment will take place throughout the class through teacher interaction with students. As I move around the room and engage students, I hope to observe their successful completing of learning tasks from the learning menu, ask students analytical questions on what they are doing, and address any difficulties the students might be having with their understanding of the objectives. Formative assessment will also happen through the bell ringer on this day, and further bell ringers/review of content on later days. Summative assessment will take place through the evaluation of the assignments the students complete on this day, as well as the unit exam scheduled for December 18. Success in this case will be seen through students verbal demonstration of understanding during the class time, as well as accurate completion of assignments and test answers. The great thing about the learning menu and "flipped classroom" is that it affords me time to interact with students while they are completing work, so problems in understanding are addressed in real time. Additionally, the opportunity is there to look over work, and bring it back to the student when they are not showing understanding, and work with students one-on-one to address the areas of concern and make corrections to their work, eventually bringing them to mastery of the objectives.

Domain 4

4a. Reflecting on Teaching:

(Following the lesson) Collect samples of the student work, from the observed lesson that represent a range of student performance. Discuss the degree to which students met your objectives and how the work shows this.

4b. Maintaining Accurate Records:

How do you track student learning as it relates to this lesson?

Throughout the unit, small assignments are given to address all the themes and objectives of the unit. These assignments are also designed to focus on reading skills, analytical skills, and to address the state history and common-core standards. These assignment options for this lesson (a talking to the text assignment, timeline and geography analysis, or poster project) offer the opportunity for student interaction with teacher and fellow students and provides summative assessment in the short term. Students in this system usually receive immediate feedback on their results, and we can cooperate to be sure they understand the content before moving on to new assignments. Observation of their work offers formative assessment, and grades assigned provide data to illustrate student understanding.

4c. Communicating with Families:

What specifically have you learned by communicating with families that impacted your planning of this lesson?

Interaction with families of students in my classes occurs in a variety of ways. Beyond the interaction that takes place through parent conferences and open-house, communication with parents on a one-on-one basis through phone calls and emails allows me to provide feedback to parents and address any concerns they might have. Additionally, as I have moved into using the "flipped classroom" model, I have taken greater advantage of the mybigcampus resource. In the beginning of the year, I provided a slip sent to parents that required students to show their parents the mybigcampus page and show them how to log in. I received signed receipts back from the students confirming they had done this. My hope is that informing parents how to access the page will provide them the ability to check student work, address concerns with their child, and make up work missed during a student's absence. Through one-on-one interaction with concerned families of my students in this class, I have learned of students that have difficulty either staying on task or struggling the content. However, there are only a few students in this class whose parents I have communicated with. This class has had less difficulty with the content, and therefore there has been less interaction with parents. However, what contact I have had with parents has revealed student struggles with assignments that require reading for comprehension; therefore, I have tried to construct a user-friendly version of the talking to the text assignment which has been the focus of reading apprenticeship. In this way I hope to have students gain more comfort with their interaction with the text, and I plan to slowly increase the difficulty of these assignments by making them more elaborate.

4d. Participating in a Professional Community:

How do you coordinate learning activities with other colleagues?

Within my department, resources and ideas for lessons are often shared. This may include specific assignments, presentations for students, or links to interesting resources. Through these interactions, I have tried to accumulate as much as possible in the way of resources, assignments, and presentations that might be employed in the classroom. From these I pick and choose which assignments/activities I believe will be present content in a way that will help students master the objectives. Additionally, interaction with the English department as well as Mrs. Sandrock (reading apprenticeship), I have tried to develop an effective approach to teaching reading in the classroom and promoting reading for understanding in line with the common core standards for the state.

Beyond my interaction with colleagues to improve my performance in the classroom, I have always tried to show leadership and willingness to evolve as a teacher by participating in new programs offered by the district. I volunteered to participate in the Classrooms for the Future grant as well as the "flipped classroom" initiative this year. Additionally, I have accepted the responsibility of presenting new resources at in-service training days, and have offered my help to school committees, such as the senior project committee and Act 48 development committees.

4e. Growing and Developing Professionally:

What aspects of this lesson are the results of some recent professional learning, including CCSD? (e.g. Literacy, research-based instructional strategies, poverty, etc.) How do you stay abreast of the subjects you teach and of the current research on how best to teach them?

Talking to the text strategies used in this lesson are in line with reading apprenticeship training which has been a focus of CCSD for the past two years. Additionally, from a recent conference I attended (Flipped Learning Workshop - November 16, 2013), I learned of some ideas to address objectives with students including "universal design for learning." This approach involves offering students multiple ways of learning the same content, and allowing them to choose the assignments that best apply to their learning style. This strategy is clearly seen in this lesson, as students are given various options to gain mastery of the objectives. Finally, I am sure to provide computers or hard copies of assignments to students who do not have the luxury of portable devices. Students are often given the option of completing assignments on googledrive or through mybigcampus; however, acknowledging the increasing population of students in our district, and in this class that may be economically disadvantaged, the computers and hard-copy assignments provide them the outlet from which to gather information, gain mastery of the objectives, and illustrate their understanding through summative and formative assignments as seen in 1f.

Outside of the classroom, I believe my willingness to accept leadership responsibility has come from my participation in committees, grants, and new initiatives offered by the district throughout my career, as mentioned in section 4d.

4f. Showing Professionalism:

In what ways have you been an advocate for students that relate directly to this lesson? In what ways have you demonstrated professionalism? (e.g. integrity and ethical conduct, service to students, advocacy, decision making and/or confidentiality.)

Throughout my teaching, I always try to remain a professional in my interactions throughout the school with teachers and students, and outside of the classroom with students, their parents, and other professionals. Within the classroom, I speak to students respectfully and honestly, offering my services to help them achieve more and grow as young adults, while also being constructive with criticism when necessary without embarrassing or belittling a student. I have established positive working relationships with the students and offer clear expectations for them. I am careful not to discuss students outside the teacher-student-parent relationship, keeping information and details concerning IEPs, medical issues, personal issues, discipline issues and more strictly between that student and myself. I have participated in parent meetings and IEP meetings and given my insight into students' strengths and needs, and have been willing to make modifications or work with students in accordance with the wishes of guidance, administration, or parents. I work hard to maintain professionalism in all I do as a teacher, and these efforts can be seen in my classroom on any day, with any lesson. During this lesson, I plan to continue to work well with students, address their needs, encourage their critical thinking and problem solving skills, and approach everything done in the classroom with enthusiasm. In these ways I hope to breed success and motivation for all students to achieve to their highest potential.