Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies

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Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies: Background

This plan focused on reading and writing across the curriculum.

The targeted audience was middle school, specifically 7th grade students.

The goal of this plan was to incorporate primary sources documents as well as vocabulary strategies to improve student literacy skills.

Recently, Bowling Green Junior High School merged its English and reading classes. This plan was developed to address growing concerns voiced by ELA teachers which centered on a potential lack of exposure to literacy practices due to the reduction of ELA instruction time.
Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies: Targeted Literacy Practices/Skills

- Employ, develop and refine schema to understand and create text.
- Utilize receptive and expressive language arts to better understand self, other and the world.
- Apply strategic practices, with scaffolding and then independently, to approach new literacy tasks.
- Collaborate with others to create meaning.
- Apply high level cognitive processes to think deeply and critically about text.
Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies: Major Steps of the Plan

**Primary Source Documents:**

- Identify primary sources documents available to enhance student attainment of content as well as for the purpose of answering a document-based question to build and improve literacy skills.
  - Not all units contained a primary source component due to lack of age-appropriate material as well as time constraints.
- Develop guiding questions for primary source documents to assist student in analysis.
  - Use the gradual release model until students are proficient at analyzing documents independently.

**Vocabulary:**

- Compile a list of vocabulary terms to assist in comprehension.
  - Text-selected terms as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 words were chosen.
- Develop age-appropriate definitions for each term.
- Create a graphic organizer for students to record the vocabulary term and its definition.
  - Differentiation was provided through cloze notes as well as opportunities to create visual representations of the terms.
Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies: Reflections

**Successes:**

➢ Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, students were exposed to roughly 10-12 new words per unit.
➢ Students began to see that the idea of “vocabulary” wasn’t just in the ELA classroom.
➢ Using the gradual release method, students were able to analyze multiple primary source documents to answer a singular question.
➢ Students collaborated with partners as well as with the whole group to analyze a primary source document focused on the Reformation.
   ○ Teacher-created audio recordings were used to improve student comprehension.

**Challenges:**

➢ This was my first year in both social studies and 7th grade, so I was very new to the content.
➢ With the new adoption of Social Studies Common Core standards, my teaching partners and I were developing all new units covering new content.
➢ Many words that I thought were common knowledge, were unknown to a majority of students.
➢ Constraints on instructional time for both ELA and social studies teachers forced writing opportunities to be eliminated or rushed, so students were not as prepared for the final document-based question essay.
Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies:
Student Work Samples - Primary Source Documents

Background information was read and analyzed as a whole group.

Each student recorded information about the ten primary sources as presented by partner groups.

Students worked with a partner to read, analyze, and answer questions for one of the ten primary sources.
Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies: Student Work Samples - Vocabulary

Vocabulary Definitions with Visuals

Cloze-Style Vocabulary Definitions
Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies: Ideas for Future Implementation

**Primary Source Documents:**

- Create goal-specific timeline for each quarter
  - 1st quarter - Read and annotate/analyze the text
  - 2nd quarter - Read two or more texts on the same topic and answer related questions
  - 3rd quarter - Read, answer related questions, and categorize three or more texts based on their perspective or content
  - 4th quarter - Independently read, answer guiding questions, and categorize four or more texts to write an argumentative essay

- Provide primary sources to ELA teachers ahead of time, so students can have increased exposure to the text
  - ELA teachers want to collaborate and incorporate primary sources into their content.

**Vocabulary:**

- Incorporate words that students struggled with this year
  - A few examples include: clergy, dismay, papacy, Protestant, quarrel as well as Roman numerals

- Create a vocabulary section at the back of their composition notebooks for words they don’t know and we didn’t cover as a group.
  - An individual, personalized dictionary

- Assess students’ prior knowledge of vocabulary terms before the unit begins through a formative assessment
  - Offer extension assignments to students showing proficiency in the terms that include digital aspects (visual and audio)
Building Literacy Skills in Social Studies: Resources

➢ History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond
➢ Reformation document-based question