Praxis Paper

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The idea of using a board game to introduce the topic of the political spectrum can be used to get students more interested in politics and make it more fun for them to learn. We are aware that most students do not feel connected to politics. This game shows students that politics involve key issues they have opinions about and is therefore relevant to their lives.

The game also helps students become familiar with some of the general vocabulary and issues surrounding politics. According to Vacca, Vacca, and Mraz (2014), “… general vocabulary consists of everyday words with widely acknowledged meanings in common usage” (240). Since politics can sometimes be a confusing topic, the board game outlines the major issues to get students comfortable thinking about them. This will be useful knowledge to have as the unit progresses.

Using the teaching aids we have made or suggested create a learning environment that is not only effective, but fun and student-centred. We believe that students who are motivated to learn and are interested in class activities perform better and have a better learning experience. Using our game to teach students about left wing versus right wing allows students to learn without them knowing they are learning. Also, it gives them the opportunity to share and expand their knowledge with others. In addition, the teacher is not transferring information to students; rather, students are creating their own knowledge from the game, relating it to their own life, drawing conclusions, and forming opinions. As they move their piece throughout the game in response to their answers, they will learn visually and kinesthetically how having certain opinions pulls them to a side of the spectrum. Assessment wise, the game can be used as an authentic approach because it is ongoing and provides information about students’ learning (Vacca, et al., 2014). Observing students playing an educational game provides lots of anecdotal information for assessment and evaluation.

Using a debate after allows the class to benefit in similar ways as they do to class discussions. Vacca et al. (2014) note several benefits to class discussions: students learn to “respond to text, build concepts, clarify meaning, explore issues, share perspectives, and refine thinking” (165). In a debate, the discussion is student-lead. Therefore, students also learn how to listen and respond academically, form and argue opinions, and relate information to their daily lives.

Finally, adapting the KWL strategy as we did in our lesson plan allows students to further develop what they have learned. It also provides a great opportunity for reflection. Vacca et al. (2014) explain how the KWL strategy is beneficial because it “engages students in active text learning” (210). Our adaptation strategy is useful because it allows students to actively reflect on what they have learned and pose new questions in an inquiry-based manner that can form future lessons.

Overall, using the game we created and other activities in our lesson plan holds many benefits for both teachers and students.

References

Vacca, R. T., Vacca, J. L., & Mraz, M. (2014). *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum,* 11th Edition. New York: Pearson.