

Action Plan

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After participating in the NCTA seminar, I felt that I was much better prepared to develop lessons that would give my students a deeper understanding of some very influential countries. The information I received was all I had hoped for: current and easy to modify for the Language Academy program at my school. As soon as I developed my first lesson plan, I began gathering resources and developing my action plan keeping in mind the changes that were being made to the Georgia 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade standards.

Last week, the International Academy at Blue Ridge was dissolved and the eight middle grade students were added to the Language Academy program at DMS, bringing our enrollment up to twenty-one students. I was also given a teacher from the IABR and the subjects in Language Academy were divided among the two of us. I will be teaching Reading, Math and 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies for the rest of the year. It is still my intention to implement the lesson I sent you and the action plan I am submitting though there may be a few modifications. I will also submit a fully developed unit on China to my Social Studies department chair in hopes that some or part of it may be used by the 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at DMS.

### **Social Studies**

My Social studies class consists of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. I developed the following unit in hopes that my students would learn that China is not only a country of rising economic and political influence, but also one of great beauty and cultural diversity. I also hope that they will learn that China faces some serious challenges as it becomes a moving force in the global community. It has been given a lot of criticism for its use of resources, growing pollution problems and the treatment of its people. But are not these the same problems faced by many nations around the world, including ours? The Chinese people revere their youth. Maybe the young, with a little education, can help set China and the rest of the world on the right path.

### **Dragon Rising: Exploring China Using the Five Themes of Geography**

I will introduce the unit, by reviewing the 5 themes of geography through an excellent video produced by National Geographic entitled, Geography: A Voyage of Discovery, in which the narrator explores the journal of Franklin Shaw who sought to fill in the blank spaces on the map.

The video is very vivid in its description of the world through the five themes. The students will then use the five themes to explore China and compare it to some of its neighbors and to the United States.

To explore China through the theme of **location**, the students will describe China's relative location in terms of its neighbors and the United States. The students will then use latitude and longitude to determine the absolute location of China's major cities. Finally, they will research these cities on the internet and gather key facts concerning population, industry, their relative location to resources and major landmarks.

There are many lessons that can be developed to explore the theme of **place**. First the students will make topographical maps of China and the United States to compare/contrast the physical features found in each country. Next, they will conquer the vast human characteristics found in each country by exploring the differences and similarities in language, religion, government, education, economics and food. The students will learn to write and speak some common Chinese words, develop an understand of Chinese philosophy, research the rise of our nations' governments and how each has had an influence on other nations, compare/contrast our educational systems, our economic institutions and try some of the foods unique to China and its neighbors in an Asian food fest.

The next theme we will tackle is that of **movement**. Students will work in groups using the site, <http://silkroadproject.org> and the videos, Discovery Atlas: China Revealed and China: Past to Present, from United Streaming to have a greater understanding of the influence the Great Silk Road had on the movement of goods, ideas

and people from Europe to China and back. They will then jump to modern times to research the development of China into a world economic power and how its success has affected nations around the world. With the lesson I submitted, the students will compare/contrast the imports and exports of China with those of the United States and learn how China has risen to be a world economic power.

With its great economic growth, China has sacrificed a large portion of its resources, its environment and some would say the welfare of its people. The students will study the theme of **human/environment interaction** by researching the impact of the industrialization of the nation, the Three Gorges Dam project and even the effect of the Olympic venues on the environment and the people of China. Again, using the Internet and the United Streaming videos,

the students will research the history of China's industrialization, the goals and construction of the Three Gorges Dam project, and the vision and construction of the unique venues for the Olympic Games. They will then list the environmental challenges that China now faces as a result of these symbols of success. In groups, they will brainstorm to offer possible solutions to these global impacting problems.

Throughout the unit, the students will study the different economic, geographical, political, and cultural **regions** of China. The students will view the video, China: A World of Difference, to develop a greater understanding of the diversity found in China's land and people. Just as in the United States, China cannot be completely evaluated by the actions and views of its government. The Chinese people are far more diverse, proud and hospitable than even the government would have us to believe.

The final assessment for my students for this unit will be the development of two brochures concerning China. The first will be a travel brochure whose soul purpose is to entice the reader to choose China for his/her next vacation. The brochure must be informative, colorful, and neat displaying the many positive attributes of China. The second brochure will be one that reaches out to the global community asking for assistance for China in addressing one or more of the challenges the nation faces. The second brochure should give detailed descriptions, offer some solutions and solicit funds to help China while helping the reader understand that China is not alone in the challenges it faces.

### **Reading/Literature**

I now teach two Reading/Literature classes, one of which consists of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders and the other is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. The 1<sup>st</sup> 9-weeks are devoted to teaching my students how to read in English. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> 9-weeks, I will begin the unit on folktales. After the 1st semester, we will concentrate on non-fiction forms of literature.

### **Once Upon a Time: A Detailed Study of Folktales from Around the World**

To introduce this unit, I read students examples of different genres of folktales: fables, myths, legends, urban legends, tall tales and fairytales. We then study each of these genres in greater detail, so that students can distinguish between them. East Asian literature is loaded with many different folktales. It is my intention to use our Bridges to Literature texts, Land of the Dragon: Chinese Myth and the internet sites, <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html> and

<http://www.americanfolklore.net> to introduce the students to the different genres of folktales from many countries.

As we study the genre of **myths**, the class will read *The Dragon's Pearl* from Chinese mythology, *Why the Monkey's Butt is Red* from Japanese mythology, *The Coyote and the Columbia* from Sahaptin/Salishan Tribes in Washington State and *Prometheus* from Greek and Roman mythology. The students will list the similarities between the four myths hopefully noting that they are creation myths that were used to explain why or how some natural things came into being. As the students study these myths, they will also research some of the universal beliefs that are behind the myths.

**Fairytales** happens to be one of my favorite genres of folktales. The fact that there are hundreds of versions of Cinderella throughout the world is amazing. For this genre the students will read and study *Cinder-Edna*, a modern version of Cinderella, *Yeh-Shen* and the Disney version of Cinderella (The Brother's Grimm version is a little too gory for my students.) The students will make a Venn diagram to compare/contrast the three versions. The students will then write their own version of Cinderella making it relevant to their cultures.

With the help of Disney, *Mulan*, has become one of the most well-known of the Chinese **legends**. The students will read *Fa Mulan* from the Bridges text and compare it to the Disney version. They will then research Fa Mulan using the internet to see if this legend is really based on fact. Again, they will compare the facts they gathered to the two legends written about this amazing Chinese woman. They will determine if and how the facts have changed over time.

According to most definitions, **fables** are folktales that have a moral or lesson and usually involve talking animals. To study this genre, the students will read *The Fox and the Grapes*, *The Tortoise and the Hare* and the *Ant and the Grasshopper* by Aesop. The students will list the common characteristics of these fables. Next, the students will read *Matajuro's Training*, a fable from Japan, about a lazy young man from a samurai family. He wants to be a samurai, but he doesn't have the discipline to stick with his training. That is, until he becomes Banzo's pupil. The story ends with the moral, "Before one can master any art, one must first learn to master oneself." The students will compare this fable to those attributed to Aesop.

The final assessment for the unit on folktales will be for the students to read and summarize folktales of the different genres. They will then choose a folktale that they have studied or one that has been passed down to them through their family members. The student will tell the story

to the class, in English, in a storytelling festival at the end of the semester providing their own illustration of a key event in the story.

### **A Taste of Reality**

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, the students will read various non-fiction and historical fiction literary works. Before the students read the pieces, they will research the setting for each of the stories and gather information to develop some background knowledge concerning the topics being presented. Two of the stories they will read that deal with East Asia are: *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Crane* and *Baseball Saved Us*. *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* is an excellent book dealing with the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima. The students will research the atom bomb and the use of it on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The students will watch a portion of *Living Treasures of Japan* video to learn about the peace bell that was made to commemorate the bombing of Hiroshima. The students will also research The Children's Peace Monument that is a memorial to the children who died as a result of the bomb.

*Baseball Saved Us* is a historical fiction story that deals with the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The students will research the Japanese internment camps before they read the story. They will discuss in groups the "fairness" of the camps and ways they may have done to overcome the lack of freedom the people in the camps must have felt. They will then read *Baseball Saved Us* and discuss how such a sport could become so important.

### **Conclusion**

I believe that a good teacher instills in his/her pupils the desire to seek knowledge. Through knowledge we begin to have understanding and with understanding comes tolerance and unity. It is my hope that as they study the countries of East Asia and other regions of the world, they will develop that understanding. My students are unique in that they are thrust into a new environment not of their choosing. We are an international school with over 30 countries represented in our student body. I need to not only teach them about America, but I need to teach them about the world so they are better prepared to be a part of it.

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