

Teaching about Asia

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Action Plan

Eakin Elementary has a very diverse student body due to its location. It is near Vanderbilt University and it is also close to some poorer residential areas. My students come from various ethnic and social economic backgrounds. Eakin School started its new Chinese language and culture program last year, which was the first in the city and the state. I have 460 students. Basically, every student in the school will take one hour lesson a week from me. The class is mandatory for every student except some students with severe learning disabilities. One of a big challenge that I am facing is to continue establishing new curriculum that fit my students. I have used Chinese songs to enhance students' ability to remember the unique sounds of Chinese words. I also use Chinese children games, and stories to give students some fun and enjoyment while learning Chinese. I talked about important Chinese festivals like Chinese New Year, and Mid Autumn Moon Festival to convey the value of Chinese traditions.

I have been avoiding teaching issues involved modern China. I have been afraid to present materials with bias or without sufficient knowledge, like issues on Tibet, Chinese Cultural Revolution, Taiwan-China relations or China-Japan relations. The NCTA summer course gave me knowledge and furthered insights on Asia, especially China and Japan. There are endless materials that I may continue to study and learn. Presently I have some idea what materials from this summer course that I will incorporate into my teaching materials for my young students. However, it requires more strategic planning to include studies on Japan and Korea in my curriculum because of the nature of the course I am teaching. Considering the age of my students, my approach to promote Asian studies to include Japan and Korea will start with arts and crafts. China, Japan and Korea have a very intense relationship with one another historically; however when talking about arts and culture, they become connected. They influence one another. I will use arts and crafts as a venue to include studies of Japan and Korea.

Before I teach the following topics to my students, I will also make a big horizontal chart (1 foot by 10 feet) on a wall of my classroom. I will mark down Chinese Dynasties and western years on the chart. Whenever a Dynasty is mentioned from the following topics, I will mark it on this Chinese Dynasty chart. This will give students a better sense of the Chinese history chronically. A map of China and the world will be always displayed in the classroom to easily identify where events were taking place.

The following are the materials and content that I will apply for my program at Eakin Elementary School.

China:

To be able to teach the Chinese language effectively, I need to provide students an understanding of China's background—history, customs, belief, arts, religions, geography, festivals and so forth. The material and topics that we covered about China this summer that I may integrate into the course I am teaching are:

1. Chinese First Emperor & Terracotta Warriors

Please see my lesson plan submitted for the NCTA summer program.

2. Chinese Last Emperor & Forbidden City

This is another interesting subject for my students. The clips that Professor Littlejohn showed in the class can be a good start. It mentioned Zhuang Zi, a Chinese great philosopher or sage. I may introduce Zhuang Zi, his book, and Daoism. I believe students will like to learn to say, "I know that you know that I know that you know" in English and in Chinese. This video clip also illustrates some elements of the transitional era between the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. I will give a brief introduction on the establishment of the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China. The famous Forbidden City is the Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Beijing. The grandness of the building and structure carry much history. I will ask students to try to comprehend the dimension of the palace, and imagine living there.

3. Confucius & *Analects*

Confucius is considered a great thinker, philosopher, and educator in Chinese history. His teachings and philosophy have deeply influenced Chinese, Korean, and Japanese thought and life. This topic will allow me to bring connection with Japanese Shinto belief which has been much influenced by Confucianism and Daoism. Traditionally Chinese highly value education and respect teachers. This concept was taught by Confucius. I will teach students a few phrases from Confucius in English and Chinese. For example—Confucius said, “One who knows it is not the equal of one who loves it, and one who loves it is not the equal of one who takes joy in it.” (子曰：知之者不如好之者，好之者不如乐之者。)

Hopefully, my students may learn how to behave as students, sons or daughters from Confucius’ teaching.

4. Marco Polo

Children play Marco Polo game in the swimming pool all the time. Children did not know the close relationship between Marco Polo and China. Marco Polo actually is an important early ambassador between East and West. He is the first westerners to cross the entire continent of Asia and leave a record of what he saw and heard. He is also the most famous Westerner who traveled on the Silk Road. The Silk Road is the pathway for trading between Eastern and Western worlds. Marco Polo traveled the whole of China and returned to tell the tale, which became the greatest travelogue. When mentioning Marco Polo, we also need to talk about the famous Genghis Khan and Yuan Dynasty. China was ruled by Mongols during the Yuan Dynasty, and was part of the Mongol Empire. I will use a world map to show how far the Mongol Empire had reached, and what route Marco Polo had traveled to come to China. Next time, when children play Marco Polo game, they will think about China and its Mongol Empire.

5. Journey to the West

All Chinese people grew up with this magnificent Chinese folk tale. The main character Monkey King will bring out a lot of imagination from children. This is a story about a monk traveling to the west to pursue Sutras, the Buddhist holy

book, and brought it back to China. This story happened in the Tang Dynasty. (The Tang Dynasty was a period of progress and stability.) The story, Journey to the West, has a strong background in Chinese folk religion, myths, and value systems. Other than the monk and the Monkey King, there are also Sandy and Pigsy. Each character has his unique personality and traits. The Monkey King may be compared to the superman in America. We in the class may compare and discuss the differences and the similarity of the Monkey King and Superman. Children love stories, especially the magical ones. This will be a good Chinese story to tell my students

Japan & Korea:

I will focus on arts and craft when integrate the Japanese and Korean materials.

1. Kabuki and Beijing Opera

I love both of these intense and sophisticated Asian theater forms. Both kabuki and Beijing Opera (Chinese Opera) include singing, dancing, and acting. Every move Kabuki or Beijing Opera actors or actresses make seems to be so absolute and precise. They are both very stylish form of performing arts. After some introduction in the class we may experience some Japanese dance using “Sakura” songs. We may also experience Japanese Samurai sword fight practice. I will ask assistance from the Consular Office of Japan in Nashville. A friend of mine who happens to work at the office will help me on the Japanese dance part, and I, myself, may teach the Chinese dance derived from the Beijing Opera. The other intriguing part of the Kabuki and Beijing opera is their painted faces on the performers. We will use some pictures, and ask students to copy the lines and colors. We may learn the meanings of colors used to portray the distinct characters of the roles in both theaters.

2. Origami or Paper Folding

Whenever we talk about Japanese culture, origami is not avoidable. Actually paper folding has been developed in several other countries, including China, Korea, and some European countries. Origami is a general term for folding

materials into shapes, most of time we refer it as folding paper into shapes. I will only focus on paper folding in Japan and China. In China, it is called 摺(zhé) 纸(zhǐ). Paper was invented in China in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 AD) in China. In the 6th Buddhist monks carried paper to Japan. The first Japanese origami is dated from this period. I will show students patterns of popular paper folding from Japan, China, or other countries. And we will make a few origami or Zhe-Zhi in the class, and play Japanese and Chinese music in the background.

3. Ink Calligraphy and Painting

This is also another area that I will like to expose to my students to. We have learned how to appreciate Japanese wood block prints in the NCTA class. I will like to expand the arts appreciation to ink calligraphy and painting from China, Japan, and Korea. Usage of negative space in painting is foreign to the Westerners. The perspective concept sometimes is not logical to western eyes. All these different ways of making arts will stimulate interesting discussion from my classes. Chinese, Japanese and Koreans use soft brush, ink stone, ink stick, and rice paper to do their calligraphy and painting. I will bring a sample of all these writing and painting tools for my students to try.

When students get more familiar with the Asia, we may establish an Asian Festival in the future. I think it is to my students' benefit to include studies of other Asian countries. I expect to have good response from my students, and build up students' own interests in Asia study. The course that I am teaching at the Eakin School is not an elective one. The majority of students have very minimum knowledge about China, or Asia. From all the topics that I am planning to teach, I expect a majority of my students will grasp better idea about China, and Asia.