Student Learning Plan

Name: Carol Manack

Subject: “Shh! We’re Writing Our Constitution in Room 117…”

Grade: 4 - 6

Goal: Students will use their knowledge of the United States Constitution to understand the needs for establishing governmental systems in our society. They will apply this understanding to their school environment and, using the United States Constitution as a model, create their own classroom constitution that will serve many useful functions by helping students find connections to their everyday lives. They will apply the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizenship through research, guided discovery, and active participation.

Expected Duration: 2 – 3 Weeks

Primary Sources

Library of Congress - American Memory Collection:
- To Form a More Perfect Union: The Work of the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention
- About the Constitution
- A More Perfect Union
- Title: US Capitol paintings - Signing of the Declaration of Independence by John Trumbull
- Documents from the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1174-1789; The address and reasons of dissent of the minority of the convention, of the state of Pennsylvania
- Declaration of Independence
- Preamble and the Constitution of the United States
- Signing of the Constitution at the Constitutional Convention
- The James Madison Papers, “A Plan of Government”
- The Constitutional Convention Broadside Collection – contains 21 titles (277 documents)
Secondary Sources

- *The US Constitution and You* by Syl Sobel
- *A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution* by Betsy Maestro & Giulio Maestro
- *Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution* by Jean Fritz
- *Declaring Freedom: A Look at the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution of the United States* (How Government Works) by Gwennyth Swain
- *A Story About James Madison* (Creative Minds Biographies) by Barbara Mitchell & Alex Tavoularis
- *The Constitution Translated For Kids* by Cathy Travis
- Schoolhouse Rock: lyrics to: “The Preamble” created by American Broadcasting Companies, Inc.

Additional Resources

- “Sign on the Dotted Line!” The U.S. Constitution by Carole Marsh – A great resource for student activities and reading material.

US Constitution Websites

- [http://www.constitutioncenter.org/expl;ore/ForKids/index.shtml](http://www.constitutioncenter.org/expl;ore/ForKids/index.shtml)
- [http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids/constitution/facts.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids/constitution/facts.html)

Pennsylvania Academic Standards

- **Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening**
  Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  1.2.3/5A Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas
  1.2.3/5B Use and understand a variety of media and evaluate the quality of material produced
  1.2.3/5C Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre

- **History**
  8.1. Historical Analysis and Skills Development
  8.1.3-6A Understand chronological thinking and distinguish between past, present, and future time
  8.1.3-6B Develop an understanding of historical sources
  8.1.3-6C Understand fundamentals of historical interpretation
  8.1.3-6D Understand historical research
8.3. United States History
8.3.3-6A Identify contributions of individuals and groups to United States history
8.3.3-6B Identify and describe primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important in United States history

Objectives

Objectives are:

✓ Cognitive
✓ Affective
✓ Psychomotor

Student Objectives:

1. Students will identify the principles of the United States Constitution and the purposes for which it was written.
2. Students will identify key ideas and terms in the Preamble to the Constitution and use this as a model when creating a class constitution.
3. Students will identify what it means to be a good citizen in the classroom, in school, at home, and in the community.
4. Students will identify and describe the types of rules and responsibilities students have/should have at home, school, and the classroom to insure their basic rights and the rights of others.
5. Students will describe ideas as to why the constitution might need amended or changed.
   (Note: Additional lessons will follow the lessons in this section based on the Bill of Rights. After experiencing the Constitution they created, students will create a Students’ Bill of Rights.)

Procedure

(Plans are general and should be adapted according to available resources, curriculum, and grade level.)

Lesson 1
Ask students to write in their journals what they think about rules. Don’t provide more direction as to specific locations (home, school, community, etc.) but allow them to “quick write” their thoughts. Allow them to share with someone when they have completed their work. Encourage them to discuss their writings. Follow with whole group discussion, recording various suggestions on chart paper as given.
   (Note: Morning Meeting Chart Question: Rules are good/bad. Choose one. Save this chart.)

Lesson 2
Ask students to write a definition in their journals for the word: government. Pair share. Class share. Lead a discussion based on students’ definitions. Refer to the discussion on rules from Lesson 1 as appropriate. Then, write the word Constitution on the T/W/L chart. Have students complete the T
portion independently…write ideas on the class chart. Working with a partner, have students generate at least 2 questions for the W portion. Record 7-10 questions on the class chart.

Lessons 3/4

Build/Review Background Knowledge:

Read aloud an appropriate level book about the Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation. (See Secondary Sources.) Review why the colonists fought for independence and why they formed the Articles of Confederation. Discuss the problems with the Articles of Confederation and what needed to be done.

(Depending on the grade and prior knowledge of the class, more time might need to be spent on the Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation with supplemental materials added as necessary.)

Use Primary Sources from the Library of Congress with the lesson:

- The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827
  - Thomas Jefferson, June 1776, Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence; Image 545
- The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827
  - Thomas Jefferson, et al, July 4, 1776, Copy of Declaration of Independence; Image 556
- Reading of the Declaration of independence White Plains, July 11, 1776 (From a painting by George Albert Harker - Courtesy Westchester Title and Trust Co.) New York’s Declaration of Independence ... Compliments of The Westchester County Historic: DIGITAL ID
  http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.10901900

Allow students to write reflections in their journals.

Lesson 5/6

Students will become historians and, working in pairs or small groups, paraphrase the meaning of the Preamble to the Constitution, applying their knowledge of American History to determine key ideas and principles.

Initially, read a selection from the secondary source list (Suggestion: A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution). Then, provide students with a copy of the Preamble to the Constitution and have them work with their partners/groups to translate the Preamble into understandable terms and identify the ideas and goals of the document.

After students have had sufficient time to complete the assignment, read the Preamble, a phrase at a time and allow small groups to share their ideas.

Primary Sources from the Library of Congress:

- Documents from the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789
  - We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union ...

Digital ID
( Copy 1 ) bdsdcc c0801 http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c0801
( Copy 2 ) bdsdcc c0802 http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c0802
Allow students to write reflections in their journals. Focus on the questions below:
1. What new knowledge do you have about the Constitution and why it was so important?
2. Do you think the Constitution is still important today? Why or why not?

Lesson 7
Read: *Constitution Translated for Kids* (Secondary Source List)
Discuss with students whether their interpretation of the Preamble and the key ideas and concepts of the Constitution are in agreement with the book they just listened to.
Have students complete the learned portion of their T/W/L. Collect and check for understanding.

Lesson 8
Students will choose a copy of a primary source painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence or the Signing of the Constitution and, using a photo analysis worksheet, identify specific details of the time period and representation of the photo.

Primary Sources from the Library of Congress:

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Item Title</td>
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Lesson 9
Read: *Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution* (Secondary Source List)
Post the Morning Meeting Message from Lesson 1 with the question about rules. Ask students to compare the reasons for laws in a government to the reasons for having rules in school. Refer to the Preamble (goals, responsibilities, tranquility, etc.) Allow students to discuss this question in small groups before sharing with the class. Then, challenge students (working in pairs or small groups) to come up with a set of rules that would make for a safe and fair classroom environment for all students and teacher in the class.
Collect the rules and check for similarities, etc. Write the rules on chart paper to be used for the next lesson. The rules will most likely be written in the negative (Don’t run in the halls; Don’t talk out; etc.) Write them as they are.

Lesson 10
Display the chart with the rules for a safe and quality environment that the students generated the day before. Have students read the rules. Then, ask students if they can find rules that fit into the same category, examples might be: Don’t run in the halls. Don’t push or cut line. When the rules are
sorted, ask students to help turn them into positive statements because they are actually suggesting positive behaviors and results. An example for the above rules might be: Act safely and respectfully. When finished, there should be a set of classroom rules (no more than 5) that all students have agreed upon (3/4 majority) that they feel they can follow and live with in the classroom and school community.

**Lesson 11 (over several days)**

Students will spend the next several days working within their small groups developing a Preamble for their Constitution. Then, meeting together as a whole class, build the Preamble for the Constitution from the combined efforts of the individual groups. They will create a document on poster board with the Preamble and the Articles (rules), each illustrated. All students will sign the document. Reenact the signing of the Constitution as students sign the class Constitution and take a picture to be placed on the final product. It will be finished and displayed on Constitution Day.

**Lesson 12**

Using a Venn diagram, students will work with a partner to compare their preamble and constitution to the Preamble and Constitution of the United States. They will each write a summary of their findings, (a compare and contrast paper) stating how they are alike and different.

Students will write a reflective piece in their journals stating how they felt in the process of creating a “living document” such as the United States Constitution in the form of a classroom constitution.

**Lessons to Follow:** Students will learn about the “Bill of Rights” and make amendments to the class Constitution as needed.

**Assessment Methods:**

- Completion of a TWL (Think, Want to Know, Learned) Chart; Active participation in all classroom activities, discussions, and group assignments; Teacher observation; Creation of a classroom constitution; Journal entries; Visual Learning/Photo Analysis Worksheet; Completion of a Venn Diagram comparing the US Constitution/Preamble to the Class Constitution/Preamble

**Questions for Students:**

1. Why do you think the Constitution was/is so important?
2. Why is the Preamble to the Constitution (the language and goals) significant?
3. How are the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution the same? How are they different?
4. What does the Preamble mean – key terms and phrases?
5. Why is it important/necessary to have a governing body or a set of rules in a classroom, school, community, state, and country?
6. How does a working constitution insure the basic rights of all people?
7. What happens if the rules of the constitution do not meet the needs of the classroom?
Content Notes:

The above lessons are ideas to be used as a guide for the teacher and should be modified to meet the needs of the individual classroom. They are general plans and may require supplemental materials or additional lessons depending on class/students’ prior knowledge. The forming of a classroom constitution is to instill a sense of ownership and belongingness in safe and nurturing classroom community. In is intended to create a respectful classroom society where the rights, needs and individualities of all students are met.