

Planning your social studies curriculum unit

Imagine that you are planning a unit of study, but life circumstances intervene and a substitute teacher will have to carry out your plans. Your curriculum unit, and the accompanying lesson plans, should be comprehensive enough for anyone to follow. Details are important (materials needed, time allotted for a lesson, etc.). If you use a song, include the lyrics. If you use a video, supply the link. Etc.

Err on the side of too much information.

Be sure to think about **student choice and agency**. Identify the points in the plan where students can provide questions, ideas, and/or feedback, and where they can make choices (consider the multiple intelligences).

Make a **cover page** – (see sample unit)

- 1) Identify the desired results of your curriculum unit (What should students know, understand, and be able to do? What big ideas are worthy of understanding? What are the essential questions?)
- 2) Select your unit concept and title, the grade level, the Neohumanist principle(s) it connects with (why is this important?), the academic subject area, the content understandings you are aiming for, the duration of the unit, etc.
- 3) Decide what culminating event or activity would determine acceptable evidence of these learnings (How will you know if students have achieved the desired results? How will you know that students *really* understand the identified big ideas? What will you accept as evidence of proficiency?) Describe the culminating event in detail (this can either be a whole group activity, or individual ones).
- 4) Consider the literacy understandings that will be highlighted in the unit.
- 5) Consider the learning skills you will focus on in the unit.
- 6) Fill out the Curriculum Unit Template.
- 7) Select the books (and other resources, such as materials) you will use. The books should include both books that you will use to build lessons around and any books you would want to have on hand in the class library.
- 8) Plan learning experiences and instruction (What will need to be taught and coached, and how should it best be taught, in light of the goals? What sequence of activity best suits the desired results? How will you make learning both engaging *and* effective, given the goals and needed evidence?) Make a list of the lessons (Under Lesson Plans)

9) You should fully develop two lessons using the Social Studies Lesson Plan Template, and submit these with the Curriculum Unit Plan. Be sure to include meaningful **assessments** in each lesson plan. Assessments should be “formative” (designed to help students improve their work) as well as Summative. Put your lesson plans in one file with the curriculum unit.

10) Write a paragraph or two about how you will assess the culminating event. Be creative – consider peer assessment, self-assessment, group reflections or focus groups, audience reflection, etc.

Supplementary materials:

Social Studies Curriculum Unit Worksheet (this handout)
Sample Social Studies Curriculum Unit (now includes Lesson #1)
Social Studies Curriculum Unit template (to fill in)
Lesson Plan Template (to fill in)