

From Empathy to Advocacy: Social Justice Education in the English Language
Arts

Creating a Class Constitution: Student Agency in Action

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Context and Rationale

Who am I and who did I write this for?

My name is Jordan Morales, and I am an elementary fifth grade teacher embarking on my fifth year of teaching. I have taught second grade for the past four years, so fifth grade will be new to me this year. I have spent my entire career growing in my understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and what it means to work with such a diverse population of students.

I teach in a Title I place-based magnet school on the west side of Flagstaff, Arizona. Because of our magnet status, students from all over the district are able to attend our school. We provide every student with free breakfast and lunch each day, and we receive a visit from the local food bank one day a week. Both students and staff are welcome to take what they need from the mobile food bank, and it has greatly increased traffic to the school. In addition, we provide free after-school enrichment through the Twenty-First Century Learning grant. This is a service that runs Monday through Thursday for about an hour each day where students can participate in activities that are both academic and just pure fun. Students can join the chess club, mindfulness, art, or grade-level academic clubs where their classroom learning is extended and enriched with more hands-on activities than are available during the day.

The students at my school are mostly students of color. Our breakdown as of the 2020-2021 year was that about twenty-one percent of students are white, twenty-five percent of students are Latinx, about two percent are black, two percent are Asian, and just about forty-nine percent of students are Native American. This breakdown of our population does not always match the emphasis we put on historical voices, and I want to change that so that the historical perspectives match the diversity of our students.

As I prepare to move into a new teaching experience, I have given a lot of thought to the kind of fifth grade teacher I want to be. Through my processing, I have come to the conclusion that I want students to leave my class with a strong sense of self, their value, and their contributions to their community. I will be focusing on social studies this coming year, so I want my students to see themselves reflected in the history, geography, social, and political lessons we learn throughout the year. I have always prided myself on my ability to form relationships with my students. I can truly say at the end of each year that I understand who my students are as young people. I can see their potential, and what might hinder them from reaching the fullness of their futures. I feel that my job is to remove or disarm those hindrances so that students can pursue their best selves.

I also sought to write this curriculum and participate in this specific seminar geared towards social justice because it seems that the ideals of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are recently perceived to be more controversial than usual. More and more often, I see news articles and discussions about Critical Race Theory in the classroom. Typically, this phrase is used as a blanket term to encompass some sort of educational curriculum where students are taught that white people are inherently oppressive to people of color, and therefore should feel bad and be blamed for societal inequities. However, the academic concept of Critical Race Theory or CRT, “is more than 40 years old,” not this new curriculum as some like to claim. “The core idea is that racism is a social construct, and that it is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies” (Sawchuk, 2021.) While I do not

seek here to say that one side is correct or not, the ramifications of this misunderstanding of CRT have had lasting effects in schools. Many states have proposed vague “anti-CRT” laws that in effect ban culturally responsive teaching (Sawchuk, 2021). These laws are chilling because they could possibly expand to programs like the DINÉ institute, which I and my students have benefitted from enormously. I write this curriculum unit to show that inclusion, culturally responsive teaching, diversity, and equity most definitely have a place in the classroom. I feel it is my obligation as a teacher, and especially as a Social Studies teacher, to teach history in a way that is accurate and nuanced. As I mentioned before, I felt that sometimes my teachers in the past glossed over more painful events in US History, and as a result I was ignorant of the truth. I want to be the brave and bold teacher that insists on upholding the facts, rather than teaching out of fear.

Social justice is valuable in the classroom because it encompasses many ideals that education strives for. As Lee Anne Bell summarizes,

social justice is both a goal and a process. The *goal* of social justice is full participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. The *process* for attaining the goal of social justice should also be democratic and participatory, respectful of human diversity and group differences, and inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacity for working collaboratively with others to create change. (Adams and Bell, 2016)

What this selection makes clear to me is that students need to express themselves by working through the goal and process of social justice. Over and over again, teachers are put through professional development classes that place an emphasis on student buy in and agency. What is social justice but the very heart of student agency? Intentionally including the full participation of people from all social identity groups means to me that teachers must intentionally seek out the perspectives of students and historical figures who are routinely overlooked. This means to me that as we complete research for our project, it is my job to ensure that our source material is inclusive and reflective of those cultures from which my students come. I also stand by the idea that in order to pursue the process of social justice, students need to democratically participate in the project’s formation. I believe that this project will allow students to genuinely take a part in their learning process, and to participate in making sense of the subject matter as well.

Why do we need this curriculum?

Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors

One of the biggest reasons that I have identified that we need this curriculum is because my students have incredibly unique life experiences. I have students tell me every day about stories I could never begin to imagine on my own. Some of these stories make me laugh with joy, while others break my heart. Overall, I have come to the conclusion that students need exposure to stories other than those they are used to, because these stories can act as mirrors, windows, or sliding glass doors. This concept comes from Rudine Sims Bishop, who is sometimes referred to as the mother of multicultural children’s literature. She says that stories can act as mirrors by reflecting the student into the story. Students can easily see themselves represented in these

kinds of stories, and are inspired by the acts of the protagonists. As Bishop puts it herself, “reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation” (1990). For many of my students, stories do not typically act as a mirror, because the protagonists do not reflect back my students’ identity. Fortunately, this is becoming less of an issue as more and more exceptional children’s and young adult literature is published by more diverse authors. This means that more children are finding themselves mirrored in literature than ever before. However, it also means that educators need to seek out these mirrors so as to let all children know that somewhere in literature, there is a specific place of comfort for them.

Bishop also says that stories can act as windows into another life. This means that while students do not see themselves reflected, they can sit and peer in on a life experience that is incredibly different from their own. Perhaps they do not see how they relate to the character personally, but they are still intrigued by the journey and choices of this different character. Finally, Bishop says that stories can serve as sliding glass doors. In this instance, students have to stretch their imagination and then see themselves going through that window into the story. As Bishop points out, “for many years, nonwhite readers have too frequently found the search [for mirrors] futile,” meaning that not enough resources were easily available for students to find their reflection and thus their self-affirmation.

This curriculum unit serves to provide a mirror, window, and sliding glass door all in one for those students. It seeks first to be a window by showing students into the thoughts and lives of those who originally wrote the United States Constitution. Students will understand why the Founding Fathers gathered together to create this momentous document all those years ago. Students will then use this experience as a sliding glass door when they are invited to put themselves in the shoes of the original authors. They will stretch their imaginations to picture what it would have been like to sit down at the Constitutional Convention with so many other delegates, and to have the opportunity to draft a document that would change the world. Students will finally have the chance to be mirrored, as we take all of their voices and experiences and put them into our new Constitution. Students will indeed craft the mirror themselves, and work to validate all of their thoughts and choices about how we could improve their working and learning spaces.

Reflecting Students’ Voice and Choice

For the purposes of this curriculum unit, students will take a deep dive into the United States Constitution. It seems that when I was a student, most lessons that I learned about this subject were only framed around the authors of the Constitution, and that students were not shown how this was relevant to themselves. As an educator of color, it is my prerogative to ensure that students are able to find meaning in historical events, instead of just memorizing dates and facts.

Another struggle that I encountered as a Social Studies student in the past was that I did not ever have a say in the learning path. When we learned about history, we were presented with one perspective, and it was taught as the absolute, black and white truth. This incomplete understanding of US history led me to feel betrayed when I finally learned some of the darker parts of our country’s founding when I entered college. I always want my students to feel like we had honest discussions where their points of view were thoroughly examined. I also want students to feel like they were heard and valued in our class. Lastly, I would like the students to

take the time to listen to their peers, do independent and group research, and to come to their own solid conclusions about the state of history, and of our world today.

My intention with this unit is to begin students on a path of critically examining history through more than just the colonizers' lens. I want students to feel comfortable asking questions that push back on the typical narrative. I want students to realize that the constitution was written to benefit a small group of colonial Americans, and many others were left out. I want students to realize who was in the room when these words were drafted and finalized for the entire new nation to see. And I want students to know that they are welcome to create their own vision for the future of their nation.

In this curriculum unit, students will look critically at different aspects of the Constitution, including the language, the authors, those who are explicitly included, and those who are discreetly excluded from the verbiage. We will discuss what it would look like to write an inclusive Constitution for our class, our school, and possibly the nation. What would it look like to include ALL human beings in our society, regardless of race, gender identity, size, religion, ability, or any other category? I want the students to determine this for themselves. My hope is that within this unit we can analyze the constitution. Then I would like to hold a roundtable discussion, possibly over a few days, where students talk about their initial thoughts. Eventually I would like this discussion to lead to one where we talk about what framing a constitution for our class would entail. As we learn more about government and its functions, we can discuss changing our initial constitution and the importance of creating amendments when we learn more about what we need as a class. We will utilize the same voting and majority regulations that it would take to pass a constitutional amendment. I think this will be a stimulating experiment to explore how a nation must come to some form of consensus within a democracy in order to change foundational documents.

At the end of this school year, students should feel empowered to hold a thoughtful microscope to any historical events we cover. I also want them to hold that lens up to their own world, and to speak up about changes that they want to see. This unit and this year should not only teach them about the past events of our country, but how their voice and their power can help to shape the future of this country. I do not want to be just another social studies teacher who drones on about dates of battles and listing presidents.

Importance of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Social Emotional Learning

More broadly, students need this curriculum because culturally responsive teaching has been proven to enhance student learning. When students feel connected to their lessons, and when the lesson feels relevant to their lives, they are simply more successful. Over this past school year, COVID-19 did immense damage to our communities. Students were required to stay home for a year, as they watched friends, family, and community members get sick and possibly pass from the virus. They were scared and disconnected from the learning. Even if students were in the right mental and emotional state to participate in remote learning, many students across the nation did not have the necessary technology available to them and were left out of learning. Thankfully, Flagstaff Unified School District community members had recently passed a bond initiative that paid for each student to have their own iPad to use for school, but many other districts were not in that same position. Even though our students had iPads, many did not have

reliable internet access and had to check out internet hotspots from the schools. At times even those hotspots were not enough as their connection speed was too slow or spotty, and we were forced to tell the students that we had tried the best we could, but we could not do any more. Now that students are more than likely returning to in person learning, they need to feel welcomed, embraced, and respected in school.

This sense of belonging is so much more important than ever. In *What Happened to You?*, author Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph. D. explains through a diagram that some patterns of stress such as those brought on by COVID could lead to sensitization and vulnerability, while other patterns of stress could lead to tolerance and increased resilience. He claims that unpredictable, extreme, and prolonged stress patterns lead to the vulnerability that we now see in students reentering classrooms (Perry, 2021). To students, this unprecedented time has seemed incredibly unpredictable, with schools unsure about when students could return to school. The worry about illness and loss of life have been extreme, and the time we've spent apart has been prolonged.

As students come back to school, we need to undo those patterns and provide them with a positive experience. This curriculum unit will reinforce those positive patterns by first being predictable. Students in our class have already participated in group projects similar in format to the project I am creating now, and this will help them to feel some sense of normalcy. It will also provide them with a strong sense of control, as students get to rewrite the rules for being in fifth grade. This will hopefully increase their tolerance and resiliency as we take on more challenges throughout the school year.

Content Objectives

In this curriculum unit, students will engage in educational and practical ownership of the United States Constitution. They will approach this through two main objectives:

1. To understand the United States Constitution.
2. To understand how they relate to the United States Constitution.

An understanding of the United States Constitution will be built through first reading and dissecting the language of the Constitution, so that students can comprehend the text itself. Once students have this overview of the language in the Constitution, then they will take time to understand who the authors of the constitution are. We will look not just at the authors' names, but at who they were, how they lived, and where they were positioned in society. We will then take a look at how the authors' own implicit biases affected whose rights were and were not guaranteed.

Once students have a thorough understanding of the wording and meaning of the Constitution, they will then be able to make meaning of it for themselves. There are many groups of people who were not included in the drafting of the Constitution, including women and people of color. If that were to extend to today and to my students, many of them would have been left out. Because they were left out, they will be able to search for how the Constitution would have applied to them then, and how it applies to them now. By the end of their study of the Constitution, they will undoubtedly have noticed things they would have changed were they the original authors. This leaves some space for reimagining, and leads us to our final content

objective and project. By the end of this curriculum unit, students will be able to co-author their own version of the Constitution. This will require them to collaborate with not only the students in their homeroom, but the students in the other two classes as well, since this Classroom Constitution will apply to all students in fifth grade. As the year goes on, they will learn about how to ratify amendments, and will use a similar process to ratify amendments to our own Constitution. This will give us a chance to not only explore and understand the Constitution, but to then realize how it impacts them all today, and how they would do it differently given the chance. Before drafting our own constitution, we will need to identify the values of each student, the shared values of our class, and the shared values of our school. Then we will articulate those values into a Class Constitution, where they feel their sense of self is included for the betterment of the Constitution.

Teaching Strategies

Questioning

Throughout this curriculum implementation, I will utilize a variety of strategies to ensure that all students feel comfortable displaying their knowledge. The first of the strategies I will use is the parking lot method. Because my students will rotate through my classroom all day, I know that my lesson will get better throughout the day as I anticipate student questions based on the class before. Therefore, I know that my first period class may have more questions than my final class of the day. Because of that, I will use a “parking lot,” where students can ask their questions about the day’s lesson. This will be a dedicated part of my bulletin board, where students will use a sticky note, write their question on the note, then put that note on the board. Either at the end of class, or at the beginning of class the next day, I will review those questions and be sure to address them before we continue on with new learning. At the start of the school year, I will encourage every student to leave some kind of question or thought about the lesson so that they become used to the process. By the time I am teaching this unit, students will be more used to the routine of asking questions this way, so I will not require them all to write something down.

Multiple Tools for Expression

In addition to making sure students are comfortable with expressing their curiosity about a lesson or topic, I will also allow them to express their conclusions about the learning in multiple ways. At various times throughout the work, one way that students will be able to submit answers is through voice memo recordings. At this point before we have started school, I am not completely aware of their reading and writing progress. I want to make sure that students can always show what they know regardless of their writing ability, and I can ensure this through voice submissions. Students can use the voice memos application on their iPads, record me a message, then use the AirDrop feature to send it directly to my computer so I can listen to it later.

Another way students can use to demonstrate their learning is through drawing. So many students are gifted artists but find they rarely can use those skills in the classroom. If they had a weekly or daily opportunity to show off that gift and to demonstrate what they have learned from the day's lesson, that would be so empowering! I also think this provides a way to share their learning without the potential roadblock of writing. I want to reiterate that my class is a social studies course, not an English Language Arts class. This means that of course students will do a fair bit of reading and writing to access the learning, but that will not be the only way they have access to the content. I want them to have many entry points into the learning no matter what, and they can continue to explicitly develop their reading, writing, and comprehension skills when they are in English Language Arts class.

To this point, students will also be able to utilize video recordings to explain or act out their learning. This has worked well in the past with second grade students. In one particular lesson, students were learning how to sequence by giving directions on how to blow a bubble with bubble gum. I was shocked to see that even my most quiet students were suddenly so talkative and demonstrative when put in front of a camera. I believe that with the rise of social media, especially YouTube and TikTok, students are more exposed to that mode of communication. Therefore, they are surprisingly comfortable with using video recordings to explain their own thinking.

Overall, I believe that these additions to the traditional ways to answer questions will allow all students to truly have access to the curriculum and be able to respond.

Providing Access to All Learners

An overarching philosophy we utilize in our school district is Universal Design for Learning (UDL). As we practice it, "UDL is a framework that guides the development of curricula and instructional practice based upon the needs of students" (Abell, 2011). There is a heavy emphasis on removing barriers to assessed skills, so that all students have the opportunity to learn. Although most students in my class can read around a third or fourth grade level, I still have some readers, especially those with exceptional needs, who struggle to read and comprehend grade-level texts. However, my class is not the Language Arts class, and I do not assess students on their reading ability. Therefore, in order to provide a UDL experience, students can choose to read short articles, entire books, or watch videos. All of these media are full of content knowledge, but will allow all students to complete their work.

Social Emotional Learning

One other important teaching strategy that I recommend all teachers apply to their classroom from the very start is building a strong classroom culture and community. Students will be asked to reveal many things about themselves throughout these lessons in my curriculum unit, but they cannot open up unless they feel comfortable and safe. Before asking students to share anything vulnerable, I do inform them that I will do my best to keep information private, but that I am a mandated reporter and I may be obligated to keep them safe by passing on what they shared. Students are fully aware of this from the start, which has avoided uncomfortable feelings when I am required to share anything with parents or counselors.

On the very first day of class, I spend time doing a community circle in which I and the students express their current emotional state on a “fist to five” ranking system. Saying you feel like a “fist” means that you are really low and having just a terrible day. A “five” would indicate that this is the best day ever, and then 1-4 fall somewhere in between. In the past when I have started these circles, they can take a long time and students can be hesitant to participate. However, with practice, students will share things that I never would have expected. When done safely and compassionately, students have shared feelings of grief from the loss of a loved one, joy about the birth of a new cousin or sibling, or just feelings of being “so-so” because they did not get enough sleep but they did have a delicious breakfast. I cannot emphasize enough how important these circles are to building our classroom community. Each day when we check in with each other, students hear about their friends and their feelings, and then many of them will do something about it. Students will go up and hug each other after sharing something hard, or will high five after hearing that something awesome was finally achieved. I am also very candid when I share, in order to demonstrate that vulnerability to the students. I might share that I feel like a “two” because I am overwhelmed by planning something outside of school, and then I would follow that up with how they could help me to improve my day. This helps students to not only identify their present feelings, but to then see how they can make that feeling better. They realize they have power over themselves and their emotions.

I also use other methods to check in with my students and their wellbeing. Each Monday, I utilize a Nearpod to see how the students are feeling after returning to school from the weekend. I allow students to use typed words or emoji to share their feelings, and maybe a little bit about how they felt during the weekend. This gets posted into a class collaboration board, where all students can see the posted answers, but they are not able to see the names of each author. I find this works to build empathy and community, because students can anonymously post their true feelings, and they can also give a “heart” to each other’s notes. I then provide a second slide for students to set a goal for themselves in the week. For some, they might write that they want to try harder in math, and others might write that they want to save up their allowance to buy a new video game. I read through all of these feelings and goals, and check in with students one-on-one at least once a week to see how they are doing. This is something new I have tried this school year, and it has completely changed my perception of my students. They are dealing with

so many things on their plates, and some students would never show their struggles if not for this check-in. I am grateful that I have the time in our class schedule to check-in and meet with students in this way, because I feel that our working relationship is stronger than any years past.

In addition to the Monday check-in, I also have students check in with a sheet I call “I wish Ms. Morales knew.” On this sheet, students can write anything at all that they wish I knew about them. Some have used this sheet to come out to me as part of the LGBTQ community, some have told me about their favorite hobbies, and some have shared that their friendships are in need of repair. Because of the nature of this form, I always allow them to check a small box on the bottom that indicates whether they would like to talk about their note, or whether they just wanted me to know.

In order to build these skills, I utilize a variety of programs. One that I would definitely recommend for younger grades is Class Dojo. They have a program called “Big Ideas” where they have worked with Stanford and Yale to make short videos about many topics in social emotional learning, including mindfulness, growth mindset, perseverance, and many more. Each topic is broken down into short videos, and is followed by a set of about three discussion questions. These videos are great to help students understand certain behaviors, and to help them learn to work through their own feelings. When I have used this program in the past, it has given my students a clear language for them to express themselves when they are in some of their biggest feelings.

Another curriculum that our school uses for social emotional learning is Sanford Harmony. This is a curriculum that is free to all schools, and it is leveled for many different grade bands. In the past I have used the stories for first and second grade students. Each grade band comes with stories that span unit topics such as diversity, inclusion, recognizing feeling in ourselves and others, and cooperation to name a few. These stories are accompanied by a full lesson plan for teachers where they can have a discussion about the story, then do an activity to help them practice that new social emotional skill.

Finally, I have taken a professional development course through a company called Mindfulness First, where I learned mindfulness strategies for myself in addition to lessons that I could use for my students. It was excellent to learn to take care of myself, especially when teachers have been working harder than ever to meet the needs of students. The lessons they provide for students are also differentiated for different grade bands. Through these lessons students can learn many different techniques for mindfulness, including having a mindful body, mindful movement, and some student-friendly neuroscience.

Overall, these social emotional learning strategies and curricula help students to truly feel like a community in which they can safely and respectfully engage in challenging discussions with

each other. They learn to manage their emotions, and to reflect on their feelings in order to better approach these class dialogues.

Classroom Activities

Project Overview

This project can take anywhere from five to ten class periods, depending on how long students are given to complete the research, writing, and review sections of the project. Students will begin with a project preview, where they watch a BrainPop video that will give them an overview about the US Constitution. They then will take the time to answer some primary research questions that will carry throughout the project. Next they get an overview of the project and its goal using the GRASP acronym. This acronym stands for Goal, Role, Audience, Situation, and Product. Students will next complete some guided research, then brainstorm ideas. Finally, they will work in groups to write articles of the Constitution and to then ratify all the articles at the end.

Part One: Introduction

To begin this unit, students will complete a drawing activity as a hook into our project. They will receive a “Portrait of a Delegate” page (see “Worksheet 1”). They will read a brief article in our textbook about the Constitutional Convention and the delegates who attended. We will then fold this page in half, and draw a picture of a delegate based on the reading. After a few minutes of drawing, we will flip our pages over and draw a picture of ourselves. This drawing exercise will help the students to see how they are the delegates of today, and will get them in the mindset of a delegate creating a new constitution for this grade level.

They will then get the formal project introduction, where they will be told that they are envisioning their own constitution. Together, we will watch the BrainPop video about the Constitution so students can have a general overview of what we will create.

Next we will complete a KWL (know, wonder, learn) chart about the Constitution (see Worksheet 2). This chart has our three driving questions:

- 1) What is a Constitution?
- 2) What rules or structures should we include in a Constitution to allow our grade to function?
- 3) What rules or structures do we already have in place as a school that we can draw from?”

At this time, students will fill out the “know” columns with whatever students believe they know about this subject. This encourages students to bring in their own background knowledge, and for the teacher to validate those thoughts. As mentioned in Geneva Gay’s article, “Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching,” “when academic knowledge and skill are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly,” (Gay, 2001). To me, this

means that I constantly need to seek information from the students and their lived experiences, so that I can continue to validate the knowledge they bring to the table. Students who are validated in that way end up investing significantly more into their learning, and are then able to gain more from it as well.

Then we will complete the “wonder” column by writing down any questions that may arise for students. This list will serve as a guide for our research questions, and the list can expand as students figure out what other information they need to seek out.

We will return to the “learn” column at the end of the project as a reflection on the project.

Part Two: Research

Students will begin their research at this time. They will be provided with an online menu of research sources of various media. Students can use videos, articles, or books to complete their research. These different types of resources will allow students access to the information, regardless of their reading abilities.

As they work through these resources, they will use a worksheet to guide their research notes. This sheet is called “Do the Research: Notes,” and gives them a place to note the source, the information, and how it informs their project (see Worksheet 3). In the past I have found that students can sometimes struggle with how to pull relevant information from a source, and their notes can be quite scattered. Some students will just consume the sources without taking any notes at all, while other students will copy down each word verbatim from their source. I want students to have some sort of middle ground so they can successfully use their notes to create their own Constitution at the end. I have also provided a digital note taking resource for the students to use if they prefer to use their tablet to complete their research notes. Using their tablets can be another way to create UDL opportunities, because there are many different accommodation tools in their iPad settings. Students are able to use the “speech to text” feature, where they can speak their ideas and the iPad types out their words for them. This is helpful for those who are slower typers, or who struggle with spelling to the point of frustration. Students can also utilize the “speak” feature where they can highlight text and have it read aloud to them. This gives students access to articles they may struggle to read on their own, and allows them to listen to the same information instead. I continue to allow students to use these accessibility features in all parts of the class, so that I can focus on assessing their Social Studies skills without allowing reading or typing/spelling skills to get in their way.

Part Three: Product Creation

In this section of the product work, students will put their research to use and begin writing their Articles of the Constitution. First, students should get into groups and complete worksheet 4, “Planning Process.” This will help students to determine their roles in the project, appoint a team member to keep the team on track, and decide on how they will give each other feedback.

They will then work on the next piece of the project. Since they have completed their research, they should generally be familiar with different types of articles in the Constitution. At the start of this section, students will sit together as a class with their research notes, and we will sketch out the articles we would like to include, and what those articles will contain. Then we can begin to assign student groups to each article so they can begin to write. Students should seek to be thorough in their writing, so that the Constitution is usable by our classes at the end of this project. After students finish writing their articles, they will go through a peer editing process where they will determine whether or not they think the articles will be acceptable for publication. Once all the articles have been peer reviewed, we will enter the ratification process. Students will sit together as teams, and determine whether or not they would like to approve this Constitution for the entire grade level. Once the Constitution is ratified, we will have a class celebration! The students will have worked so hard to create this document, and they have not completed anything so collaborative or extensive before. I cannot wait to see what they do!

Student Assessment Plan

I will assess each part of the work with the following rubric. In our school district, the elementary grades use a four-point mastery scale. Scoring one means that a student shows very little understanding of the content. Scoring a two would mean that the student could possibly understand more of the content on their own, or that they can demonstrate the skill with support from a teacher. Scoring a three means that the student is right on track and can demonstrate competent understanding of the content on their own. Scoring a four indicates that the student demonstrates learning above and beyond the requirements. Perhaps they added more significant details than were asked, or they were able to coach or teach a struggling student the content.

Team Score Rubric

This rubric is intended to be used to grade each team on their final Article writing. Each student in the team will receive the same score, with the exception of the “teamwork” category. This category being different means that each team member could end up earning a different final score. Because there are four categories and I am using the four-point scale, I will be able to take the average of all the four scores to provide the final team score. Students will be made aware of this rubric from the start of our work together, so that they always have a clear understanding of how they can be successful. They will also use this rubric to complete their peer evaluations, so they can take their peer feedback and apply it to their article.

Category	1	2	3	4
What is a Constitution?	Team was unable to demonstrate knowledge of a constitution.	Team was able to demonstrate some knowledge of a constitution.	Team was able to demonstrate thorough knowledge of a constitution.	Team was able to demonstrate exemplary knowledge of a constitution.
What rules or structures should we include in a Constitution to allow our grade to function?	Team/class was unable to demonstrate knowledge of necessary structures in a constitution.	Team/class was able to demonstrate some knowledge of necessary structures in a constitution.	Team/class was able to demonstrate thorough knowledge of necessary structures in a constitution.	Team/class was able to demonstrate exemplary knowledge of necessary structures in a constitution.
What rules or structures do we already have in place as a school that we can draw from?	Team was unable to reference current rules or structures in our school.	Team was able to reference a few current rules or structures in our school.	Team was able to reference many current rules or structures in our school.	Team was able to reference an abundance of current rules or structures in our school.
Teamwork	Student did little to almost nothing to support their team project.	Student contributed some to the project.	Student provided all the required parts in this project.	Student went above and beyond to ensure completion of the project.

Informal Final Assessment

Informally, students will be evaluated on whether or not the Constitution is functional once we put it to use. I have gotten an okay from my teaching teammates that we will all abide by this Constitution once it is created. If we find afterwards that we need to make and ratify many amendments, that might show that the students were less successful in creating a functioning document for us to utilize as teachers and students.

Alignment with Standards

I will utilize the following Department of Diné Education Standards:

- Standard 1: Concept 2: Ádáhozodílzín dooleel. I will practice and maintain the sacredness of self-identity.

- Standard 2: Concept 1: Nitsáhákees Shintsáhákees shil nilíígo bee ádaa'ákonisdzin dooleel. I will acknowledge and value my thoughts and personality.

I interpret these standards to work hand-in-hand with each other. They both signify to me that students know who they are and what they stand for. I want them to find beauty and importance in that knowledge. This goes back to my rationale for teaching this unit. Students will need to hone in on the sacredness of their self-identity and to acknowledge and value their thoughts and personality in order to determine what classroom agreements will make them and the rest of our class feel healthy and successful. Students will also relate to these standards by dissecting the constitution and talking about how they see themselves and how they would write it themselves. They need to know themselves before they can know how to value and interact with others.

They will work to practice and maintain the sacredness of their self-identity through their daily quote activity. When students can reflect on a significant quote or piece of music and determine how that piece reflects in them, students can determine what makes them who they are. This also goes back to Sims Bishop's writing about mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. I hope that by providing these quotes and songs, students can decide where they see themselves mirrored and then take those pieces on with them. They can work to cultivate their personalities and values more authentically by choosing to seek out more sources that make them happy, instead of just liking the same things as their peers for the sake of fitting in. This will also encourage them to acknowledge and value their thoughts and personality as they realize what exactly defines them.

This unit will address the following Arizona College and Career Ready Standards:

- 5.C3.1 Describe the origins, functions, and structure of the United States Constitution the three branches of government.
- 5.C4.2 Use a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions about and act on issues and civic problems in their classrooms and schools.

These standards will also be a key piece of the foundation of the project and what students will be assessed on. In order to create their new Constitution, students need to have a clear understanding of how the United States Constitution is structured and what it includes. They also need to understand how the Constitution came about, which they will have studied in earlier chapters. They can then use this understanding to determine the shape of their own Constitution. They will also need to use the second standard to complete and make final revisions to their Articles so that they can decide whether or not to ratify their final product. Truly these standards are the background knowledge students will need in order to dream and more fully realize the Diné standards set forth above.

Resources

2021. (n.d.). *US Constitution*. United States. Retrieved October 10, 2021, from <https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/usconstitution/>. This video gives students an overview of the United States Constitution.

Apple. (2021). *Get started with accessibility features on iPad*. Apple Support. Retrieved October 11, 2021, from <https://support.apple.com/guide/ipad/get-started-with-accessibility-features-ipad9a2465f9/ipados> . Use this webpage for directions on how to enable accessibility features for students.

GAY, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003>

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12QPdZPbTiLAzjCLwcfloLu5GTopqD3MA2dzi51hGIZA/copy> Teachers can use this Google document link to share with their students. Students can collaborate to write their Articles here.

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1a_xbBgfWmQfHm71BM6gIKetbEkMICNX5O7dmoSJRJcQ/copy Teachers can use this Jamboard template as a way to collect student brainstorm ideas.

If you utilize the Canvas learning management system and would like a copy of the module, I use to teach this unit, please send me an email and I will share it with you.

Student Resources

Teachers' Curriculum Institute. (2010). Chapter 14 -The Constitution Version (online). In *Social Studies Alive! America's Past*. Retrieved October 10, 2021, from https://subscriptions.teachci.com/shared/sections/10945?program_id=231. This is our school district's chosen curriculum. It does require a subscription to enable online access.

Abell, M. M., Jung, E., & Taylor, M. (2011). Students' perceptions of classroom instructional environments in the context of 'Universal Design for Learning. *Learning Environments Research*, 14(2), 171–185. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-011-9090-2>

Adams, M. and Bell, L. A. (2016). *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. 3rd edition. Routledge.

Perry, B. D. (2021). *What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience and Healing*. Bluebird, an imprint of Pan Macmillan.

Sawchuk, S. (2021). What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack? *Education Week*, 40(34), 4–5.

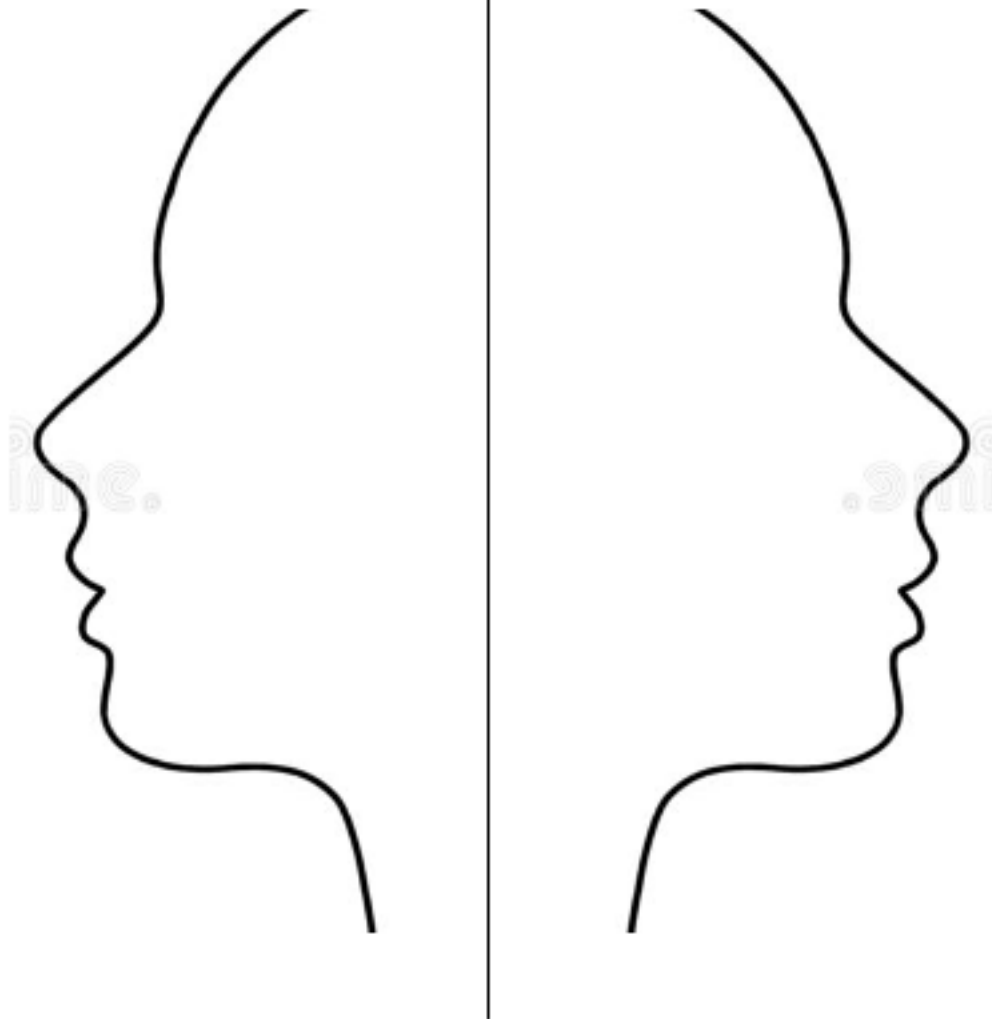
Sims-Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 1(3), ix–xi.

<https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: PORTRAIT OF A DELEGATE

Directions: Fold your paper in half. On one half, draw a picture of yourself. After reading about the Constitutional Convention, use the other half to draw what you think a delegate would have looked like at the Constitutional Convention.

Name: _____



EXAMINING THE CONSTITUTION

Name: _____

	Know	Wonder	Learn
What is a Constitution?			
What rules or structures should we include in a constitution?			
What rules or structures do we already have in place at school?			

