

Brent Estes
Hickory Creek Elementary
Smithville

Unit: Social Studies

Lesson Title: "LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT TENNESSEE!"

Grade Level: Grade 4.

Overview: This activity is proposed as an alternate to using the social studies text in grade five. It includes integration of critical thinking skills, reading skills, research, and report writing skills.

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to develop awareness of the concept of the "United" States, and to "learn to learn." It provides essential motivation, excitement in "discovering" a state, and in living and learning about that state for the entire year. It provides opportunities for teacher/student and student/teacher interaction--- for growth in writing skills, team skills, critical thinking skills, and questioning skills. Through sharing of the published reports, information is exchanged and knowledge acquired.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Develop report-writing skills, following a "report recipe."
2. Develop awareness and show knowledge of:
 - a. Geography and climate of Tennessee
 - b. History of Tennessee
 - c. Tennessee state symbols and tourism/places to visit
 - d. Government--- parts that comprise government and how it works
 - e. Economy/manufacturing/natural resources
 - f. Population and distribution of Tennessee, and the "why" of distribution
3. Become involved in publishing their reports, using the word processor and other computer programs as they prepare covers and appropriate graphs and other illustration for inclusion in their report; thus developing pride and ownership of writing.
4. Apply information using various data bases on the computer.

Activities:

1. Students will draft a letter requesting information from their state. The letter is then typed up on the computer, and sent. Students receive the packet from the state at their house. The teacher directs a discussion and demonstration on introduction of the topic, using another state as practice:
 - a. How to find information in the encyclopedia
 - b. What is the scope of the report
 - c. Ideas as to how to formulate questions
 - d. Interview a person (students) to find out more about their state

2. Reports are generated from STUDENTS' questions--- they write the agenda, they make most of the choices. The teacher provides general direction only. The students follow the "Report Recipe" in preparing their reports:

REPORT RECIPE (adapted from Suid and Lincoln)

1. Pick a subject (from objective 2: a-f)
 2. Ask a question(s) that you will answer in your report
 3. Plan the report around the answer (or answers)
 4. Gather information from at least three of these sources:
 - a. media
 - b. people
 - c. personal experience
 - d. encyclopedia
 - e. other books
 5. Organize material
 6. Draft material
 7. Illustrate report
 8. Publish report
3. Students use a database in retrieving information pertaining to their report. Students make rough drafts of their letters and reports, each time conferencing with the teacher on content, scope, and direction. This provides feedback to the student, allowing for the best possible finished product. The teacher conducts individual conferences with students:
 - a. as students hand in the questions they will be answering in their reports.
 - b. as students submit their rough drafts--- making comments regarding paragraph clarity, detail sentences, possible use of illustrations, and so on.

Peer editing is encouraged. Students read their classmates' reports, offer suggestions, ask questions for clarification, make positive comments on writing style, or perhaps comment on kind and/or type of

Resources/Materials Needed:

Books: Suid, Murrey & Wanda Lincoln, Recipes for Writing, Motivation, Skills, and Activities. Addison-Wesley, Menlo Park, California, 1989.

Software: B-GRAPH. Commodore Business Machines, Inc., 1984. DATA

QUEST, THE 50 STATES, MECC, 1988. GEOS, Berkeley Softworks, 1985.
PRINTSHOP, Broderbund, with states' graphics, public domain software for use with
PRINTSHOP.

Website: <http://www.volunteervoices.org>

Tying it all Together:

Student written tests are given once each six-week period. Students write a question regarding the report topic of the state and write the answer to the question. These are typed up and given as a test to the class. The test becomes a "scavenger hunt." Students must ask each other about the questions. When asked, the student can tell only where the information can be found: i.e., the typed report, or encyclopedia, etc. Students who wrote the question are NOT to tell the answer!