

Lesson Plan

Defining Your New School's Culture

50 min lesson

Summary

1. Subject(s): culture, anthropology, sociology
2. Topic or Unit of Study: Beginning of the year activity, intro to Social Studies
3. Grade/Level:4-6
4. Objectives:
 - a. Students will be able to identify cultural traits, define culture and describe the culture of their school by analyzing the physical space of the school building.
 - b. Students will be able to define the role of a sociologist and anthropologist.
 - c. Students will be able to practice collaboration and group discussion skills by brainstorming a description of the school's culture.

Reading Rainbow Tip: Convince students that they're actual sociologists and anthropologists for this assignment by providing "field note" note supplies like a clipboard and sketch pad and/or camera to document what they're seeing.

5. Time Allotment: 50 minutes

Implementation

Learning Context

Reading Rainbow Tip: This lesson is designed to be taught after students have learned the concept of culture. A basic understanding of culture is necessary.

Procedure

- a. Hook: Ask students what comes to mind when you think of the word culture?

Example: A foreign exchange student has just moved in with your family and you're in charge of teaching them about your family and culture. When you describe your life what comes to mind? Sports, music, t.v., food, holidays? What would you tell your new friend about your life?

- b. Guided Practice 3-5 minutes: Have students complete the graphic organizer at the top of the student worksheet by listing 5 culture traits that represent either their own culture or culture in general. Ex. Students may write food, or specifically write tamales.
- c. Check for Understanding 5 minutes: Have students share out their culture traits and fill in on a collective graphic organizer on the board. Discuss why they chose those traits and ask: Are these traits we listed enough information to teach your new foreign exchange friend about your culture? Then ask: based off of the traits listed, can you think of a 1-sentence definition for the word culture?
- d. Direct Instruction 7-10 minutes: After brainstorming possible definitions for culture, present the actual definition and have students copy it down on the student worksheet.
 - a. Culture=a pattern of learned behavior shared by a society, or group of people.
 - b. Ask students how their definitions compared to the actual definition and highlight some the listed culture traits to relate how they fit into the definition of culture.

e. Next, teachers will explain that the job of interpreting cultures belongs to sociologists and anthropologists. Sociologists and Anthropologists both study culture, and the disciplines have some overlap. Traditionally, Anthropologists have focused on non-Western cultures and have used participant observation as their primary method for understanding human culture. Sociologists have traditionally focused more on Western cultures and more commonly employ survey and other quantitative methods. However, over time the two disciplines have converged in many ways in both who they study and the methods they use. Bottom line: both sociologists and anthropologists observe groups of people to better understand their culture. Tell students to choose whether they want to be a sociologist or anthropologist for the next activity. Have students group with their profession for the next set of directions. Students will tour their school for 10-15 minutes. They are to analyze the physical space of the building to describe what the school's culture is. They will use the chart on the back of the student worksheet to navigate this next activity.

f. Directions for the chart on the back of the student worksheet: Have student walk the school building individually or in pairs for 10-15 minutes. They are to complete the chart on the back by finding examples for each category listed and write it down. Ex. a student may see a poster in both English and Spanish and put that in the column titled "language." They should write down what that poster means. Ex. This poster means that more than one language is spoken at this school.

G. Group Debrief 5 mins: Have sociologists and anthropologists meet in separate groups to go over what they found. After students have shared out, ask them if they noticed any

similarities in their findings. Have the groups decide on two things they found and their meanings to share out as a whole class.

F. As a whole class, have each group share out their two findings and meanings. Have students compare their findings that were similar and different. Ask students if they think they were able to gain a better understanding of the school's culture by observing the school building through the lens of a sociologist/anthropologist. Describe the difference between etic (from outside the social group) and emic (from inside the social group) observations and ask students which type of observer they are? If students are new to the school, they likely have an etic perspective, but if they have already been a member of the school they have an emic perspective.

G. Ask students to take 1 minutes to write down any similarities between their old school and their new school (or classrooms/grade levels whatever is best-fitting)

H. Tell students to take what they've learned to write a 1-2 sentence description of the school's culture using examples from their chart. Share out answers as time allows.

Reading Rainbow Tip: This is the perfect opportunity to open up the class for a group discussion. Ask your students questions that help them realize the importance of today's lesson with questions like, "Why is it important to understand what traits make up a culture? What traits seem the most important to a culture? How do you think culture is taught to people new to the area?"

Differentiated Instruction

Reading Rainbow Tip: Try to keep in mind that children learn in many different ways. By consciously thinking about this, you'll be able to use different teaching techniques to reach as many children as possible in your classroom!

- a. Visual Learners: Have students sketch or take pictures while on the tour of the building
- b. ESL Students: Have students sketch or take pictures while on the tour of the building. Use sentence frames in the definition of culture and the description of culture sections of the student worksheet
- c. At-risk Students: Have students pair with advanced students to share ideas
- d. Advanced Learners: In place of asking students to compare their old school's culture to their new school's culture, ask students how culture is taught/portrayed in occupied spaces? Ask students to define "subculture" by comparing the school's culture to the larger culture and ask why there might be slight differences in a subculture?

Materials & Resources

Reading Rainbow Tip:

Instructional Materials: Whiteboard with the word “culture” written on it, student worksheet, clipboards, cameras/sketchpad (optional)

Assessment

The last question: Write a 2-sentence description of the school’s culture is the writing formative assessment for understanding. Students should be able to cite two pieces of evidence from their chart to write a sentence describing the school’s culture.

Identifying Your School’s Culture

Students should circulate the school and take notes about what evidence of culture they see using the following chart:

	Evidence of culture	What does this communicate about the school's culture?
Language		
Symbols		
Norms		
Rituals		
Values		
Beliefs		
Other		