

Understanding different scenarios in immigration

This unit was planned in collaboration with and implemented by Andrea Bohling at Glastonbury Public Schools. A prior version of this unit (Wallace and Tombarello, forthcoming) is published in Byram, Perugini, and Wagner (forthcoming).

Project Description:

As a concluding activity students were able to incorporate prior knowledge on the different immigrant groups, as well as the information on both the causes and the process that constitute immigration to the United States in order to prepare a logical action plan for an immigrant family with specific characteristics.

The allotted class time for the production of their plan, as well as the research and data organization needed for it, was a week and a half. This is the first time, we implemented this unit and we decided to use this as a pilot project which can be modified for later implementations. All reflections, pre and post assignment, were completed at home; however, preparation and organization for the final reflection was assembled during class time following an organizer prepared specifically for these classes (See: ICC Project Final Reflection Organizer).

Implementation

Day 1:

On day 1, we conducted a pre-survey in order to assess students' prior knowledge as well as their predispositions with respect to immigration (See: ICC Project Survey). We also explained the assignment (See: ICC Project Description), as well as the requirements for the final product. On this day, each group of students got started on understanding their specific family scenario, investigating resources and information, as well as identifying restrictions and obstacles to keep into consideration for creating a plan that would fit their assigned family's situation. They were asked to develop a way to organize and collect information in a way that would help them complete the project.

Day 1- ICC aspects addressed:

Attitudes: In order to find information for their projects, students were asked to look for information for their projects from a variety of perspectives. This requires openness to the fact that there are different perspectives.

Knowledge specific to the country of origin of the family scenario they were assigned, as well as issues related to immigration that they had seen on prior units.

Skills of Interpreting and Relating: Students interpreted information about the project and the specifics of their assigned family and related this to what they already knew. .

Skills of Discovery and Interaction: Students discovered information related to their project (challenges faced by their assigned family, steps needed to be taken) and interacted with team members in the target language in order to make sense of what they learned and to negotiate how to go about finding solutions to the needs of their assigned family situation.

Day 2:

On day 2, students were provided with additional resources specific to the different families' immigration statuses as well as tools for documenting the data (general information as well as evidence to support their logic).

Students worked in groups/pairs to compare what they found and decided how to proceed to find solutions to prepare the action plan for their assigned family. Class time was allotted for students to ask questions and clarify their understanding on the specific scenarios; this proved to be an instrumental part of the activity and it allowed students to further guide their research.

Homework: First Reflection (See: ICC Project Description).

Day 2- ICC aspects addressed:

Attitudes: As students worked on finding even more information for their projects, students continued to look into and stay open to a variety of perspectives.

Knowledge of unique immigration statuses and the implications of such positions.

Skills of Interpreting and Relating: Students interpreted information about the project as well as information they researched and related it to what they already knew.

Skills of Discovery and Interaction: Students continued their investigations from the prior day and in doing so they discovered even more information related to their assigned family needs and interacted with the information and with each other in the target language to further make sense of their family situation, what they had already identified, and assess what they still would need in order to address their assigned family needs .

Day 3:

Students continued working in groups and were tasked to discuss their thoughts from the homework (first reflection) to start to formulate a course of action for their specific

families. As students exchanged the ways in which they believed they could act as facilitators (See: ICC Project Description “Reflexión Antes”), they discussed possible solutions, based on the family’s restrictions (English proficiency, educational level, immigration status and family composition) and obtained and gave feedback to one another.

Day 3- ICC aspects addressed:

Attitudes: In looking into their ideas from their individual reflections, students had to consider perspectives other than their own and negotiate with their teammates which would be the ones that would best inform their plan of action. perspectives. This requires openness to different perspectives and willingness to consider each other’s ideas - even if different from their own- as valuable contributions to the project.

Knowledge of social and institutional structures in their own society

Skills of Interpreting and Relating: Students interpreted information about the project as well as information they researched and related it to what the expectations of the immigrant families might be, coming from a different country and culture

Skills of Discovery and Interaction: Students discovered information related to their project (challenges faced by their assigned family, steps needed to be taken) and interacted with team members in the target language in order to make sense of what they learned and to negotiate how to go about finding solutions to their problems.

Day 4, 5 & 6:

Students continued and resumed their investigation. During this time, they arranged their evidence (to be used as part of the final product in order to supplement their decision-making) and determined the format of their final product (poster, website, blog, portfolio, etc.). All final product ideas were submitted and approved.

Day 4, 5 & 6- ICC aspects addressed:

Attitudes: In order to complete the investigation, team members needed to remain open to each other’s point of view, consider everyone’s ideas for how to utilize what they had, and be willing to discuss differences to reach consensus about how to proceed.

Knowledge: Students continued to use their immigrants knowledge from prior units, as well as the new knowledge they had gained over the past few days as they focused on specific needs of their immigrant family and how these could be addressed within the context of this country.

Skills of Interpreting and Relating: Students needed these skills throughout these days in order to incorporate all the materials they had gathered and recognized as important in prior days but now with an eye to a final product; thus they needed to interpret all resources and relate them as a whole in a way that would support the final plan for their family.

Skills of Discovery and Interaction: In the process of considering how to converge their resources to create the final plan for their family, students were able to find gaps in their resources or missing information needed to complete their task. These offered opportunities to discover new materials or learn more about specific aspects related to immigration that had not been considered before, and assess whether and how to integrate this new knowledge with what they already had.

Day 7:

Final survey was administered (See: ICC Project Survey); in addition, students took time to compare their pre and post activity surveys and shared what changed in their opinions. Final reflection prompt was explained in detail. Class time was allotted for students to verify understanding of expectations (based on ICC Project Product Rubric). Students were then given a graphic organizer in order to prepare for the final reflection (See: ICC Project Final Reflection Organizer). In addition, students used the ICC rubric (See: ICC Project Final Reflection Rubric) as parameters for their final reflection.

Day 7- ICC aspects addressed:

Attitudes: Analyzing their pre to post responses called for students to keep an open attitude to understand their preconceptions and perspectives that were potentially different from the ideas they held after the activity. Reflecting on the similarities and differences in their own responses and those of their peers required students to be curious and willing to recognize changes or shifts in their own beliefs.

Knowledge: This reflection provided students with an opportunity to combine their knowledge and understanding of immigration and legal statuses from prior units and from the group activity, to form a more integral knowledge base of the topics we had addressed.

Skills of Interpreting and Relating: Students interpreted information about the project as well as information they researched and related it to what they had learned about immigrants and their cultures throughout the year, and compare that to their own.

Skills of Discovery and Interaction: Students discovered information related to their project (challenges faced by their assigned family, steps needed to be taken) and interacted with team members in the target language in order to make sense of what

they learned and to negotiate how to go about finding solutions to their problems. They also looked for materials in Spanish and discovered information in online documents.

Critical Cultural Awareness: Students evaluated values and institutions in their own society from the perspective of the immigrants based on specific evidence from their investigations and reflected on the experience of being ‘decentered’ by having to learn new things about, and look at, their society from a new perspective.

Citizenship: The crucial dimension of citizenship education is that it leads learners to take action in the ‘here and now’ and not just think about what they might do in the future. In this project the students had acted - albeit in an imaginative, fictive environment, but none the worse for that - as citizens engaged with the issues in their society and how those issues can be addressed.

We also discussed a component of the unit which was not implemented due to time limitations: Students would create a webpage on which they would post all information they considered helpful and which could indeed be helpful for families who are in the process of getting settled in the USA.

Teacher’s insights on the implementation

Having been able to conduct this activity with my students was revealing in many ways. Not only was I able to witness and enjoy the daily discoveries my students made but I was also privy to possible future implementations and modifications that could build on the original design proposed by Jocelyn, and Deanne. It goes without saying that, in retrospect, there are a number of things I would have liked to incorporate or do differently. After discussions with professionals in the World Languages field, I believe the products of this activity would be elevated if an interaction component was implemented as well. In other words, in order to supplement the action plan portion of this activity, students would also be required to interact with a source (a person through an interview or conversation, a video, or a reading material) that might be able to clarify, add to and elevate their understanding on the multifaceted nature of the immigrant experience (i.e. the socio-cultural challenges of immigration and assimilation). We would all have liked to do this in this implementation, but were unable to do so due to the limited scope of this activity based on timing issues. In addition, the groupings and designs of each immigrant family profile might also be an aspect to look at for modification.

Moreover, through carrying out this activity, I was able to come to the realization that most students were unfamiliar with the process of *reflecting*. After this activity, I found that often, students are used to reporting the “right” answer to a specific question; whether it may be a single numerical answer, or a factual piece of information, students

are accustomed to looking for and providing the “one answer” to the question. When faced, then, with a writing prompt that encompasses a multitude of different aspects that they must *reflect* on, students struggled in understanding this concept. I believe, then, that it is of utmost importance to explain to students how to reflect and then how to be able to transcribe these thoughts onto paper.

As I reflect on my students’ daily progress, I am confident and proud of the work my students did. I can think back on some instances of frustration as students were met with challenges that they thought, at some points, could not overcome; however, the persistence in understanding the situation at hand in order to be able to logically develop a solution allowed them to inquire and think beyond.

Additional Materials

1. ICC Project Survey
2. ICC Project Description
3. ICC Project Product Rubric
4. ICC Project Final Reflection Organizer
5. ICC Project Final Reflection Rubric

References

Wallace and Tombarello (forthcoming)

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