

Changing Lives with Language: Navigation of Proper Political Channels

A Language Arts/Literature Curriculum Unit

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The following curriculum unit narrative outlines the overall objectives and strategies of the unit. The unit is intended to develop communication strategies among students in the language arts areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and to provide background experience with various literary forms. A further goal is to facilitate the opportunities to discover, and the abilities to construct, students' own communicative strategies in a manner that encourages overall balanced literacy.

Educational Pedagogy in the Development of Literacy

Literacy is achieved by adopting a combined "top-down/bottom-up" theory for the development of language strategies. Language comes from the "top-down" when we expose children to a wide variety of examples of and experiences with language and its uses. This exposure is most effective when the examples and experiences provided are meaningful, relevant, and geared to the interests of the student group. "Bottom-up" literacy consists of teaching specific content in grammar and usage, mechanics, composition, vocabulary and spelling, as well as decoding strategies for faster and more effective reading and retention. This form of direct instruction is most effective when a need for these strategies presents itself to students in order that they may accomplish a given objective, and when the instruction is individualized to meet the specific needs of each student. As with the need for the relevancy of resources utilized during "top-down" language development, tasks assigned to students to encourage opportunities for "bottom-up" tutorials with the teacher must also be student-centered, and may even be tailored to the interests of each particular child. Applebee (1991) suggests the importance of this concept as follows: "In writing, opportunities for ownership occur when topics call for students to explore their own experiences and opinions, or to elaborate upon a point of view." ¹ (*See notes on final page.*)

Harrison Middle School: 7th Grade Language Arts/Literature

Curriculum Standards and Benchmarks

What follow are the curricular goals for the school's literacy program for seventh grade students in the 1999-2000 school year. This information is provided in order that the reader may recognize the connection between these more general objectives and the specific behavioral objectives outlined in the unit's lesson plans.

Standard: The student demonstrates the ability to read, applying a wide range of critical thinking strategies to printed texts and electronic media, using English and the primary or home language.

Benchmark A: The student demonstrates the ability to read a variety of printed texts and electronic media for a purpose.

Objectives--The students will:

1. select developmentally appropriate materials and determine the purpose of selection.
2. read a variety of material independently for a sustained period of time.
3. read complex material for information, inference, discussion, main idea, detail, and pleasure.
4. read and discuss various types of printed texts (e.g. newspaper articles, magazines, electronic media, books.)
5. read, listen to, and respond to a variety of literary genre (e.g. mystery, poetry, fiction, nonfiction) including culturally diverse literature.
6. build vocabulary through reading a wide range of appropriate material.

Benchmark B: The student analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates a wide variety of printed texts and electronic media, and applies knowledge for multiple purposes.

Objectives--The students will:

1. apply reading strategies to acquire literal and implied meaning from complex material.
2. find information using table of contents, heading, indexes, menus, glossaries, bibliographies, and appendices.
3. identify specific questions and seek to answer them through literature.
4. form opinions with supporting evidence about what has been read.
5. understand and accept differing responses to literature.
6. understand how literature reflects time and culture in which it was written.
7. appreciate, recognize, and apply literary elements to analyze and interpret literature.
8. use reading to gain information about the world.
9. appreciate a wide variety of appropriate literature.
10. identify genres and recurrent themes in literature.

Standard: The student demonstrates the ability to write meaningfully, displays knowledge of writing processes, purposes for writing, potential audiences and conventions of writing.

Benchmark A: The student selects an audience, topic, purpose, and genre for writing.

Objectives--The students will:

1. write a research paper utilizing a minimum of three sources.
2. write a formal compare and contrast essay.
3. use the five elements of fiction in writing.
4. use dialogue to develop creative writing.
5. write business and friendly letters.
6. convey personal and reflective feelings in detail.
7. write a persuasive essay.

Benchmark B: The student plans and composes writing with awareness of audience, purpose, and form; edits for mechanics on a sophisticated level; and edits for style.

Objectives--The students will:

1. apply the steps of a writing process within a given format from pre-writing to final draft.
2. develop three paragraph essay maintaining thesis throughout.
3. begin to use parallelism.
4. compose expository and creative writing which explores a thesis or theme, and shows originality, order, support, coherence, transition, awareness of audience, purpose, and form.
5. give and receive feedback to revise, edit, and evaluate written work by adding, deleting and rearranging text.
6. utilize and edit tone, purpose, point of view, and style.
7. write clearly and concisely.
8. correctly use negatives and avoid redundancies.

Benchmark C: The student uses appropriate grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, standard spelling, figures of speech, and multiple paragraph structure to enhance meaning.

Objectives--The students will:

1. use appropriate punctuation, capitalization, and standard spelling.
2. make appropriate choices of vocabulary, modifiers, and figurative language to enhance meaning and interest.
3. compose compound and complex sentences.
4. evaluate own and peer writing of proper grammar and conventions.
5. identify, describe, and correctly use the eight parts of speech.
6. differentiate and use figures of speech (e.g. simile, metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, idiom, hyperbole.)
7. use topic, supporting, and concluding sentences within a paragraph.
8. use editing symbols.
9. apply keyboarding skills.

Standard: The student demonstrates active listening in a variety of settings, including the ability to understand and evaluate verbal and non-verbal cues.

Benchmark A: The student consistently applies active listening skills and strategies as well as the conventions of courtesy in listening and viewing.

Objectives--The students will:

1. make appropriate eye contact with the speaker, respecting cultural norms.
2. wait to respond until speaker completes a thought or pauses.
3. acknowledge speaker's message by formulating opinions and responses based on prior knowledge and new evidence.

4. seek additional information to clarify understanding.
5. demonstrate appropriate audience behavior.
6. use recall strategies to remember information (e.g. visualization, grouping, association.)
7. derive specific information from oral messages in the form of key words, concepts, or ideas.
8. organize oral information through note-taking and/or outlining.
9. efficiently shift focus of attention to important oral messages and return to task.

Benchmark B: The student recognizes and analyzes verbal and visual messages.

Objectives--The students will:

1. consistently organize oral information and begin to critically analyze it.
2. relate spoken and visual messages to prior knowledge and experiences.
3. interpret verbal and nonverbal cues.
4. recognize various types of persuasive language and their purposes.

Benchmark C: The student applies knowledge of culture to aid comprehension in listening and viewing situations.

Objectives--The students will:

1. acknowledge and respect cultural differences in a variety of situations.
2. seek clarification and supplemental information.
3. make an effort to understand unfamiliar accents and syntax.
4. ask encouraging questions and provide positive feedback.
5. listen politely to speakers, including those with unfamiliar dialects.

Standard: The student demonstrates effective oral communication for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Benchmark A: The student understands and applies effective techniques which appeal to logic, emotions, and speaker credibility, using primary and/or home language.

Objectives--The students will:

1. use feedback to clarify thoughts.
2. keep to the topic.
3. present ideas in logical sequence.
4. use vocal tone and inflection to convey emotional emphasis and credibility.
5. use persuasive techniques.

Benchmark B: The student applies knowledge of situation, audience, and purpose when

presenting or responding orally in formal or informal discussion.

Objectives--The students will:

1. select and organize information for a purpose in group discussions.
2. respond appropriately to ideas and opinions of others in group discussions.
3. learn techniques to facilitate small group discussions.

Benchmark C: The student plans, prepares, and delivers oral presentations using clear reasoning, coherent sequence of thought, and suitable vocabulary.

Objectives--The students will:

1. speak clearly and coherently to accomplish a variety of tasks.
2. evaluate the effectiveness of own communication and make appropriate revisions.
3. recognize and control non-verbal cues when speaking.

Relationship of the Unit to the Overall Balanced Literacy Curriculum

Harrison Middle School is part of the Albuquerque Public Schools, and is located in a semi-rural section of the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico, known as the "South Valley." The student population is primarily Hispanic (90%). The community served by Harrison Middle School comprises the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Eighty-three percent of all students enrolled receive free or reduced-price lunch, which is the prevailing determiner of the economic composition of the population. This factor creates a community of students who can be defined as "at-risk," insofar as emotional, social, and economic support systems within the family may be lacking. Thus, in light of these special needs, the school assumes many roles in addition to the education of students. The need for creating high-interest, relevant content in lesson planning must be balanced with the demand for providing consistency and structure that may be absent in other facets of the students' lives. The struggle my school community has had and continues to have in developing literacy for all students which meets or exceeds national averages derives from many influences and has impacts which are cyclic in nature.

Single-parent and blended families, teen pregnancy, limited meaningful interaction of children with adults during the critical early childhood stage of development, students acquiring English as a second language and those with limited English proficiency, and limited economic resources within the family structure all inhibit a child's opportunities for the expansion of background experience and the progression of language acquisition.

A program of balanced literacy strategies for approaching these challenges is in the process of being developed specifically for students in the Rio Grande school cluster, of which Harrison Middle School is a part. The lesson plans outlined within this unit must utilize these strategies in a manner in which the level of student literacy is measurably elevated. In response to a perceived need for improvements in literacy education, the promotion of literacy has been assigned a distinctive and proportionately large time-block (86 minutes) devoted to the uninterrupted development of balanced literacy for all sixth through eighth grade students enrolled at the school.

My teaching assignment in the 1999-2000 school year will involve eleven- and twelve-year-old seventh grade students, those in the chronological center of the middle school experience. Many of these students will be those enrolled in my sixth grade language arts and math classes of the previous year. Teacher accountability for student achievement is a primary focus of educational reform, and said achievement is measured through concrete statistics such as students' scores on standardized achievement tests and the school drop-out rate. New methods of raising the competency levels of students and bolstering their interest in educational endeavors are continuously being sought by members of the educational establishment and the community at large. This cooperative effort between the University of New Mexico and the Albuquerque Public Schools to engage teachers in meaningful dialogue connected with developing teaching techniques designed to best reach and teach students, as well as to expand the experiences of teachers with the seminar topic subject matter, will serve to enhance all aspects of the public educational experience.

Relationship of the Curriculum Unit to the Political Culture of New Mexico

The notion that all politics is local is one that can be readily communicated to students. The relationships between effective communication, literacy, and political culture are basic ones in which particular nuances in the use of language are specific to certain forums in which political communication takes place. Powerful and persuasive communication can and does reinforce or alter the cultural and political landscape according to the objectives, wishes, desires, and skills of the communicator.

If the primary purpose of politics is to improve the societal well-being of communities and individuals, effective communication is the means through which such enhancement occurs. If management and control of societal conflict are also political goals, appropriate and proper use of language is a substantial tool in achieving this end.

During the process of early language acquisition, infants begin to explore their influence on their environment through effective communication. Advocating and protecting one's interests in order to survive and flourish is the first of life's lessons. Is the exercise of these powers of persuasion and influence "political" in nature? Indeed, it is. The adolescent developmental stage, also, is one in which the need for potent communicative ability asserts itself in the lives of our young citizens. Political interest expands from concerns of the self to those of the family, peer group, school, and community. With this expansion of the social and cultural world comes the need for the student to be able to comprehend and construct language and apply it in these diversified contexts. Discussion among students of New Mexico's political culture can further amplify the message that students must communicate capably in order to induce positive change in their own lives, families, and communities.

Goals of the Curriculum Unit

My expectations for student achievement throughout the course of study encompassed by this unit are as follows:

- Students will engage in activities which stress the importance of effective communication in the ability to affect change in one's

environment.

- Students will practice effecting change through political means and the competent use of language.
- Students will observe, discuss, and analyze communication as it exists within the realm of political processes.
- Students will be exposed to literary works in which the political landscape in New Mexico has been altered through communicative strategies.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of circumstances in which a lack of communicative ability has resulted in unfavorable political outcomes.
- Students will invite articulate legislators and executives of New Mexico's state government to discuss current legislative issues and the importance of effective communication as part of the political process.
- Students will read, write, listen, and speak appropriately and effectively as a matter of course while engaged in lessons and activities.
- Students will observe and analyze the New Mexico state legislature in action.
- Students will present political speeches designed to get candidates elected and to mobilize the electorate.
- Students will role-play the interactions of New Mexico's governmental entities.

These educational objectives are quite general; and more specific, behavioral objectives for student mastery will be included in the distinctive lessons which follow.

The Lessons

**Each behavioral objective will be met with 100% accuracy, or mastery learning.*

The Writing Process

I. Behavioral objectives

- A. The students will view and listen to a video presentation.
- B. The students will discuss their responses to the video presentation in expository, narrative form.
- C. The students will demonstrate knowledge of the four-step writing process by responding in writing to a teacher prompt.

II. Materials

- A. pencils
- B. red pens
- C. college-ruled paper
- D. video entitled, "Success through Education: 'A Salute to Hispanic Excellence 1995' "
- E. TV/VCR

III. Motivation

The teacher will say, "Raise a quiet hand if you like school. Why is it important for you to come to school?" Students will respond, and the teacher will encourage all responses. The teacher will say, "Sometimes it is difficult to stay focused on our goals, and to understand the importance of obtaining a good education. What are some of your most important responsibilities in life?" Students will respond, and the teacher will write their responses on the board. The teacher will ask students to number these responsibilities in order of importance. The teacher will say, "Understanding the importance of education doesn't always come naturally, but today we'll see if we can find out why it should be near the top of our list of priorities."

IV. Anticipatory Set

The teacher will say, "You will watch a video that explores how other young people like yourselves have come to value their educational opportunities. Then you will discuss your thoughts on the presentation and write about it."

V. Procedure

A. Guided Practice

1. The teacher will say, "This video is entitled, 'Success through Education: A Salute to Hispanic Excellence 1995.'"
2. The teacher will present the video to the students.
3. The teacher will divide the students into groups of three or four.
4. The teacher will say, "One way we take advantage of our educational opportunities is by learning to speak and write effectively. Speak to me! Tell me how the students in the film were able to capitalize on their education." Students will respond. The teacher will record the responses on the board, as one student in each group writes them on paper.
5. The teacher will say, "Work with your group to come up with ten things a good education can do for you. This part of writing is called brainstorming, and is part of the *prewriting* stage of the writing process. You could also cluster your ideas (*teacher demonstrates on board*) or free write, which means just writing whatever words come into your mind without thinking about them too much. You will share these ideas with the class in 5 minutes." The teacher will circulate, encouraging students and expanding their ideas. Groups will choose a speaker to present to the

class.

B. Independent Practice

The teacher will say, "Now you will *prewrite* on your own. You will write a paragraph (7 complete sentences) that begins, 'As an adult, I would like to be _____'. A good education will help me accomplish this because.....' Use brainstorming, clustering, or free writing to outline your 7 sentences, then write them.

VI. Evaluation

The students will use proofreader's marks to peer-edit within their groups, and the teacher will assign a score using a standard writer's rubric. The teacher will facilitate and will identify this stage of the writing process as the evaluating and revising stage for individual groups.

VII. Remediation/Extension

The students proofread their own paragraphs, making note of peer-editing remarks. Students will be encouraged to improve the content as part of the proofreading and publishing stage of the writing process. They will use a word-processing program to publish their work.

Main Idea

I. Behavioral Objectives

- A.** The students will read and identify the main idea of a piece of literature.
- B.** Students will identify the main idea of this particular piece of literature as a *moral*.
- C.** Students will construct a topic sentence for a paragraph in response to a teacher prompt.
- D.** Students will construct sentences containing supporting details for the main ideas of their paragraphs.
- E.** Students will orally share their writing efforts with the class.

II. Materials

- A.** Southwestern tale entitled, "The Boy and His Donkey" from Cuentos: Tales from the Hispanic Southwest
- B.** college-ruled writing paper
- C.** pencils or pens

III. Motivation

The teacher will say, "How can you tell whether or not someone is trustworthy?" (Students respond.) "Is it more important to listen to what someone says or to observe his or her actions?" (Students

respond.) "Tell me of a time when you thought you could trust someone and later discovered that you couldn't, or a time when you had suspicions of someone's untrustworthiness which later proved to be unfounded."

IV. Anticipatory Set

The teacher will say, "Have you ever heard anyone say, 'The moral of the story is.....?'" Today you will read a Southwestern tale that has a moral. The moral of this story is also the story's *main idea*. The moral of a story, and in this case the main idea of the story, is the message that the author intends for the reader to derive from it. This story deals with one of the six pillars of Character Counts--trustworthiness."

V. Procedure

A. Guided Practice

1. The teacher will hand out copies of the story in both Spanish and English. The teacher will say, "I will read this tale to you in both English and Spanish. Please follow along as I read it, and see if you can find the author's intended message. I'll give you a hint: it has to do with determining whether or not a person is trustworthy."
2. The teacher will read the story in both languages as students follow along.
3. The teacher will guide students to respond to the story in class discussion and to identify the moral/main idea as *a person's trustworthiness can be determined by observing his generosity or greed*.

B. Independent Practice

1. The teacher will give the students the following writing prompt: "I know a person is trustworthy when....."
2. The students will complete this thought, and will be instructed to write a 5-sentence paragraph centered on this main idea.
3. Each paragraph must have at least four sentences which contain supporting details for the stated main idea. These details must be organized in chronological order, and should center on an anecdote from each child's experience.

IV. Evaluation

The students will read their paragraphs aloud to the class. Classmates will evaluate the paragraphs in accordance with the degree to which they meet the criteria of a standard writer's rubric.

VII. Remediation/Extension

The students will role-play the events in the story, and/or the examples and details derived from their own writings, and present their skits to the class.

Persuasive Writing

I. Behavioral Objectives

A. The students will orally demonstrate an understanding of the importance of effective communication in advancing one's perspective on a given topic.

B. The students will utilize the writing process to construct a 3-paragraph essay with the intent to persuade the reader to adopt a particular point of view.

C. The students will demonstrate an understanding, through their writing, of the introduction, body, and conclusion parts of a cohesive and persuasive essay.

II. Materials

A. video excerpt from the television news-magazine program "Hardball" hosted by Chris Matthews on the subject of posting the Ten Commandments in public schools

B. college-ruled writing paper

C. pencils or pens

III. Motivation

The teacher will say, "On a scale of one to ten, how important is it to you to get what you want?" (Students respond.) "How do babies let adults know when they want something? Toddlers? Small children? Older children? Teenagers? Adults?" Students will offer responses at appropriate intervals, and the teacher will encourage, accept, validate, and expand student responses. The teacher will say, "It's important to know different ways of communicating, so that we can achieve the best for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our society as a whole."

IV. Anticipatory Set

The teacher will say, "Today you will do two things. First, you will watch two people discuss a topic that is in the news and that affects you and your school. The topic involves whether or not the United States Congress will sign into law a bill which will allow the Ten

Commandments to be posted in public schools. The two debaters are members of Congress, they have different opinions, and each will attempt to convince the other that his point of view is the right one. Next, you will choose one side or the other of this argument, and you will write a 3-paragraph essay to convince me, the reader, that you are right."

V. Procedure

A. Guided Practice

1. The teacher will say, "As you watch the video, write down three main points that each speaker gives in support of his opinion."
2. The teacher will play the videotaped excerpt.
3. The students will vote by secret ballot on whether or not they think public school should be permitted to post the Ten Commandments.
4. The class will discuss the results of the vote.

B. Independent Practice

1. Each student will create three cluster-diagrams, one for each paragraph of the essay, labeled *introduction*, *body*, and *conclusion*.
2. The teacher will provide a model for the manner in which the cluster-diagrams should be constructed.
3. The students will write a topic outline from the cluster diagrams.
4. The students will organize their ideas into complete sentences and paragraphs.

VI. Evaluation

The teacher will edit the compositions using proofreader's marks and return to the students for revision, with an attached standard evaluation rubric and comments.

VII. Remediation/Extension

Each student will proofread and publish their work for utilization as talking points in a videotaped debate with another student who holds an opposing viewpoint.

Writing a Business Letter

I. Behavioral objectives

- A.** The students will read several examples of properly constructed business letters.
- B.** The students will demonstrate the ability to construct business letters, including all necessary parts.

C. The students will write business letters to legislators and executives in state government for the purpose of inviting them to the classroom to discuss and debate issues of the students' own choosing.

D. The students will follow up their invitations with telephone calls to insure proper receipt of the letters, and will schedule appointments for school visits.

II. Materials

A. pencils

B. paper

C. telephone access

D. computer access/word processing program

E. appointment-setting book

F. postage, envelopes, address labels

G. the New Mexico Government Handbook

III. Motivation

The teacher will say, "In our state of New Mexico, who decides how much money schools can spend on students and programs? Who decides whether or not your parents can use a school voucher to change your school? Who decides if you can, or must pray in school? Who decides how many kids can be placed in a given classroom? Who decides whether or not you have to wear a uniform to school? Who decides whether or not you can be SPANKED at school? Would you like to know who is responsible for making some--not all, but some--of these decisions which may affect your own life and those of members of your family?"

IV. Anticipatory Set

The teacher will say, "Today we will discuss the answers to some of these questions. There are several parts of our government in this state which take part in making these decisions. We will also learn to write business letters to some of these people to invite them to come here and speak to our class about these issues. After we send our letters, we'll call them to see who's coming, and when?"

V. Procedure

A. Guided Practice

1. The teacher will give handouts which exemplify a model business letter. The handouts will identify the letter's six parts, including the heading, inside address, salutation, body, closing, and signature.
2. The teacher will ask students to read the sample business letter aloud, verbally identifying the six parts.

B. Independent Practice

1. The students will utilize the four-step writing process to formulate ideas to include in the bodies of their letters.
2. Each student will write a rough draft of his or her letter, and the teacher will edit them, conferring with each student individually to narrow content and perfect form.
3. The students will visit the computer lab to word process their final drafts of their letters, printing two copies (one to keep), as well as address labels.
4. The teacher will mail the letters.
5. Five days after the letters have been mailed, students will make individual follow-up phone calls to the offices of government officials, and will set appointments in an appointment book to arrange for guest speakers to visit our classroom. They will record the speaker's name, position, and subject matter to be discussed.

VI. Evaluation

The students will discuss in a large-group setting the results of their phone contacts. Each student will have an opportunity to share his experience with this initial foray into the realm of local government.

VII. Remediation/Extension

The students will work in groups to prepare a list of questions for their speakers, since only some students will be successful in arranging appointments. The questions will be typed in the computer lab, with copies distributed to each member of the group. The speakers will come, they will speak, and the students will engage the speakers in discussions of the various topics.

Writing a Political Campaign Speech

I. Behavioral objectives

- A.** The students will identify themselves as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.
- B.** The students will form political parties within the classroom.
- C.** The students will work in teams to nominate candidates and to select eight nominees for each of their political parties in order to elect a 12-person legislature and a governor for the class.
- D.** The students will listen to, discuss, and evaluate historical and current campaign speeches.
- E.** The students will work in teams to write campaign speeches for their respective candidates.
- F.** The candidates will present their speeches to the class. The speeches will be

videotaped.

G. A secret-ballot election will be conducted. The students will evaluate the balance of power as it relates to the outcome of the election.

II. Materials

A. chalk and chalkboard

B. official platforms for the Democratic, Republican, and Reform parties

C. pencils, paper, and word processing access

D. video camera and videotape

E. secret ballots, or a voting machine (optional)

F. Overhead projector

G. Transparencies listing the main points of the three party platforms

III. Motivation

The teacher will ask the following questions, to which the students will be given an opportunity to respond, "If you were in charge of this class what is the first thing you would do to change it? If you were in charge of all of A.P.S., what would you do differently? What about the whole state of New Mexico? What would you do? O.K.-let's think even bigger! If you were the President of the United States what would be your most important priority?" Then the teacher will say, "We are very lucky in our country and in our state, because each person who lives here has a chance to make the changes that he or she thinks are important. Since we all have our own opinions of what should be done, people in government first had to decide and agree on a way to make those decisions. One way they have decided to do this is to elect people to represent them and their ideas. People with similar ideas have formed groups called political parties. These parties work together very hard to get their candidates elected, so that their ideas will win, and they can be in charge! The political system is very much about POWER! Who wants it, and who gets it? Do YOU want it?"

IV. Anticipatory Set

The teacher will say, "Today you will decide if you are a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent. You will divide into parties, and will work together to nominate and select candidates to run for a 12-person

legislature, and a governor. Then you will write campaign speeches for your candidates, who will present them to the class. Next, your candidates will present your speeches for the camera, and we'll have an election."

V. Procedure

A. Guided Practice

- 1.** The teacher will draw a horizontal line on the board and divide it in half. On the right side he will write the word *Republican*, and on the left side the word *Democrat*. The word *Independent* will be written in the center above the line.
- 2.** The teacher will present the platforms for the three parties on the overhead projector, pointing out that very few people in any of the parties are in complete and total agreement with every item on their party's platform. The teacher will say, "People choose their political parties based on which party *most closely* agrees with their own ideas. True Republicans are also known as *conservatives*, and are said to be on the 'far-right' of issues." *{The teacher will write these terms.}* "True Democrats are also known as *liberals*, and are said to be on the 'far-left' of issues. Independents say they are neither liberal nor conservative, but that they decide what's correct based on what they think about each issue. Which of these are you? Let's see!"
- 3.** The teacher will present the three party platform lists on the overhead projector. Students will keep a tally for each item of each platform to identify which party most suits them on each issue. They will move into groups with other like-minded people. Each party will nominate eight people to run for the legislature, and one person to run for governor.
- 4.** The students will view video of several campaign speeches by accomplished and not-so-accomplished orators. Nixon vs. Kennedy and Reagan vs. Carter could be used, or whatever is available to the individual teacher.
- 5.** The students will discuss en masse the strengths and weaknesses of each speech and speaker. The teacher will mention that while they do provide input, Presidential candidates rarely write their own speeches.
- 6.** The students will write one-page campaign speeches for each candidate as a group. The teacher will guide the groups through the writing process.

B. Independent Practice

1. The teacher will video-tape the candidates making their speeches to the class.
2. The students will hold a secret-ballot election to select the legislature and the governor. All nominees will be on the ballot with their party affiliations clearly identified. The teacher will count the votes and announce the winners.

VI. Evaluation

The students will discuss in a large group the outcome of the election. They will determine who is in power, and will evaluate the way in which power may or may not be balanced between the governor and the legislature. They will view the recorded speeches again, and determine whether they were influenced more by the words of the candidate or their own and the candidate's party affiliation. The teacher will ask what other factors they may have considered in deciding for whom they would vote.

VII. Remediation/Extension

Each student will write a short paragraph exploring the importance of participating in the legislative process for all citizens. The teacher will provide the students with the party statistics for the New Mexico State Legislature and the United States Congress, and the students will compare the make-up of their own classroom government to those of these larger governmental entities.

Culminating Activity

The students will attend a field trip to the state legislature to observe the political process in action. They will sit in on a legislative session and, hopefully, visit the governor's office and speak with representatives. A guided tour is preferable. The students will take detailed notes of their observations, and will write a narrative essay of their experience.

Concluding Remarks

The Albuquerque Teacher's Institute seminar entitled " The Political Culture of New Mexico" explored various topics and subject matter outside the realm of this particular curricular unit. In order to conform to the constraints of time and space defined by the unit's requirements, this vast quantity of material has been narrowed to those subjects best suited to become a vehicle for teaching language arts and literature to seventh-grade students. The possibilities for constructing other curricular units with varying themes is quite extensive. Topics covered in the seminar, but not explored herein, include New Mexico's land grant issue, Native American culture, Hispanic art, and the politicism of education itself.

Participation in this seminar was an extraordinarily enriching experience for me, and was well-suited to my teacher-as-learner philosophy of educational professional development. The opportunity to engage teachers from other schools in our community in discourse regarding

educational philosophies and concerns was invaluable, as well. In particular, the insightful comments, both written and verbal, of our seminar facilitator, Dr. Felipe Gonzales, were essential in supporting the development of the unit. I am confident that the one-hundred students enrolled in my class in the coming school year will profit measurably from my participation in this unique experience.

APPENDIX

The following rubric is to be used for evaluation of all writing assignments and activities contained within the unit. ² (*See notes.*)

Score	Meaning (focus, support)	Structure (organization, flow)	Language (correct sentences, word choice)
4	The writing has one important idea or focus, with facts (details) to support it.	The ideas are clearly organized, with the ideas flowing.	The language is vivid, with correct sentences.
3	The writing has an important idea or focus, but gives few details to support it.	The writing is unclear in some parts, affecting the flow.	There are appropriate word choices and mostly correct sentences.
2	The writing has some ideas, but no clear focus and lacks details.	The writing is confused. The flow is not smooth.	Word choices are limited. There are many incorrect sentences.
1	The writing lacks a clear focus.	Ideas are unrelated and do not flow.	Word choices are inappropriate. There are errors in sentence structure.



NOTES

1. As quoted by Applebee, 1991. *Writing Instruction in the Intermediate Grades: What Is Said, What Is Done, What Is Understood* by Robin Bright, p. 12.
2. Table as outlined by Joyce C. Fine, 1997. *Alternatives to Grading Student Writing*; Stephen Tchudi, Editor, p. 95.

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