From Textbook to Activism

Engaging Students in Social Issues They Care About

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Overview

- Reframing a “same-old” unit on social movements in the 20th century into a **dynamic study** of effective social activism
- Ending with students taking the first steps to **becoming effective activists** for their world
- Students learned to **analyze social issues**, then to identify the type of activism that **proved effective** for those issues.
- Next, students selected social situations **important to them**, analyzed the changes they sought to effect, and determined a means of activism to effect that change
- **With practical and often surprising results.**
Beginning in the textbook

• Previous unit was taught traditionally through textbook reading and lecture

• Topic: Civil Rights Movement

• As a bridge to the unit on later social movements, students learned the “How” of social activism through lecture, discussion and examples of the common strategies of activism
Moving Beyond the Textbook

• Examining historical Activism of 1960s, 1970s

• Learn > Analyze > Reflect

• Scaffolding of Process:
  1. Modeled by teacher
  2. With a partner
  3. Individually
  4. Give one, Get one
Internet @ School: Resources for Learning

• Nature of resources shaped by grade level of students and teacher vision for this learning.
  • 9th grade students
  • Seeking primary resources in the sense that the major figures would speak directly to the student
  • Source Sets included:
    • An overview of the movement (usually from their textbook)
    • 1-3 leaders in the movement and what they did
    • Laws that were passed that either helped or hindered the movement
    • Events that either helped or hindered the movement
Reaching into Students’ World

- Asked students to reflect personally: “What do you want to see changed in your world?”
- Students planned their activism considering which methods were most effective and best matched their goal(s).
- Students ACTED!
Surprising Results

• Involved staff, faculty and administration all over the building and at the district level  
  “I went to college in 1968, so I say Bring it On!”

• Students forced out of their comfort zone

• “We got the opportunity to attempt a real and valid change in our school/world.”

• “I like that we were able to talk to the school about something that we feel strongly about and that we were able to voice an opinion.”

• “I learned that everyone can learn from history and if you take what has happened and react because of it, the world could be a better place.”
Assessing and Re-Shaping for the Second Round

- Move to organize by larger groups, to support individuals and to deepen possible impact
- Consider issues on campus: Got Your Backpack program, for example
Questions?

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