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Teaching Social Justice Issues Using Informational Texts

Baylie Gregurich and Leah Nillas*

Research Question
How can I integrate the Common Core State Standards of reading and understanding informational texts with teaching social justice issues in an elementary school classroom?

Methodology
◆ Second grade classroom with 27 students (11 males, 16 females)
◆ Field notes, lesson plans, video, audio, and student work samples
◆ 3-lesson unit with a focus on the strategy of finding the main idea and details of a text
◆ Each lesson had a social justice issue that was discussed

Literature Review
◆ Goss (2009) described how to co-construct with students a curriculum that promotes social justice and yet is grounded in their everyday lives.
◆ Since standards guide focus on students’ ability to comprehend and analyze what they read, reading and writing standards can easily be addressed through any of the social justice-themed texts that were introduced. (Zambo, 2011; Cunningham, 2013; Fox, 2006; Sandmann, 2004; Seban, 2011)

Findings
◆ Choose informational texts that encompass a social justice theme as the main idea.
◆ Choose texts that are appropriate for grade level reading.
◆ Create assignments that assess students’ mastery of the standard for reading and understanding informational texts.
◆ Enable/encourage discussion about the social justice issue presented in the text.

Conclusions
◆ The standard for reading and understanding informational texts was easily addressed through social justice themed texts.
◆ Relating the social justice topic to the students’ every day lives promoted engaging and insightful conversation.