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Implementing Constitutional Rights into the History Classroom

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Implementing Constitutional Rights into the Classroom

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Research Question

How can lessons about constitutional and civil rights help students gain awareness of their civil liberties?

Literature Review

- Abowitz and Harnish (2006) stated that meanings of citizenship are complex and evolving.
- Boyle-Baise (2003) concluded that citizenship is “reformative” and “transformative.”
- Kahne (2000) identified five prominent frameworks linking curricular strategies to the preparation of citizens to act and participate within a democracy:
 - 1) developing higher order reasoning,
 - 2) engaging students in deep inquiry,
 - 3) providing students opportunities to experience democracy as a way of life,
 - 4) fostering student respect for groups with differing values or beliefs, and
 - 5) enabling students to identify problems, their causes, and possible solutions.

Methodology

- There were two classes of 11th and 12th graders from Central Illinois who participated in this study.
- The study involved three lesson plans that focused on privacy and citizenship rights.
- The data analyzed in this study consisted of lesson plans, field observations, and multiple sources of student work.

Constitutional Rights to Gain Student Awareness



Figure 1. There are many steps to becoming an informed citizen, but the first is to gain awareness of your responsibilities as a citizen. Here are words that express the relationship between students and ideals of citizenship.

The Human Graph Experiment

Expectation of Privacy

Low Medium High

Figure 2. The Human Graph Experiment engaged students to consider their own rights as American citizens. In this activity, students were asked to gauge their expectations of privacy in varied locations, such as at home, school, and on the internet.

Results and Data Analysis

- The three most common themes found in the lesson plans were: *analyzing argument*, *social controversy*, and *reflection*.
- The lesson plans led to student-based results. The lesson plans allowed students to make their own decisions using their own faculties.
- There were two themes that emerged from the Human Graph Experiment (Figure 2) and analyzing student work:
 - 1) Students passionately wanted to protect their own rights.
 - 2) Students disagreed with each other.
- The data collected demonstrated that the lessons incorporated all five of Kahne’s (2007) frameworks.

Conclusion

- There is an obvious need for teaching lessons that promote citizenship understanding.
- By engaging students in how they perceive their own rights, they will become more aware of these rights.
- Further research should be conducted on the most efficient and engaging techniques that promote citizenship understanding.

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