

Education on the Trail

Summary

This is an activity the students can do to increase interest in the pioneers. They will be expected to invent ways to teach pioneer children on the trail.

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

Materials

The materials needed will depend on how the students decide they are going to teach the pioneer children. An inventory list of the materials that each group will have to choose from. The ones they actually use to teach with will vary among the groups.

Background for Teachers

It would be helpful to this lesson if the students knew what things were commonly found in a wagon. This could possibly be found at the heritage website (<http://heritage.uen.org/>).

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will understand the unique experience of pioneer children's education on the trail. See essential questions <http://heritage.uen.org/>.

Instructional Procedures

If possible show the students the part of the Apollo 13 movie when the scientists are given all the things they can use to make a square peg fit into a round hole to save the astronauts. Discuss with the students the challenge that the scientists faced in the movie clip. Ask them if they have ever had an experience where they had to solve a problem with only limited materials. For example, if they were making a craft and ran out of glue. How could they finish without glue?

Ask the students to tell their favorite experience in school that they can remember. Ask them what materials were used. Now have them think of ways they could have done the activity without those materials.

Have the class imagine that they are a pioneer who wants to make sure that their children know how to read, write, and do arithmetic. However, the only paper they have is their journal. They are trying to decide how to teach their children while they are traveling every day, using the things they have in their wagon. They also must remember that most of the instruction will be done while the people are walking or riding in a very bumpy wagon.

Once the class has been divided into groups of 5-8 students give them the inventory list of all the materials they have in their wagon. Remind them that these materials constitute everything they own, so they do not want to waste things. Allow the groups as much time to plan as possible. You can specify the specific facts to be taught or allow the students to choose, but I would recommend specifying that they need to teach reading, writing and arithmetic. Another way would be to have each

group focus on a specific content area. The latter method would save a lot of time. Once the groups have decided on their teaching method, they need to make a list of materials and have it approved. It would probably be wise to have the students be in charge of gathering as many of their materials as possible on their own. Then have them practice their method in preparation to use it to teach the class.

Once the groups have gathered all the materials and practiced what they want to teach the class, have them schedule a time to do so. Following the presentations have a discussion on the ways the students taught. Discuss how the different groups used different materials and if they were careful not to waste things. Does this show what the group valued? Also discuss whether or not the teaching methods differed very much from the way they were taught. Also discuss if the way they taught things was the way they liked to learn. To close the lesson, have the students talk in their groups about ways they could conserve things in the classroom to make them last longer. The ideas can then be shared and implemented.

Extensions

Some or all the students could be asked to consider how the method they have invented would work if one of the children they were trying to teach were deaf, or otherwise handicapped. The students could also be made responsible for teaching a specific skill to a lower grade using the method they invented.

Assessment Plan

I would assess the students on their participation. One of the major focuses of this lesson was to use creative thinking and that is hard to assess in individual children. I would try a group survey. This would be filled out by every member of the group asking them to determine if they felt that each member of the group made a worthwhile contribution and they fulfilled their responsibilities.

Authors

[CHRISTINE WILKINSON](#)