Power Failure

Summary

This lesson encourages students to look closely at how electricity is vital to many societies in the world. By contacting others around the world to gather feedback, and by then publishing student findings in an online newspaper, students will use the Internet to actively determine how access or lack of access to electricity may impact many world cultures.

Time Frame

5 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Communication, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Internet connection. It is preferable if the internet connectivity is available to all students, but this is not mandatory. One connection in the school, or even one connection at the home of the teacher will still allow the class to participate in the online activities.; email address; paper, pencil or pen OR word processor.

Background for Teachers

Prior to beginning this lesson, it is important to begin gathering information from students from other locations. However, responses from students who are a part of keypal programs may not be an accurate representation of students from other, less developed areas. It is important to discuss with your students the limitations of gathering information through the Internet, and how the pool of contacts may not be be a good cross-representation of students from many backgrounds.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will have a greater understanding of how electricity impacts world cultures. Students will report results honestly and will avoid embellishing or exaggerating the results.

Instructional Procedures

As mentioned in the background, prior to beginning this lesson, it is important to have students email questions about electricity usage to keypal contacts around the world. A few good sites to visit to find international keypals include the Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections site located at http://www.stolaf.edu/network/iecc/ or the Virtual Handshake site at http://ananke.advanced.org/3174/English/mail.html. Both of these internet sites allow your students to establish communication with students from around the world. Have your students ask other students questions such as 'How do you use electricity in your house?' or 'How would your life be impacted if you lost electricity for a day?'. If this is difficult to do, bring to the class newspaper articles, magazine stories, and/or nonfiction writing about experiences people have had around the world when something has caused a change in electricity access. Divide the class into small groups of three. Have the students review the email responses they received from other students around the world regarding the ways that electricity is used in households in their communities (see Introduction and

URL's listed below). If there are no email responses, or if the responses are limited, review the written materials gathered prior to the beginning of this lesson. Have the students share with the class the information they received either by email or in written form. Ask each group to take notes about the differences and/or similarities they noticed between the ways in which students use electricity in other communities. Once all of the emails and/or written materials have been shared with the class, have the students draft a feature article that compares their electrical usage with the usage of electricity in other communities. Also include in these articles a prediction of how the lives of students around the world would be impacted if electricity was shut off for a week, a year, or even indefinately. After the draft feature is completed, have the small groups share their feature with another small group. Have the students peer edit the writing that they are given to review, asking for clarification if the information is incomplete, making punctuation and/or spelling suggestions, and/or letting the authors know if the feature has been well written and why. After the peer editing process is complete in the small groups, have the students re-write and edit their feature stories, continually working in their small groups. Once the story is rewritten, repeat the peer editing process one more time in the same groups to provide the editors with a second look at the stories they reviewed. Once the stories are returned to the authors, have the small groups write their final copy. Again, the purpose of the feature is to share with others their findings about how electricity is used by students around the world, and making predictions about how the lives of students would be impacted if electricity was no longer available. Once the stories are complete, visit the KidNews site to submit the stories online. Share with other classes, students, and family members the internet address where the student writing can be found online. For those families without internet access, invite them to the school to view the pages on the school internet access, inform them most public libraries provide free access, or print out the individual story and share.

Assessment Plan

Completion of a feature article on the KidNews site (or in written form if you don't have internet connectivity) about ways in which various communities utilize and depend on electricity.

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