Lesson Plan: Constitutional Convention

Unit: Principles of Independence

Teacher: Ms. Ferris

Course: U.S. History Grade 8

Unit Objective: Students will understand the roots of the American government in the principles and philosophy that shaped American independence.

Student Objective: Students will describe the major debates and compromises that occurred during the Constitutional Convention.

Context for Learning: In this unit, we have covered basic ideas behind the framing of the Constitution and U.S. government (John Locke, the English Bill of Rights, Magna Carta), as well as the Articles of Confederation. We last compared the powers of the Articles of Confederation to the later Constitutional powers. Students also learned about Shay’s rebellion as a turning point for the young Republic. Preassessment data for the classes show a moderate to low understanding of governmental function, but a low understanding of the history and philosophy behind such governmental processes.

Opening: Warm-up: What is a delegate? How should delegates be chosen?

Lesson Procedures

1. What is a delegate? How should delegates be chosen?
2. Students draw state name from bag. Regroup into states and work on “Solve the Problem” on pg. 115 together. Complete answers in notebook.
3. Discuss which state was on which side?
4. Make t-chart about Virginia and New Jersey plans (small states research New Jersey plan/large states research Virginia). Use pgs. 116-7 in WTP book.
5. Discuss how this issue could be resolved.
6. Read section about the Great Compromise. Emphasize federalism and separation of powers.
7. Homework: V3 for tariffs, Federalists, Antifederalists, Federalist Papers, Ratification

Closing: Informal discussion, group conversation while completing work. Answers in notebook.

**Lesson Title:** The Constitutional Convention

**Grade Level/Focus:** 8th Grade Social Studies (United States history, Principles of Independence unit)

**Objectives:**

Unit Objective: Students will understand the roots of the American government in the principles and philosophy that shaped American independence. Lesson Objective: Students will describe the major debates and compromises that occurred during the Constitutional Convention.

**Why did you choose this lesson to revise?**

I selected this lesson as I have taught this lesson two different ways in the past two years, and I am not satisfied with either lesson. I think that with some revisions I can improve this lesson for next year.

**What are the barriers to learning in the lesson you chose?**

**Goals:** The lesson objective contains latitude in how students can relate information about the Constitutional Convention, as the means of addressing the goals are not stated in the goal itself. However, this can offer a challenge to students in that it may be too broad of a goal, without the requisite choice that is implied by the goal.

**Materials:** This lesson requires several materials that include inherent barriers. To start, this lesson relies on the use of the textbook, presenting barriers for students with reading difficulties. This is mitigated in several ways, including the use of partner work and the delivery of accommodations to Special Education students. The lesson also includes a mathematically driven activity, presenting barriers for students who struggle with math. By allowing students to use calculators in the activity, this lesson uses an additional material as a way of overcoming a potential barrier.

**Methods:** As it has been presented, this lesson includes a variety of instructional methods including large and small group instruction, collaborative work, silent reading, mini-lecture, printed notes, and the Elmo presenter. These may be barriers depending on student learning styles and potential negative peer interactions. Further, by incorporating interdisciplinary skills, some students may encounter a barrier they would not ordinarily face in Social Studies, as this lesson asks them to tackle mathematical concepts, as well.

**Assessments:** This lesson includes several informal means of assessment, including informal conversation, small-group discussions, the mathematical worksheet, and the creation of student-directed notes. However, these assessment methods present barriers in that each student participates in the same assessment methods. Further, am I truly able to capture an accurate picture of all of my students’ understandings or issues on this topic given these assessment methods? As a teacher, I am also facing this barrier of accurately and successfully evaluating everyone at the same time.

Identify the barrier in the lesson, align the barrier to the principle and describe what you could do to improve/change instruction, which technology resources could be used to enhance/alter the lesson and how the resources support UDL.

**Complete the chart below and include a copy of your original lesson with the plan you have to change it.**

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| **Barriers/Missed Opportunities** | **UDL Principle** | **What changes would you make to this lesson to eliminate this barrier?** | **Which technology resources could be used to enhance this lesson?** | **How do these resources support UDL?** |

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| I think the inclusion of mathematical concepts in a Social Studies lesson presents a barrier for many students. While the worksheet asks students to add a string of multi-digit numbers, many students were thrown off balance by being asked to complete mathematical work in a Social Studies class. | Principle I (Representation)  *What of Learning* | Allowing students to use calculators would help to alleviate this barrier. Additionally, having graphic organizers that structure the math necessary to interpret the table would allow struggling students visual guidance, while proficient students could work on their own. | Calculators could be used. Additionally, an interactive website like <http://www.gisforhistory.org/projects/firstcensus_st/> would illustrate the populations of the original thirteen states during this time period. | These resources allow all students to complete the same task, and thus draw similar conclusions about the Virginia and New Jersey plans. |

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| Students worked in groups on all of the tasks with little scaffolding to practice. All students were required to complete the same task, drawing the same conclusions. | Principle II (Action and Expression)  *How of Learning* | Additionally, by chunking the tasks with a gradual scaffolded release of responsibility, students should be better able to manage the work on their own. This particular task asks students do complete the same process twice with two sets of data. After instructions are given and modeled, the first time, students might be paired heterogeneously to complete the first set of questions. Students could then be released to work on the second set of tasks independently, showing greater practice. | Students could respond with their answers by writing or using personal MLD’s. Calculators (assistive devices) could also be included as needed. | By allowing students to complete work in a variety of ways, students are free to work in a way that is comfortable to them. Assistive technologies like calculators would also allow students to reach the end-goal of their task, completing the steps, but focusing on the end objectives. |

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| This lesson includes several barriers and missed opportunities that could improve the strength of the lesson. First of all, the lesson does not include much differentiation in the output of the lesson. All students complete the same task, and take the same notes with little option to make meaning in their own way. Secondly, while the levels of support may vary, this asks all students to complete the same tasks in the same order. | Principle III (Engagement)  *Why of Learning* | Revisions to this lesson should include a few key changes. First of all, while the tasks for students to complete are all the same, with scaffolded practice built in, the way students report out on their conclusions can be varied and include choice. A more open-ended formative assignment would allow for better assessment of student attainment and understanding. Secondly, students should have the choice about what kinds of groups to work in, or if they would like to work independently. This could be accomplished by allowing students to select a preference to work alone, and then guiding other students to partner in a heterogeneous way. | By adding an open-ended, creative assessment tool, students could use a variety of technological resources to highlight their learning. For example, a student may choose to make a cartoon using ToonDoo, write a paragraph response by hand or typing, or create a graphic organizer comparing the Virginia and New Jersey plans. | These resources support UDL because they allow students to express their understanding in an original, self-directed way. Each student has the freedom of choice, to self-direct their own work, while still sharing their knowledge in a concrete manner. |