Choices and Challenges: Journey to America

Grade Cluster – 6 – 8

NETS-S – 1 - Creativity and Innovation

Quick Look:

Students study immigration from both historical and present day perspectives. They create digital diaries that document the push/pull factors that cause people to leave their native country and the struggles of people who resettle in America. Interviews with current day immigrants and study of the current political issues provide information for students to consider how the struggles of early immigrants compare and contrast with modern immigrants' issues. Culminating projects include proposals to politicians via live interviews, informative podcasts, and opinion pieces shared with local media.

Scenario:

Msiba, from Kenya, and Thien, from Vietnam, are two new students in Ms. Jackson's eighth grade class. Neither can speak English. Other students are concerned about the difficulty in conversing with these newly enrolled students. A class discussion begins about why these students came to America and how difficult it must be to be immersed in a whole new culture. Students begin to question who is "really" an American and their own status as American citizens. They decide to research this topic based upon their own family history.

Students begin the study by confirming that most Americans are immigrants. Students interview family members to find out when and from what countries the first of their relatives came to the United States. Some students create a family tree online using *Geni.com*, while others use online graphic organizers such as *Mindomo* and *Bubbl.us* which allow distant family members to contribute information. (6a, 6b, 6d) Students also use digital media recording tools such as *digital voice recorders* and *Flip* video cameras to obtain family history from relatives who live nearby. As students study their family trees, they place markers on a class *Google Map* to pinpoint their families' countries of origin. Msiba and Thien work with the ESL teacher and their interpreters to plot their countries of origin.

Using the *Google Map* to find groupings of students' ancestors, teams of two to four students are formed based on country of origin. In the groups, students research the reasons why people left their native countries to move to the United States (e.g., war, famine, and lack of jobs). All teams record the reasons people left a country in a *Google Docs Spreadsheet* and then analyze this information to look for similarities and common threads. (1d) Using a new copy of an online graphic organizer, students document problems and opportunities faced by the immigrants. With help from the ESL teacher and interpreters, Msiba and Thien also add their reasons for leaving their countries so other students can look for commonalities between their ancestors and their new

classmates.

Students are then assembled into teams of ten "friends" to create digital *social networks* to document the journeys of the immigrants using a tool agreed upon by the group such as *Facebook,* or *Ning*. (6b) Each individual student creates a "profile" of an immigrant traveling to America, preferably based on a real ancestor, including information such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, and home address. Posts are used to create a travel diary/journal, beginning with the decision to leave their home and ending with finding a place to live in America. "Friends" within the network comment upon these virtual journeys. Photos include copies of actual documents collected from sites such as www.ellis.org (e.g., ship log and passenger record) or prototype documents that are created using a word processing or publishing tool. (1b, 6a, 6b) Msiba and Thien are included in the same project as members of a team, supported by their interpreters and the ESL teacher, as they document their journey to America.

As the journals are being created, several immigrants are invited to "visit" the class either virtually or in person.   Digital visits take place via *Skype* or the *Learning Network of Vermont Video Conferencing System (LNV).* (6a, 6b) Msiba and Thien send "invitations" to the people who helped them travel to America, as well as people from their culture that have already assimilated to American life.

Upon completion of the travel diaries and visits from immigrants, newly created groups of four students each research current day political issues related to immigration (e.g., the impact of illegal immigration on health care reform, custom detention centers, border enforcement, and public benefits for immigrants). As they research the current issues of immigration, they add to the graphic organizer they created earlier to compare and contrast problems and opportunities faced by earlier immigrants with today's immigrants. (1a, 1c, 6a) Each student finds at least one current events article or *podcast*/newscast relating to these issues to link to the class chart/*wiki* to support his/her contribution.

As a culminating project, each group of students does more in-depth research on a current immigration issue and completes one of the following projects:
1) Research politicians' positions on the chosen immigration issue, create a prioritized list of questions for the politician using a *wiki*, and arrange for an interview to be shared with the entire class, using a video-conferencing tool such as *Skype* or *LNV* (1a, 1b);
2) Create a persuasive *podcast* or *vodcast* with a convincing argument for one side of an issue dealing with immigration (1a, 1b);
3) Create a *wiki* with all of their information included and summarize their findings in a document that is e-mailed to local news media as well as their state representatives (1a, 1b).

Student Standards – The following NETS-S are noted in the scenario:
      1. Creativity and Innovation – A, B, C, D
      6. Technology Operations and Concepts – A, B

Teacher Standards –Teachers who teach this unit address the following NETS-T:
      1. Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity – A, B, C
      2. Design and Develop Digital-Age Learning Experiences and Assessments – A, C
      3. Model Digital-Age Work and Learning – B, D
      4. Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility – B

Content Grade Expectations

The scenario writer has identified the following content grade expectations that s/he felt might be assessed in this scenario. In most of these scenarios, there may well be opportunities to assess other or additional content grade expectations across a variety of disciplines. If you are interested in developing a unit or lessons based on the following scenario, and you don't see any grade expectations in your content area, we encourage you to capture the ideas presented in the scenario and make it your own by adding components that address the grade expectations you are most interested in assessing.

W7:11 In written narratives, students organize and relate a story line plot/series of events by…
- Creating a clear and coherent (logically consistent) story line
- Using a variety of effective transitional devices to enhance meaning
- Establishing context, character motivation, problem/conflict/ challenge, and resolution, and maintaining point of view

W7:12 Students demonstrate use of narrative strategies by…
- Creating images, using relevant and descriptive details and sensory language to advance the story line (purpose)
- Using voice appropriate to purpose
- Maintaining focus
- Controlling the pace of the story

H&SS7-8:1 Students initiate an inquiry by…
- Asking focusing and probing questions that will lead to independent research and incorporate concepts of personal, community, or global relevance.

H&SS7-8:6 Students make connections to research by…
- Formulating recommendations and/or making decisions based on evidence.
- Proposing solutions to problems based on their findings, and asking additional questions.

H&SS7-8:7 Students communicate their findings by…
- Developing and giving oral, written, or visual presentations for various audiences.
- Soliciting and responding to feedback.

H&SS7-8:12 Students show understanding of human interaction with the environment over time by…
- Recognizing patterns of voluntary and involuntary migration in the U.S. and world.
- Using information to make predictions about future migration.

H&SS7-8:14 Students act as citizens by…
- Identifying the various ways people become citizens of the U.S.
- Identifying problems, proposing solutions, and considering the effects of a course of action in the local community, state, nation, or world.