Describe-Interpret-Evaluate:

Thoughtful Students in the Making

Brooke Y. Hoffman

(Adapted from <http://www.intercultural.org>)

Subject: Classroom Climate Lesson (appropriate for any content area, although connections could easily be made to the mental processes used in reading and science)

Grade Level: Middle School

Time Frame:

* Best suited for use at the beginning of a school year, school term, or unit
* Spans two days (45 minute period each day), could easily be extended

Goals:

This lesson is designed to play a crucial role in establishing the classroom as a safe place for everyone. With this lesson as a starting point, the teacher begins to lay the framework for the yearlong task of raising up glocal (global + local) citizens. Although this lesson is designed for a classroom of English language learners (ELLs), it would be appropriate for students of all classes, ages, and levels.

* Students will become aware of how they constantly describe, interpret, and evaluate, and how these thought processes lead them to act.
* Students will practice discussing, both disagreeing and agreeing.
* Students will become more reflective, thoughtful members of their classroom, school, and larger community.

Objectives:

* Students will be able to (SWBAT) understand the concepts of description, interpretation, and evaluation.
* SWBAT produce several possible interpretations and evaluations for a given image.
* SWBAT discuss varying opinions in small groups and reach a consensus.
* SWBAT connect their classroom experience with an incident in their daily lives.
* SWBAT practice using the DIE strategy to deal with potential conflicts, producing alternative reactions.

State Standards:

Science

3.2.7.B Apply process knowledge to make and interpret observations.

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

1.3.8.E Analyze drama to determine the reasons for a character’s actions taking into account the situation and basic motivation of the character.

1.6.8.A Listen to others.

1. Ask probing questions.
2. Analyze information, ideas and opinions to determine relevancy.

1.6.8.DContribute to discussions.

1. Ask relevant, probing questions.
2. Respond with relevant information, ideas or reasons in support of opinions expressed.
3. Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
4. Adjust tone and involvement to encourage equitable participation.
5. Clarify, illustrate or expand on a response when asked.
6. Present support for opinions.
7. Paraphrase and summarize, when prompted.

1.6.8.F Use media for learning purposes.

* Describe how the media provides information that is sometimes accurate, sometimes biased based on a point of view or by the opinion or beliefs of the presenter.

Materials:

* Ambiguous objects (2), any objects that would be unknown to all of the students (i.e. Items from other cultures, from unusual hobbies, or rare hardware, gardening, or kitchen utensils)
* Blackboard, chalk
* Chart paper, markers
* Optional: “Observation Chart” graphic organizer
* Image (to be projected on white board, overhead, or handed out as hard-copy) of Asian female covering her mouth:

<http://pro.corbis.com/images/42-17165801.jpg?size=572&uid=%7B25DEECEC-A284-44A0-9382-BA8DA05D576C%7D>

* Images (1 per group) of ambiguous scenes or interactions from cultures other than the cultures of the students (to be handed out as hard-copies to small groups of students)
* Worksheet A (1 per group of 3 or 4 students)
* Notebook paper or journal (for students’ reflections)
* Scenario cards
* Worksheet B (1 per pair of students)

Procedure:

Day 1

1. The teacher will select one of the “ambiguous objects”, hold it up and pass it around for the students’ inspection, and say, “Tell me something about this.”
2. As the students volunteer suggestions, the teacher quickly records their ideas in three columns on the board. Although the headings are not written yet, the three columns represent description, interpretation, and evaluation.
3. Explain description, interpretation, and evaluation in the context of the activity. Description is something the students do by using their five senses: see, smell, touch, taste, and hear. Interpretation is what the students do when they suggest how the object might be used. Evaluation is what the students do when they give an opinion as to the usefulness, appropriateness, etc. of the object. Use the students’ ideas as examples for each category. Present and post the following chart as a summary:

Description: What I See

Interpretation: What I Think (About What I See)

Evaluation: What I Feel (About What I Think)

1. When the students seem to understand the three categories, ask them to prove their understanding by describing, interpreting, and evaluating another “ambiguous object”. Present the second object, using THINK-PAIR-SHARE to elicit descriptions first (only information that can be gathering through the five senses!). Record them on chart paper. If students are having difficulty sticking only to descriptions, have the students use the graphic organizer “Observation Chart” (see references).
2. Next, use THINK-PAIR-SHARE to elicit interpretations. Finally, use THINK-PAIR-SHARE to elicit evaluations, including both a positive and negative evaluation for each interpretation.
3. Tell students that they will now try the activity with a picture instead of an object. Show the image of the Asian girl smiling and covering her mouth with her hand. To build confidence, do an example together, such as the one below.

Example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Interpretation | Evaluation |
| I can see an Asian woman covering her mouth. | I think she’s yawning because she’s bored. | \*That’s okay. I don’t blame her a bit.  \*It’s rude. She should hold back the yawn. |

1. Then allow time for small groups of students (3 or 4) to come up with and discuss more interpretations and evaluations (both positive and negative). Possible interpretations and evaluations are recorded below.

**Description:** I see an Asian woman covering her mouth.

**Interpretation #1:** I think she’s burping and trying to be polite by covering hermouth.

**Alternative Evaluation #1:** I think it’s great that she’s trying to be polite.

**Alternative Evaluation #2:** I think that’s unnecessary. She should relax.

**Interpretation #2:** I think she’s surprised.

**Alternative Evaluation #1:** Covering her mouth is a natural reaction to shock.

**Alternative Evaluation #2:** She’s being too dramatic. It’s no big deal.

**Interpretation #3:** I think she’s smiling because she’s embarrassed.

**Alternative Evaluation #1:** She shouldn’t be so concerned. Smiling is nice.

**Alternative Evaluation #2:** She should be embarrassed for flirting with her smile.

1. Gather the whole class together and give each group time to show their photo and their description, interpretations, and evaluations. If time allows, let other students contribute suggestions as well. If the photographer’s interpretation is available, the teacher may choose to share it with the class after the group has presented their opinions.
2. Debrief by asking the students to share the most difficult part of the activity. Students may point out that it was hard to describe the photo without jumping ahead to interpreting and evaluating. They may also mention that it was difficult to think of alternatives.
3. Give students the following options for a homework journal entry:
   1. Describe a time someone misinterpreted something you did or said. What happened? How did you feel? Was the situation resolved? If so, how?
   2. Describe a time you misinterpreted something someone did or said. What happened? How did you feel? Was the situation resolved? If so, how?
   3. Describe something in your culture that others don’t usually understand or appreciate. If you could explain it to them, what would you say?

Day 2

1. Review the vocabulary used for yesterday’s activity: description, interpretation, and evaluation.
2. Give students the chance to share their journal reflections. Give students the opportunity to respond to each other.
3. Collect the journal responses.
4. Explain that the D-I-E strategy can help to build understanding between cultures, but can also be used between classmates, friends, teachers, students, neighbors, and family members. Tell students that after evaluation, reaction often comes quickly. If we take the time to carefully and thoughtfully think about a situation, we will be less likely to regret our reaction.
5. Give pairs of students a scenario card and ask them to complete a worksheet, recording a description, interpretations, evaluations, and the resulting actions. (Suggestion: Start with a scenario in which a teacher misunderstands a student’s action. After seeing how a teacher may misinterpret a student’s action, students will be more willing to acknowledge that students can also misinterpret teacher’s actions.)
6. Ask volunteer pairs to act out one person’s action and the other person’s reaction. Ask their classmates to guess the interpretation and evaluation that led to the reaction. It may be necessary to remind students that increasing understanding does not necessarily eliminate consequences. If possible, we should avoid misunderstandings, being as proactive as possible.
7. Debrief the role-playing, asking students why they think the teacher chose the activities of the past two days. Ask why it might be important to think about why people, including themselves, react the way they do.

Closure:

Share with students that reactions can become habitual. Sometimes we react without understanding why we reacted the way we did. Sometimes we react because we’ve seen others react in that way and without realizing it, we are following their example.

Ask students to think of a way they typically react that they would like to change. The teacher should give a personal example, sharing the scenario, his/her typical reaction, and how (s)he plans to interpret, evaluate, and react in the future. Ask students to either write or draw two scenarios, showing how they used to react and how they plan to react in the future. Allow volunteers to share with the class.

Extension Activity:

In pairs, have students choose a scenario or choose one of their own to use as the basis for a book modeled after the “Choose Your Own Adventure” books. Each book should describe a situation, providing the reader with options for interpretation, evaluation, and action. If possible, have students meet with younger students (i.e. 5th graders) to read the book and discuss building understanding between individuals and cultures.

Assessment:

Teacher can gauge students’ understanding through class discussions, THINK-PAIR-SHARE sessions, small group work, pair work, worksheets, role-plays, journal entries, and final project (either written or drawn).

References:

*Description, interpretation, and evaluation.* Intercultural communication institute.

Retrieved July 11, 2008 from <http://www.intercultural.org/pdf/die.pdf>

*Observation chart.* Houghton Mifflin Company. Retrieved July 11, 2008 from

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/observe.pdf>

Worksheet A

Name Date

Section

Topic: Description, Interpretation, and Evaluation

Description: What I See

Interpretation: What I Think (About What I See)

Evaluation: What I Feel (About What I Think)

Description:

Interpretation #1:

Evaluation (positive) of Interpretation #1:

Evaluation (negative) of Interpretation #1:

Interpretation #2:

Evaluation (positive) of Interpretation #2:

Evaluation (negative) of Interpretation #2:

Interpretation #3:

Evaluation (positive) of Interpretation #3:

Evaluation (negative) of Interpretation #3:

Scenario Cards

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A teacher sees a student pass a piece of paper to another student. | A student sees his/her classmate looking at him/her. | A teacher sees a student running down the hallway. |
| A student bumps into another student. | In a quiet classroom, a student suddenly yells. | A teacher sees a student whispering to another student. |
| A driver cuts you off on the highway, driving above the speed limit. | A student comes to school, not wearing their uniform. | An employee is late for work. |
| A friend is visiting. You offer him/her something to eat. (S)he refuses. | You call and leave a message on your friend’s voice mail. (S)he never calls you back. | TBD |
| TBD | TBD | TBD |

Worksheet B

Name Date

Section

Topic: Description, Interpretation, and Evaluation

Description: What I See

Interpretation: What I Think (About What I See)

Evaluation: What I Feel (About What I Think)

Description (Scenario):

Interpretation #1:

Evaluation (positive) of Interpretation #1:

Reaction:

Evaluation (negative) of Interpretation #1:

Reaction:

Interpretation #2:

Evaluation (positive) of Interpretation #2:

Reaction:

Evaluation (negative) of Interpretation #2:

Reaction:

Interpretation #3:

Evaluation (positive) of Interpretation #3:

Reaction:

Evaluation (negative) of Interpretation #3:

Reaction:

Reflection Questions (Record your answers in your journal):

1. Which interpretation do you think is the most realistic? Why?
2. If this scenario really happened, would there be any consequences for any of the people involved? What would they be? Who would be affected?
3. Which reaction would be the most harmful? Why?
4. Which reaction do you think would be the best? Why?
5. Could this scenario have been avoided? If so, how?