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Paideia Seminar Lesson Plan

Text: "Autobiography in Five Short Chapters" by Portia Nelson

Grade/Subject: Schoolwide, Early Elem, Upper Elem / ELA

Ideas, Values: Perseverance, Experience, Progress

Date of Origin: 11/5/2018

Pre-Seminar Content

Launch Activity:

Post the following statement: *People should do things that they do not enjoy doing.* Do a four corners activity, with Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree as options. Corner groups choose a spokesperson to share why the corner was selected. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. See if any members change their group affiliation as a result of hearing the groups' reasons for choosing the corner.

For Kindergarten and First Grade- Consider just posting Agree and Disagree in the classroom. You may want to have students turn and talk in each group to share and then have some students share out with the whole group to hear different opinions.

Inspectional Read:

Kg, Gr 1: Display the text on the Smart Board with the stanzas already numbered. Read text aloud to students.

Gr 2-5: Distribute the text and ask participants to anticipate what they expect this reading to be like. Read text for the first time aloud. Number the lines within each stanza.

Background Information:

Share as appropriate: Portia Nelson (born Betty Mae Nelson, 1920-2001) was an American popular singer, songwriter, actress, and author. She was best known for her appearances in

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the most prestigious 1950s cabarets, where she sang an elegant repertoire in a soprano noted for its silvery tone, perfect diction, intimacy and meticulous attention to words.

In 1965 she portrayed the cantankerous Sister Berthe in the film version of *The Sound of Music*; she also had a minor role as Sarah in the musical *Doctor Doolittle*; on TV's *All My Children* Nelson played the long-running role of the nanny, Mrs. Gurney. Her book of poetic musings, *There's a Hole in My Sidewalk: The Romance of Self-Discovery*, became a mainstay of twelve-step programs.

Vocabulary:

Review the definition of autobiography: an account of a person's life written by that person. Remind students of the Roman Numerals to five. Discuss *symbols* in terms students can understand. Provide meanings for any vocabulary which students may find unfamiliar; these may include *helpless, fault, pretend, habit, immediately, autobiography*.

Analytical Read:

Kg, Gr 1: Read aloud the text to students a second time and have students close their eyes and visualize the text. Then have students draw a picture of what you think the text is about. What are you visualizing?

Gr 2-5: Have students partner read the text. Share the opening question (What phrase do you think is most important?), so that participants can anticipate answering, and then re-read the text aloud while participants consider their answers.

Pre-Seminar Process:

- ✓ **Define and State the purpose for the seminar.**

“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.

“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.

- ✓ **Describe the responsibilities of facilitator and participants.**

“I am primarily responsible for asking challenging, open-ended questions, and I will take a variety of notes to keep up with the talk turns and flow of ideas. I will help move the discussion along in a productive direction by asking follow-up questions based on my notes. “I am asking you to think, listen and speak candidly about your thoughts, reactions and ideas. You can help each other do this by using each other’s names.

“You do not need to raise your hands in order to speak, rather, the discussion is collaborative in that you try to stay focused on the main speaker and wait your turn to talk.

“You should try to both agree and disagree in a courteous, thoughtful manner. For example, you might say, ‘I disagree with Joanna because...,’ focusing on the ideas involved not the individuals.

✓ **Have participants set a Personal Goal.**

“Now, please reflect on how you normally participate in a discussion as a group. What goal can you set for yourself that will help the flow and meaning of the seminar? “Please consider the list of personal participation goals – either on the Speaking and Listening Checklist or on the board.”

- ✓ To speak at least three times
- ✓ To refer to the text
- ✓ To ask a question
- ✓ To speak out of uncertainty
- ✓ To build on others’ comments

“Is there one that is relevant for you? Please choose one goal from the list or that you feel is best and commit to achieving it during the discussion we are about to have... write down (or circle) your personal goal.”

✓ **Agree on a Group Goal.**

For this seminar, I will suggest our group goal (select display for all to see).

Seminar Questions:

✓ **Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):**

Kg, Gr 1:

- ❖ What was your favorite part? (round-robin)
- ❖ Why is that your favorite part? (spontaneous discussion)

Gr 2-5:

- ❖ Which phrase do you think is most important? (round-robin)
- ❖ Why did you select that phrase? (spontaneous discussion)

✓ **Core (Analyze textual details):**

- ❖ **Kg-Gr 5** Why did the speaker fall in the hole? What makes you think that?

- ❖ **Kg-Gr 5** In the third stanza the speaker refers to falling as a habit. What does that mean? What makes you think so?
- ❖ **Gr 2-5** What do you notice about how long it takes the speaker to get out of the hole as the story goes along?
- ❖ **Kg-Gr 5** What do you think the hole symbolizes? What makes you think so? Why do you think that? (If needed, suggest that the hole might not just be a real hole in the ground)
- ❖ **Gr 2-5** What happened after the speaker finally accepted the responsibility for falling in the hole?

✓ **Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):**

- ❖ **Kg-Gr 5** What are your holes? What lessons can we learn about falling into our holes?

Post-Seminar Process:

“Thank you for your focused and thoughtful participation in our seminar”.

- ✓ **Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal goal.**

“As part of the post-seminar process, I would first like to ask you to take a few minutes to reflect on your relative success in meeting the personal process goal you set prior to beginning the discussion. Please review the goal you set for yourself and reflect in writing to what extent you met the goal. In addition, note why you think you performed as you did”. (Pause for reflection.)

- ✓ **Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of the seminar.**

“Now I would like us to talk together about how we did in relation to the group goal we set for ourselves (insert your group goal). On a scale of one to five, five being perfect, how would you say we did? Why?” (Pause for discussion.)

“Now, would someone be willing to (volunteer) to share your personal self-assessment and reflection?”

- ✓ **Note reminders for the next seminar.**

Post Seminar Content:

✓ **Transition to Writing:**

Gr 2-5 Give students a few minutes to write down things they thought, heard or said during the seminar that will help them explain how they may be able to persevere when a task is difficult.

✓ **Writing Task:**

Kg-Gr 5 Write about a time when you accomplished something that you didn't think you could. What did you learn from the experience?

✓ **Brainstorm:**

Kg-Gr 5 Have students talk in pairs about what the writing task is asking them to do, and share ideas about what each student might choose to write about.

✓ **Structure the Writing:**

Gr 2-5 Ask students to make an outline of the narrative they are planning to write.

✓ **First Draft:**

Gr 2-5 Challenge all to spend 10-15 minutes putting thoughts on paper according to their outline.

✓ **Collaborative Revision:**

Gr 2-5 Have participants work in pairs to read their first drafts aloud to each other with emphasis on reader as creator and editor. Listener says back one point heard clearly and asks one question for clarification. Switch roles. Give time for full revisions resulting in a second draft.

✓ **Edit:**

Gr 2-5 Once the second draft is complete, have participants work in the same pairs (as in the revision stage) and this time take turns reading each other's second drafts slowly and silently, marking any spelling or grammar errors they find. (Have dictionaries and grammar handbooks available for reference.) Take this opportunity to clarify/reteach any specific grammar strategies you have identified as a need. Give time for full revisions resulting in a third and final draft.

✓ **Publish:**

Kg-Gr 5 Create a class book or post the narratives on a bulletin board for others to enjoy.

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***Text is attached if open sourced.**

***Text is cited if it needs to be procured.**

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

By Portia Nelson

I

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes me forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place
but, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
my eyes are open
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.

