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CMStep Rationale Paper

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Rationale for Curriculum Component Choices

Value of kick-offs and culminating activities in general and the ones you chose in particular

I chose a group initiative for my kick-off, because most students, especially at Gamble Montessori High School, enjoy playing group initiatives. Through this the students begin to build a micro-community in their classroom and form positive relationships with their peers organically. As a result, this positivity is translated into the classroom and facilitates a better learning environment for both the students and the teacher. I selected the activity, What I'm Doing, as the kick-off for the cycle theme, independence/interdependence. Students arrange themselves into a circle and one student starts by saying what they are doing. For instance, "I'm jumping rope" and the student next to them must do the action, but exaggerated. Then that student tells the next student a statement and eventually everyone is pantomiming one another's statement. I envision everyone in the classroom to look very silly, including myself. I selected this particular group initiative because it was an activity that I would genuinely enjoy playing with my students. In addition, most students like to participate in group initiatives that have some light physical activity. It gives all students an opportunity to participate and have a good time. Also this activity will break down or at least crack students' walls they may have coming into an unfamiliar environment with unfamiliar people. The silliness of this group initiative will help with calming down some of the students' nerves. Furthermore, this activity allows students the freedom to express themselves in a safe environment without judgement. I plan to participate as well which means I will be making a fool out of myself and I don't mind it. Why? Because, it will demonstrate to students that I, as the teacher, am not shy about being my most authentic self. I hope that my actions will make students feel that they have the freedom to be who they are. "In the end, it is freedom that allows the children's self-formation. Montessori called freedom 'the key to the process of development' "(Polk Lillard 22).

For my culminating activity, I selected a fiesta day, but I will refer to it as, *Buen Provecho*, in class. In Latino/Hispanic communities they traditionally use the phrase, *buen provecho*, before eating their meals. It is the equivalent of the French phrase, *bon appétit*. In both languages *buen provecho* and *bon appétit* are used in a way to bless the food. The exact translation is, "enjoy

your meal”. Students will bring in food they made from their recipes that they had chosen for their projects at the beginning of the cycle. Students will also make their food presentable by creating food tents/labels to indicate the main ingredients and the name of each dish. Once all of the food is set out then the students will go up to retrieve their food and take their seats. They will wait for everyone to be seated with their food and then we will hold up our cups in the air to bless the food by saying, *buen provecho*. People especially adolescents love food, and before the pandemic students would always mention how they would like to have a food party. Also in my Spanish class in high school, I do not recall having the opportunity to have a food party in class. I would have felt more connected to my classmates and a sense of community if we had a culminating activity similar to the one I chose for one of my components. In summary, I want to continue to reinforce that my classroom is a safe place. Where we work together, eat together all in the name of community, but still acknowledge everyone as independent individuals. “The yearning to connect meaningfully with a group or community is strong in teenagers. A meaningful connection includes respect and care that encourages authenticity for each individual in the group” (Kessler 22). So what is the value of incorporating kick-offs and culminating activities in the classroom? It gives students a sense of belonging and an opportunity to sincerely connect with others.

The value of projects to guide instruction in general and the choices you made in devising your project in particular

Students will research a recipe of their choosing from a Spanish speaking country and then they will make the recipe and bring it to class. Specifically, students will research the origin of the dish, the health benefits, the tools needed to cook the food and there is also a reflection component to the project as well. The product of this project, the dish, will then be shared with everyone, which is a part of the culminating activity. “For this would result in a “valorization” of his personality, in making him feel himself capable of succeeding in life by his own efforts and on his own merits, and at the same time it would put him in direct contact with the supreme reality of social life. We speak therefore of letting him earn money by his own work” (FCTA, Montessori, 64). Adolescents can learn more about the world around them without having to buy a flight ticket to travel to that particular place. Projects will help students to develop a deeper meaning, purpose, and connection to the world and others around them. Projects also help students to discover their cosmic task and how they can improve our society, world, and

ultimately our universe. “It is evident that if an individual has entered into something great intellectually his enthusiasm will compel him to widen and deepen the extent of his knowledge. This we have always seen in our schools that directly the children have entered into a new field of knowledge and given the basis, their demand is so great that not only the teacher is unable to fulfil their demands but sometimes even the professors find themselves exhausted! It is this enthusiasm which enables the child to work without feeling fatigue. If, instead, the studies are dry and uninteresting, which is almost incomprehensible in our days when everything should lead to enthusiasm, it is then that he becomes tired and needs recreation” (Montessori, Public Lecture at Kingsway Hall).

Use of seminar as a teaching technique and the choice of your chosen piece in particular

Seminar is an amazing tool that does not discriminate against content areas. Anyone can incorporate seminars into their classroom, various forms of training, and in any other work related space. I use seminars in my classroom to reinforce information and to introduce new topics. For my seminar component, I selected a text that brings to light the struggle of Afro-Latinos in the United States as well in their country of origin. The text is called, *In the Heights and Colorism: What Is Lost When Afro-Latinos Are Erased*. This article offers some constructive criticism to film producers and directors to be conscious about who and how they are casting for their roles. Also how the public will view their film based on the biases they see in the featured film. The themes for my clustered questions are identity, connection, and perspective. Majority of the student population at James N. Gamble Montessori High School is black. They would greatly benefit from this seminar, because they would be able to make connections with their experiences with the experiences of Afro-Latinos they read in the article. “Through Socratic circles students begin to see each other as viable, important individuals capable of improving the quality of thinking and experience of all involved, regardless of race or background” (Copeland 22).

Value of regular and frequent group initiatives and games in general, and the choice of your group initiative and processing questions in particular.

Including regular, frequent group initiatives and games into the classroom build student morale. It leaves space for the students to have fun, gets them away from their desks, and helps students who need that movement. When students play group initiatives and games they think it is not related to school let alone the subject area. As a result, this creates a fun and welcoming

environment. I chose *Me gusta la gente que le gusta*, which means I like people who like. I selected this group initiative because it helps students to get to know each other better.

Awareness of process is crucial to group initiatives in order for students to properly reflect on the activity. My processing questions for this activity are, what did we do well on, what could we have done differently or what didn't go well, what can we do to improve for next time, and were you able to understand your peers' likes/dislikes in Spanish. "An important take-home message is that it is vital to keep the lines of connection and communication open and to remember that we all—adolescents and adults—need to be members of a connected community." — Daniel J. Siegel, *Brainstorm*

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