Analyzing Causes and Effects

Subject Areas: Social Studies and Science

Grade Levels: 6 – 12 (ages 11 -18)

Time: At least two 45-minute class periods, plus two periods if class presentations are given; time outside of class as necessary.

Lesson Objective:
Students will research the causes and effects of an event or situation.

Common Core State Standards¹:
College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading:
   Standard 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing:
   Standard 1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
   Standard 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Overview:
Analyzing the causes and effects of an event or situation can be challenging and sometimes controversial. Students need to think critically and organize what is often a large amount of information from multiple perspectives. However, doing so with a visual diagram can make the process much more manageable. In this lesson, students use the **Cause and Effect** template (**Webspiration Classroom™ Starter>Starter Docs>Social Studies>Cause and Effect**) to help them research the causes and short- and long-term effects of an event. Completed diagrams can then be used as visual aids in class presentations.
Preparation:
• This lesson requires Internet access and the Webspiration Classroom software application published by Inspiration® Software, Inc. It can be accessed by visiting <http://www.webspirationclassroom.com>.
• Access to library resources would also be helpful for student research.

Lesson:
1. Tell students that they will choose an event or situation and research its causes and effects. For example, if you are studying the Civil Rights Movement, ask them to choose a significant event that occurred throughout the course of the movement. They will use Webspiration Classroom to help organize their notes and thinking.

2. Open the Cause and Effect template and talk students through it so they understand the assignment. They will use the template to help them organize and better understand the information. Completed diagrams will serve as visual aids for presentations to the class at the end of the project.

3. Open the example file (Webspiration Classroom Starter>Examples>Social Studies>Cause and Effect) and talk the students through it, as well, so they know what is expected.

4. Explain that students can add visual Symbols available in the Symbol Palette, as well as text, to their diagrams. Adding symbols will help them and their readers to better understand and remember the content. Optional: Additional graphics can be inserted into diagrams via the Edit menu.

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5. Organize students into groups of 2-3 to complete the project. Tell students they will choose an event to research within a certain range of possibilities.

6. Student groups can collaborate on their diagram and obtain feedback from the teacher using the collaboration tools. Documents can be shared with others using the Collaborate tab. The Comment tab can be used to comment on the document, or the Chat tab can be used, if it is turned on at your school, to discuss ideas in real time.

7. Encourage students to add Hyperlinks to their sources of information, including any multimedia files available on the Internet.

8. Inform students they can use Notes to add additional information as they complete the project. They can go to Outline View to finish organizing their information.

9. Have students “publish” their work by making presentations to the class using a data projector or interactive whiteboard, if one is available, to display their diagrams as a visual aid during the presentation.
   - Notes can be turned on and off by clicking the Note Quick Controls in the upper-right corner of the icon with the note.
   - Subtopics can be hidden or viewed using the Subtopic Quick Controls to allow focused attention on the topics being discussed.

10. Lead a class discussion about the causes and effects of the events the students presented. Were there any “common threads” among the events? What kinds of actions were the most effective and resulted in the longest-lasting changes?

Adaptations / Extensions:
   - Provide students with a list of possible events or situations to research.
   - Incorporate primary source documents by providing students with first-hand accounts of the events.
   - Students can download their project to Inspiration® or a word processor, or transfer it to a Google Doc, to complete a written report about their events.
   - Have students take notes during their classmates’ presentations focused on the causes and effects of the events. A simple graphic organizer that could be used for this purpose is a piece of paper with one line drawn down the middle of it. Label one side “Causes” and label the other side “Effects.” Audience members could record details from a presentation on one side or the other.

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