

Friday, August 31, 2007

Teacher Resources

Nation Master .Com and State Master .Com Every teacher needs an up-to-date resource about the history, geography, politics and other information about the countries of our world. NationMaster.com is like the CIA World Fact Book on steroids. Link to the sites: NationMaster.com, StateMaster.com. Wide, Deep and Broad in Scope: NationMaster.com and StateMaster.com can provide the standard fare, i.e.: Flags

Maps

Statistics

Country Profiles

FAQs

News

Site Search

Free Lesson Plans The sites also has a forum. Uses of Geography In a country where many students can't identify the country of Iraq on a map, even though our country has been at war there for the majority of their lives, geography is important.

Geography is one area where our students are being "left behind."

The power of sites such as NationMaster.com and StateMaster.com is that teachers don't have to remain the sole expert about country and state information.

With Internet access, students can search for the facts and figures that fascinate them. Then, it is up to the teacher to tell stories, and weave this information into concepts and higher-order thoughts. A Resource for (Almost) Every Subject, Even Math Classroom Toolkit advocates teaching math at every opportunity in every subject. The same recommendation goes for geography, history and news (current events).

Background information is the natural segue into every lesson, because: If stories were written, they were written in a country (maybe a state, province or political division within that country)

If stories have settings, these may be in countries, regions or cities within those countries

If science discoveries were made, these discoveries were made within countries, by scientists that were either citizens of that country, or by scientists that were born elsewhere

If food is being prepared, that food came from somewhere

If sports are being played, they are also played in other states and other countries. And many sports heroes (and national icons) come from other countries

Etc. On and on: You get the idea Not only are children interested in other countries, but they often communicate with students from around the world.

How?

Children play online video games with others at home.

A Nation of Immigrants

With the recent rancorous debate and divisive public opinion our country's immigration laws, our students need to become conversant of the issues.

In some schools and in some communities, there could be one or more "illegal immigrant" children sitting at the desks of its classrooms.

Students could suffer distress to learn that some folks in our country, politicians among them, might consider their friends to be "criminals and unsavory elements" in our society.

Do the math. Not every one of the estimated 12 million "undocumented aliens" is a maid, migrant farm worker, construction worker or custodian. A bunch of them are children. Sidebar The existence of these children in our school has to gall certain politicians among us.

Not only do these children consume resources, but these children are primarily of the "wrong religion," and they consume public school resources that could be used to send children of the "right religion" (i.e., their rabid constituents children), to church schools at government expense. Too bad that this is illegal. Of course, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is designed to fix this by making our public schools (and our teachers) look bad; and provide an excuse to give government money to pay for church school tuition for these children.

Hopefully, this brand of bigotry (both the politicians of this ilk and NCLB) are on the way out. The next election will tell.

But, teachers are "child-centered" and politically neutral in public. In private, NCLB is enough to turn the vote of many teachers away from the party that "rammed it down the gullets" of our schools. Mature Resources "Mature resources" does not mean that these two sites are for adults, but that they have deep and well developed content.

Of course, StateMaster.com is the newer of the two online resources, so its content isn't quite as expansive. (We're sure that it will get to this level in short order.)

In addition, the close integration with Wikipedia.com seems to be a plus, even though the validity of the information

in Wikipedia™ is sometimes of less than first quality.

In summary, NationMaster™ and StateMaster™ are resources that can help almost all teacher to integrate geography, history and current events into all subjects.

Children respond to this holistic approach to "human interest-type" knowledge with excitement and curiosity, a welcome "breath of fresh air" that can spruce up and spice up the bland taste of our "politically correct" textbooks.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00