Level 3 Civics and Citizenship - Graffiti Sheets in the Classroom

PEEL in Practice: 1300 ideas for quality teaching
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This activity was used at the 'Tuning In' stage at the beginning of a unit of work on Rights and Responsibilities. It is a brainstorming activity designed to find out what children know about the terms given and from there to clarify definitions of these terms.

Large sheets were labeled with the terms needs, responsibilities, wants, rules, rights and fairness. The children moved individually around the sheets writing the ideas they had for each word. They were encouraged to read what others had written (but did not have to agree with others' opinions) before writing their own contributions.

This activity supported all students. They were all active - either writing, reading others' ideas or discussing the ideas of others. The highly able children could write all their ideas and the less able or confident children could add their ideas but also build on the initial ideas of others. The children could move freely from sheet to sheet spending as long or as little time at each one as they wished.

My aim was to include all the children in the collection of ideas. All the children were involved and active and all ideas were accepted at this stage. It was not left to the vocal and confident few to give the answers.

In small groups, the children analysed the sheets using a list of questions to be considered:

- What does the term mean to us?
- What have other students said?
- What stands out as the main idea?
- What else do we need to know about this term?
- What are some of the examples of this term?

The students had to work co-operatively and agree on the definition to report to the class.

The whole class then discussed the findings of each group report, with others able to ask questions. The children all thought of the word 'rights' as in right and wrong rather than a just claim or something to which a person is entitled.

Although I felt that the sessions were successful, I feel that the process would be made more efficient, and there would be less likelihood of the children using alternative meanings for the words, if a sentence stem was used rather than a word for each chart - e.g.:

I want
I have the right to
It is fair when
The students were allowed to use pictures, but for a future activity I would encourage them to be used more freely. The children enjoyed using any writing implement they chose and the use of colour was promoted.

As an alternative, the children could write their own individual definitions of the terms which could then be pasted onto large charts, added to and analysed by small groups first and then by the whole class.

To follow up this activity, the students could then write their own definitions for each term using words and pictures. This would assess the children's understanding.

As an evaluation of the effectiveness of the activity, the children could complete a PMI. (Plus, Minus, Interesting and new ideas) or use a Venn Diagram to compare it with a class discussion.

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