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8th Grade Lesson Plan

Exploring Ubuntu as an African Worldview

Ubuntu originates from the phrase "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," meaning "a person is a person through other people"(Bolden, 2014). Ubuntu is a collectivist worldview that embraces cultures and social groups for the betterment of the entire community. Ubuntu principles of community, humanity, sharing, and caring are cornerstones of collectivist societies (Chong, 2020). Seeing ourselves through others increases respect and a desire to share and work together. In the 2025 Fulbright-Hays GPA program, there were multiple examples of Ubuntu and how communities can work together to make a difference with the help of others (US Department of Education, 2025). The Safe Cities Program in Cape Town, South Africa, is Ubuntu in action (Safe Cities, n.d.) The program levers include giving children a safe learning and play space, working with women to help them understand their value, training people in construction, producing plays that are made available at local schools, and more. This lesson plan will focus on one lesson for 8th grade students to help them understand the principles and how they can incorporate them into their lives, schools, and home communities.

Reading Assignments, group summaries and presentations: Students will be divided into three groups. Each group will be assigned a book to read one week before Ubuntu is discussed in the classroom. At the end of the week, the students will present an overview of the book they have

read so that they will have a clear understanding of Ubuntu. The reading materials are for students ages 12 years and up with a primary focus on Middle school students.

I Am You: A Book About Ubuntu, written by Moahloli, R. (2022)

Everyday Ubuntu: Living Better Together, the African Way, written by Mungi Ngomane (2020)

Botho-Ubuntu: A Collection of Short Stories & Poems, an anthology compiled by Gladys Ke-Di-Bone Mokwena (2023).

Review of Ubuntu Principles

Human Dignity

Respect

Compassion

Solidarity

Sharing

Caring

Hospitality

Community

Reconciliation

Harmony

*Ubuntu information (Mugumbate, 2023)

Terms

Interconnected Self (Niedenthal, P. M.,1997)

*Cultural Values

*Collectivism

*Individualism

*(Klein, N.D., *et al., 2024)*

Learning Goals:

- Understanding Ubuntu principles (i. e., community, caring, sharing, respect, and solidarity)
- Apply Ubuntu principles to a case study scenario using a problem-based learning approach
- Using empathy as a tool for collaboration and real-world problem solving
- Understanding how individual actions reflect on community well-being

The case study allows students to learn how to problem-solve using the principles of Ubuntu (Khamsong et al., 2022).

Case Study:

Cape Town, South Africa, is an exceptionally diverse area where movie stars like Will Smith and Chris Rock own homes that lie along the ocean with amazing views of a place called Table Mountain (Meadows, 2015). At night, the lights glimmer on the hillside overlooking the beauty of the Cape. The roads that lead in and out of Cape Town mask poverty. Two highways, N1 and

N2, divide the wealthy residents from the poorest who live in poverty in areas referred to as the flats (Paulsen, 2025). A group of Americans visiting Cape Town were taken to meet with the principal of a school where the children from one of the flats sat in classrooms with more than 40 children crammed into classrooms suited for 20 or fewer. There are no computers, no heaters in the cold months, and no air conditioners in the hot summers. Shortly after the visit, a large food distribution company contacted the school principal and said they were willing to donate a large number of computers to the school, and in return the school would be required to serve the company's unhealthy food products to her students. As badly as the computers were needed, the principal realized that what was being offered were replacement meals that were high in fat and sugar and would likely result in poor health outcomes over time. If the school refused the donation, there would be no computers; however, if they accepted, the children would mostly suffer in other ways. The parents and the school principal needed to work together to decide what was best for the children.

Case Study Key Questions

What does "I am because we are mean to you, and how does it apply to the case study?"

Which Ubuntu principles are most needed to resolve the challenge presented in the case study?

Do you think the parents and the school need to work together to determine what's best for the school and the children? If so, which principles matter most?

Questions for further discussion?

Have you made a decision that made you feel better about yourself but did not include concerns or the feelings of others?

When you work with others, which principles of Ubuntu are you most likely to use?

Do you believe it's better for every person to look out for themselves or to identify solutions by working together?

Do you believe that your class works well when faced with problems that affect all of the students?

Which principles of Ubuntu do you believe are most important to creating a great community?

Outcomes:

Students will be able to compare the benefits and challenges of individualist and collectivist communities

Students will be able to identify Ubuntu principles

Students will understand the meaning of Ubuntu

Key Knowledge and Skills students should achieve in the lesson taken from relevant curriculum documents.

Understanding the benefits of working together

Identifying problems that occur when communities are only concerned with individualism

After participating in the lesson, students will be able to write a one-page essay sharing the Ubuntu principle they like most and why they feel it is important in the classroom, at home, or in their community.

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