
MISSION 1: “For Crown or Colony?”
Pre-Game Activity:
Was the Principal of Empire Middle School Fair and Right?
Exploring Point-of-View

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

Read the following text to the class:

Late last September, Mr. Imus Dubedder, the principal of the Empire Middle School, came on the loudspeaker and said the following:

“Good morning, boys and girls. I have recently received a report on the scores our students earned on last spring’s state-wide reading and math tests. Unfortunately, each of those two school averages has gone down by several percentage points. The superintendent of schools has called to express his disappointment in us and to say that we must improve. The superintendent closed down three schools last year because of low scores over a period of time, and no one wants that to happen to Empire.

“So, effective immediately, I am instituting the following changes: First, the physical education program, and the music and arts programs will be cut back one period per week per student, and those periods will be used for extra reading and math study and test prep. Next, all English and math teachers are instructed to give at least two extra hours of weekend homework in those subjects.

“While this might not be the best news, as good citizens of Empire, you all understand that it is the right thing to do, and so I know I can count on your complete cooperation with these measures. Thank you and have a good day.”

(Take questions for clarification and/or read the passage again.)

Now, I’m going to ask you to choose a ticket from the grab bag (or assign the roles to small groups of students who will work together). On the ticket will be the name of a person and a brief description of that person’s relationship to the Empire Middle School community (give your students an example.). You (or your group) will be taking on the part of the person named on your ticket. Think about how you might feel about the principal’s announcement if you were that person. Make notes in the first person, that is, as if you were that person. When you’re ready, we’ll discuss your responses.

Does anyone have any questions?

Student Organizer (cut up this page and put each slip into your class grab bag)

<p>Mr. Imus Dubedder School Principal</p>	<p>Mr./Ms. Latburn Phys Ed Teacher</p>
<p>Mr./Ms. Sideman Assistant Principal</p>	<p>Altrie Harter Student who had low grades in last year's reading and math tests</p>
<p>Jess Fein Student who had excellent reading and math grades on last year's reading and math tests</p>	<p>Ms. Uneeda Reedmore English Teacher</p>
<p>Mr. Adam Upp Math Teacher</p>	<p>Your Parent or Guardian If you were a student at Empire Middle School (You can decide what your grades on last year's tests were.)</p>

Give your students what you feel is an appropriate length of time to write their opinions and the reasons for them before they discuss with anyone. If students are working in groups, tell them not to discuss the questions before they write, but give them time to share their ideas before reporting out to the class.)

Ask your students the following questions:

1. Was Mr. Dubetter's proclamation over the loudspeaker the right thing to do?

2. What reasons can you give for agreeing with him/her?

(Example: Mr./Ms. Sideman may say "Principal Dubedder only has the best interest of every student in the school in mind. He wants everyone to improve. No one likes to work harder if they don't have to, but even the students who did well last year might do even better this year.")

3. Was Mr. Dubetter's proclamation over the loudspeaker the wrong thing to do?

4. What reasons can you give for disagreeing with him?

(Example: Jess Fein may say "I think it's wrong. My grades were excellent. Why do I have to lose gym, art and music and do extra work? I'm being punished for nothing!")

Discussion:

Most of the students should be eager to express themselves on these questions. Keep track of the responses on your board or on charts on which the characters' names are written. If the students work in groups, you might decide to have one person report from each group or to have each group write their responses on chart paper that can be shared.

After you feel that most or all of the class is on board (they don't have to agree, just be involved), refer to one of the sections of the responses and say:

Does it make sense that _____ would be for/against this? Why?

Take responses.

Repeat this process for a few of the other characters.

If no one has articulated the concept yet, say:

So, then, who is right?

Try to elicit from the class some expression of the idea that, at least in this case, what a person feels is right might depend on who he/she is in the situation, how he/she is affected by a decision someone else makes.

Ask others if they agree. If there's time, ask for other examples of similar instances in their lives.

Close by complimenting the students on their thinking, and by telling them that in the activities of the next several days, they may see a similar phenomenon, that is, that characters they meet may feel differently about an issue depending on their particular points-of-view. You can decide to make the connection between this discussion and the game/historical period, or you can revisit this topic after the students play the game.

Extension:

Decide the most appropriate and effective way to share the poem, "The Blind Men and the Elephant," by John Godfrey Saxe. A copy of the poem follows on the next page.

Then, encourage students to articulate the connection between the previous activity, the period they are studying (including the MISSION US game), and this poem.

Some variations:

1. Read the poem aloud without pausing for questions or comments. Allow the students about five minutes to write a paragraph explaining what the poem is about. Then discuss their ideas.
2. Read the poem to the class, pausing to have students paraphrase after each chunk. Write their interpretations on the board. At the end, ask them to look at the notes, tell the story of the poem, and to explain its lesson.
3. Call on students to read parts of the poem aloud, and then proceed according to the directions of #1 or #2.
4. Give each student an annotated copy of the poem. Allow time for all the students to read it independently. Then discuss as suggested above.
5. Give each student an annotated copy of the entire poem and allow time for them to read it independently. Assign each of six groups of students one of the six men of Indostan. In the discussion, call on each of the groups to read their stanza and to interpret it for the class. You might have each of the students in each group make a small drawing (4.25 in X 5.5 in) of the elephant from the point-of-view of their person to share. Then discuss the poet's conclusion together. Students might color their drawings for homework and they could be posted around a copy of the poem.

