

NJ History in the Classroom

By Annie Gill

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This edition's NJ History Lesson Plan comes to you from Annie Gill. Ms. Gill graduated from Monmouth University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in History and Special Education. She completed her student teaching at Long Branch High School.

Upon graduating from Monmouth, Ms. Gill moved to Philadelphia to teach. She had such a positive experience at Long Branch High School, however, that after completing a year of teaching in Philadelphia, she moved home and began her career with the Long Branch School District in 2010. Anne currently teaches United States History to tenth and eleventh grade students and was named Long Branch High School Teacher of the year for the 2014-2015 school year. Her favorite aspect of teaching is, in her words, "creating lessons for her students that make history come to life." She specifically aims "to connect events from the past to current affairs, to help students better understand why examining history is an essential component of their lives."

According to Ms. Gill, the following lesson "is a result of a concerted effort to provide high school students with a more in-depth understanding of the role of New Jersey in early American history. Most students receive a unit of instruction on New Jersey History at an elementary school level, providing learners with a solid background on New Jersey's past. By the time they reach high school, students are equipped with the skills to now analyze the role of New Jersey at a more critical and deeper level."

Objective:

Students will be able to (SWBAT) compare and contrast the 1776 NJ State Constitution with the US Constitution by analyzing secondary sources and creating a comparative timeline.

Standards:

- NJCCCS: 6.1.12.A.2.b Compare and contrast state constitutions, including New Jersey's 1776 constitution, with the United States Constitution, and determine their impact on the development of American constitutional government.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3: Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

Essential Questions:

1. How are governments created, structured, maintained, and changed?
2. What impact did the NJ Constitution have on American Constitutional Government? What impact did the American Constitution have on the NJ Constitution?

Do Now: (Activating Prior Knowledge)

1. Create a T-Chart on the white board- one side representing the NJ Constitution and one side representing the US Constitution.

2. Provide students with mini dry erase boards, communicator paddles, or paper.
3. Select one student from the class to create a list on the board of class responses/thoughts/ideas.
4. First, ask the students to write on their mini dry erase boards what they know about the US Constitution. Responses will vary, but the students will have prior knowledge on the topic, and should be able to provide a variety of complex facts about the document.
5. Next, ask the students to write on their mini dry erase boards what they know about the NJ Constitution. Again, responses will vary, but the students will have significantly less knowledge regarding this topic. Elicit as many responses as possible, and then ask the students to respond in writing to the following prompt:

In your life today, do you feel that our state government or federal government have a bigger impact on your daily life? What role do the state and US constitution play in your lives?
6. Provide the students with enough time to respond to the prompt, discuss their responses, and explain the objective of the lesson and the activity for the day.

Lesson Activities:

1. Divide the class into groups of four. From the groups of four, two of the students will become a NJ Constitution Expert Group, and two of the students will become a US Constitution Expert Group.
2. Each expert group will be provided with a copy of the article *Constitutionally New Jersey*, by Jodi L. Miller, and a copy of an information text that details the creation of the Constitution from whitehouse.gov.

3. Each expert group will be responsible for analyzing their article for the following information:
 - Year of Creation
 - Constitutional Leaders
 - Constitutional Conventions
 - Revisions
 - Controversies
 - Included Powers/Forgotten Powers
4. Following expert group analysis, the group will rejoin together and share the information they found.
5. Together as a group, the students will produce a timeline of the two events (including significant events and leaders) to create a visual that not only shows the important events surrounding the creation and history of the two constitutions, but also provides a visual aid that shows how the two historical events overlapped in time.

Closure:

1. Exit Slip: After the students discuss the NJ State Constitution and the US Constitution and create their timeline they will respond to the following prompt:

The NJ Constitution was signed in 1776; eleven years later, the US Constitution was signed. Based on your research, your discussion with your peers, and your timeline, what impact if any do you believe the NJ Constitution had in influencing the US Constitution? What impact if any do you believe the US Constitution had in influencing the revisions of the NJ Constitution? Please be specific in your response, and include evidence and details from the articles provided.

Resources:

Constitutionally New Jersey:

<https://www.njsbf.org/images/content/1/1/11068/Constitutionally%20NJ.pdf>

The Constitution:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/constitution>