Sarah Weller

ADO 421 Student Teaching Overseas
Assignment:
Imagine that you are going to teach a unit or learning segment to your future students in the U.S. about the culture in which you have student taught. Create an overview of the unit or learning segment that indicates the content you will teach, the learning goals you will have for your students, and the resources you intend to use. The overview may be a graphic organizer, an outline, or any similar format that you choose. Write a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper that explains (a) what you intend to teach – as represented in the overview, (b) why you value this, and (c) why you believe this would be of value to students in the U.S.

What the Heck’s a Brekkie?
An exploration of Australian Culture through Language and Colloquialisms

When I began thinking about my learning segment, I considered everything that I’ve learned since arriving in Australia, as well as some of the cultural norms I wish I’d known beforehand. While I wasn’t culture shocked per se, there were definitely things I was taken aback by when I stepped off the plane. Suddenly I was surrounded by men in tiny shorts, Hungry Jacks, cars driving down the wrong side of the road, and an entire country of people who forgot to pronounce the letter “r.” Everything that I’d thought would affect me most—the climate, public transport, a 15-hour time difference, being on the opposite side of the Earth—fell to the wayside in comparison to small cultural differences. Sure, I enjoyed the 80 degree temperatures and close proximity to the ocean, but actually living and working here made me appreciate the minute, ordinary variances more than I’d ever expected. I went from not knowing which way to look before crossing the road to hopping off a train in my romper, grabbing a sausage roll, and greeting my mates with a “hey, how ya going?” at the shopping centre. I ate at barbies, swung a cricket bat, relaxed during morning tea, and enjoyed the sunshine in my bather. Australia turned out to be nothing that I expected and everything that I wanted. I designed my learning segment around the conception that the understanding of a culture goes far beyond landmarks and
stereotypes, and is instead rooted in how local people eat, dress, play, and interact. I wanted to create a learning segment that showed my students the real Australia, a nation that has come to feel like my second home.

I decided to split my learning segment into five days—a week-long segment. Each day is allocated a broad theme such as food, clothing, sports, schooling, and interactions. Being an English major, I’ve always been fascinated by differences in language—not only accents, but the actual terminology and colloquialisms used. Although Australians speak English, their phrases, manners, and terms are quite different from American English. Little things caught my attention immediately. Tomato sauce is ketchup, and it’s much thinner and less sweet. Jumpers are sweaters, and they’re rarely required. Uni is college, and most kids live at home for it. And “you’re alright” doesn’t mean that you’re okay, it means “don’t worry about it.” Everything felt simultaneously familiar and foreign, and it was fun to pick up on the subtleties that made Australian culture unique. I wanted my lessons to be oriented around topics that are actually relevant to Aussies, not tourists and guidebooks.

I think I would begin each lesson by just having the main terms listed on the board, and then delving into their explanations, examples, and connected tasks. The materials I elected to include were largely authentic, tangible, or visual representations of the content. If I’m going to be teaching my students about Australian food, I want to have restaurant menus, newspaper ads, cooking show clips, maps showing immigration patterns, and, of course, samples. Students won’t be content to merely learn about cricket, they want to hold a bat in their hands and see how it’s different than a baseball bat. I recognize that realistically it would be difficult to have samples of everything, but technology definitely makes it easier to show students real-life examples of the
material I’m presenting. I also thought it would be beneficial for students to look at Australian novels and even school workbooks to see how education is different than in the States.

My tasks were developed with the idea that students should be able to put their knowledge into practice. Memorizing greetings isn’t sufficient. Rather, being able to hold a conversation using colloquialisms exemplifies a legitimate understanding of language. I not only wanted the activities to be engaging, but also challenging. Students are mandated to make critical decisions about how to present their knowledge in the most novel and accurate way possible, and the assignments force them to view things from an Australian perspective.

I feel that my learning segment would be of value to US students because it removes them from what they know and places them in a position of unfamiliarity. I hope that the topic of Australian colloquialisms would ignite their curiosity and desire to learn more about other cultures, and that they would begin to appreciate differences rather than devalue them. I worry that our nation’s younger generation—and even my own—are too wrapped up in our own lives and problems. We fail to recognize the value of traveling, exploring, and educating ourselves about the rest of the world. My learning segment is designed to help my students transition towards more open, inquisitive, and compassionate mindsets, and also just have fun with words, phrases, and Australian culture in general. Although physical travel is not always possible, students need to be reminded of the unbounded possibilities that are still within their reach. It is through the lessons that we create and multicultural materials we provide that educators are able to help students grow into insightful global citizens.