

Keiskamma

Learning the Hard Way



KEISKAMMA CANADA

Learning the Hard Way

Grade 5/6

60 minutes

- Materials:
- Very short dull pencils for each student
 - one small hand pencil sharpener
 - one package of crayons – well used
 - one eraser
 - one glue stick
 - 1 scissors
 - 3 sheets of poster paper
 - 3 magazines

General Objective: To raise awareness on how students struggle to learn in rural areas in developing countries

Specific outcomes:

- The students will experience and understand the frustration of trying to learn with little or no resources
- The students will understand the necessity of cooperation when supplies are limited

Preparation: Before the class the teacher will cover any books or reference material. The teacher's desk will be clear except for a single container that will hold the crayons, eraser, pencil sharpener, scissors and glue stick.

Introduction: Show the students a map of South Africa and the location of the tiny village of Hamburg.

Tell the students they will be experiencing what it is like for grade 5 students at a rural Eastern Cape South African school, doing an assignment.

There are no reference books available and no computers. The students have no teacher. The principal comes in each day and gives them work to do. Today they are to make posters of animals, plants and insects of the world.

Student activity:

The students are divided into three groups and each student given a stubby pencil. Each group is given a sheet of poster paper, one of the magazines and assigned one of the poster topics. They may cut and paste pictures from the magazines and trade the magazines between groups. They may also draw and colour. They may **not** ask help from the teacher. Except for the pencils each student has been given, the rest of the supplies sit in a container on the teacher's desk. They are to share using the supplies.

Assessment and reflection:

At the end of 30 minutes the teacher has the students return to their desks and record their feelings about the assignment in their journals.

The teacher then reads the "personal story" and opens a discussion to assist the students in reflecting.

The teacher may ask the following questions:

How did you feel about this assignment? Why?

What were the frustrations?

What was good about the experience?

How do you think the students feel at the school in the story?

Personal Story :

When I was in South Africa with another teacher, volunteering in schools for Keiskamma Trust, we were walking past a classroom when two students came to the doorway and motioned for us to come in. This was a grade five classroom. We went inside to a barren room with three small tables. There was no teacher. They hadn't had a teacher for over a year. The principal who teaches grade 6 comes in each day and gives them work to do. They have very little in the way of supplies. The government gives some school supplies but never enough for everyone. Many are orphans or come from very poor families. Even if they had any money, the nearest town to buy school supplies is over 100 kilometres away. Hardly anyone in the village has a vehicle and the mini bus that stops at the village only comes every two hours.

Students were neatly dressed in school uniforms and gathered around the tables working on posters, just like you have been doing. They had glued pictures from magazines and drawn other images. They had no reference books in the classroom and no access to computers. They had no teacher to ask. They asked us if we could help them identify some of the pictures on their posters and where the plants, animals or insects in the pictures might be from in the world. The pictures they had drawn themselves were ones they were familiar with and were neatly labeled. However, even some of the ones they had drawn were not labeled because they weren't sure how to spell the name and had nowhere to check it. We helped them identify pictures and they were full of smiles and questions. The students we saw were polite and eager to learn.

Some teachers at the school travel over 100 kilometres to come and teach each day. Some students walk over five kilometres to reach school. We saw how difficult it was for these children to learn. They have almost no materials and supplies. Many of them have only one meal a day, which is supplied by Keiskamma Trust.

J. Marilyn Scott