Lesson: What Does the Pledge of Allegiance Really Mean?
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Grade Level: Lower Elementary

Common Core Standards:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7 Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2c Use linking words and phrases (e.g., also, another, and, more, but) to connect ideas within categories of information.

Wisconsin Academic Standards:
- B.8.5 Use historical evidence to determine and support a position about important political values, such as freedom, democracy, equality, or justice, and express the position coherently
- C.8.2 Identify and explain democracy’s basic principles, including individual rights, responsibility for the common good, equal opportunity, equal protection of the laws, freedom of speech, justice, and the majority rule with protection for minority rights.

Essential Questions:
- What do the words in the Pledge actually mean?
- How good of a job have we done as Americans living up to these words?

Learner Outcomes – Students Will Be Able To:
- Identify synonyms for key terms in the Pledge
- Include key terms from the Pledge in original sentences
- Explain instances in which the United States has not lived up to ideals of the Pledge

Procedure:

Phase 1
1. Have the students recite the Pledge of Allegiance:

   Have the words written down by phrases
   I pledge
   Allegiance
   To the flag of United States of America
   And to the republic
   For which it stands,
One nation,
Under God,
Indivisible
With liberty
And justice for all

2. Have students brainstorm meaning of each underlined word.
3. Explain what each of the underlined words mean. For each term, have students brainstorm synonyms for these words and examples of times in which they have used these words and heard others use these words.
4. Students will then be assigned one of these words. Using a student dictionary, each student will look up a definition.
5. Students will then define the term in their own words.
6. Next, students will create an original illustration of the word.
7. Finally, students will create a sentence that includes the assigned word.

Closure: Students will share their original illustrations and sentences to make a class collage.

Assessment: Successful completion of illustration and sentences that reflect the meanings of these terms.

Phase 2
1. Have students review meaning of each underlined word and find the dictionary meaning. Also discuss the history of the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Use the Civil War as an example of a time the United States was not united and some Americans broke their allegiances and pledges to the nation.
3. Show students a picture of suffragettes in the early 20th century. Ask students to come up with ideas why these women were marching.
4. After gathering responses, explain to students some rights women lacked at the time. Ask students which terms in the Pledge the denial of these rights violated.
5. Show students a clip of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Provide background on the struggle for civil rights and relate it back to issues during and prior to the Civil War. Ask students which words in the Pledge were examples of standards Americans were not living up to in the midst of denying rights to some Americans.
6. Re-write the Pledge of Allegiance using the new meanings. Use specific examples of what those words mean. For example, using “indivisible,” bring in a chain that can not be divided, united show the states by regions and then together.

Closure: Read the revised Pledge of Allegiance as a class. Randomly call on students to share what key terms from the actual Pledge mean.

Assessment: Student responses to discussion prompts and class questions.