Global Geography
China's One Child Policy Lesson Plan

Standards:
Cedar Rapids School District SLE's:
- Interpret, explain, and evaluate the interaction of people and their environment historically, and relative to contemporary issues of environmental change
- Analyze the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to current and emerging global issues such as resource allocation and economic development
- Interpret and explain how culture, human needs, government policy, and values and ideals are reflected in the design of community environments
- Create, interpret, use, and synthesize information from a variety of representations of the Earth, such as maps, globes, etc.

National Geography Standards:
- The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics (10)
- How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future (18)
- How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective (1)

Grade Level: Ninth
Class Time Needed: Two 50-minute class periods

Background/Context/Purpose: The Chinese government introduced a one-child policy in the 1970s as a way to slow their skyrocketing birth rate. The policy began as completely voluntary. Over the years, the government began to use financial incentives to reward families with only one child and punishments to families with more than two children. The policy, while effective in slowing the birth rate, has had negative consequences for the Chinese population. Perhaps the worst were (and are) instances of forced abortions, and/or abortions after an ultrasound determines the female sex of a fetus. The preference for a male child has led to the overcrowding of orphanages with young girls. The high rate of male to female births leaves many sons without the prospect of a wife. There is also no one to care for the quickly aging Chinese population. This lesson leads students to examine the history of the one-child policy and the tenants of the policy. The lesson also requires students to evaluate the policy and propose changes to it.

Goals/Objectives:
Students will:
- Identify the different factors contributing to the introduction of a one-child policy in China.
- Cite components to various one-child policies that have been enacted in China.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of China’s one-child policy at decreasing the China’s birth-rate.
- Propose changes to China’s existing one-child policy or propose that the policy is eliminated and support that proposition with evidence.

Materials:
- China’s One-Child Policy Overview Handout with Discussion Questions
- China’s One-Child Policy Government Propaganda PowerPoint
- Writing Utensil
Procedures:
A. Introduction (15 minutes) Day One
1. Ask students if they know what country in the world has the highest population.
   a. After they answer “China,” tell them that China’s Population is over 1.3 Billion people
      > That is over 4 times the population of the United States!
      > That is one fifth of the population of the entire world!
   b. Show slide 1 of the PowerPoint (populations of countries that fit inside provinces of China)
      > Let them know that this is to help them visualize the extremely high population of China
      > Point out some specific countries. Ask students for any comments.
2. Ask a student to define population density (how many people live per square mile)
3. Show slide 2 of the PowerPoint (map of the world: population density)
   a. What are some countries with high population density according to the map?
      > India, China, Japan, North and South Korea etc.
4. Switch to slide 3 of the PowerPoint
   a. Talk them through the slide line-by-line
   b. Be sure to convey the extremely high population densities of places in China
5. Ask students about some potential challenges/negatives for a country having such a high population and high population density.
   a. scarce resources, overcrowding, expensive health care, expensive education, disease, etc.
6. Ask students to travel back to the 1970s, and pretend you are a member of the Chinese government:
   a. If you saw the population growing and saw the trend leading to such a high population in the future, what would you do?
      > Would you try to slow down the growth? Would you let whatever happens happen?
      > Do governments have the right to intervene?
      > If you wanted to stem population growth, how would you do it?
7. Let them know that China’s government chose to do something about it…
B. Overview Handout (20 minutes)
1. Hand out a copy of the Overview Handout to each student
2. Instruct them to read the two-page overview and to write their answers to the discussion questions. Let them know that we will also be watching a couple of films. They will want to leave room on the discussion questions sheet to update their answers after they watch the films.
   a. Let students know that they will use their answers to contribute to the class-wide discussion we will have later
   b. Inform students that only numbers 4 and 5 on the discussion sheet will be graded but they need to fill out the rest of the sheet. The other questions provide evidence they need for their last question.
C. PowerPoint (15 minutes)
1. Show students the various government propaganda posters that were used to encourage couples to only have one child
   a. What does Mao’s quote mean?
   b. What does “Later, longer, fewer” mean?
      > Get married later in life, wait longer to have children (and longer in between births), and have fewer children. This was the first emergence of a one child policy; largely voluntary.
   c. Why are there always girls in the posters?
d. How effective do you think the posters are?

2. Population Pyramids
   a. Explain what population pyramids represent
      > Show the population broken down by age. Shows how much of a country’s population belongs to each age group.
   b. Discuss the three types of population pyramids on the screen
      > Rapid Growth: we will see the largest part of the population on the bottom, the youngest.
      > Slow Growth: more equal throughout the pyramid
      > Negative Growth (below the replacement rate): more people in the older categories than in younger ones.
   c. Show China’s population pyramid
      > What do students notice about this pyramid?
      > What does the crowded middle represent? (Lopsided near the center. This is the population boom during the 70’s that the Chinese government saw and decided to enact the one-child policy to slow it.)
      > What does this mean for the future?
   d. Switch to next slide containing the 2025 projection
      > What’s happened?
      > What are the implications of having a very large aging population (increased health costs)

D. Closing Day One
   1. Before the bell, tell students that you will continue to look at China’s One-Child Policy the next day.

E. Film and Small Group Discussion (20-25 minutes)—Day Two
   1. Tell students that you are going to show them a couple films that present the information from the reading in a visual way.
      a. Instruct students to add to their discussion question sheet as they watch the film.
   4. Tell students to get into groups of three and discuss the questions on their discussion sheet. They can add to their sheet information/opinions from the movies.

F. Discussion (15-20 minutes)—go through the discussion questions as a class.
   1. How did China’s One-Child Policy come about? What did the government hope to achieve by implementing this policy?
      a. Mao Zedong promoted large families; new communist government was not equipped to pay for the skyrocketing population
      b. Government pushed for smaller families with a campaign; after the campaign did not do enough, the government began providing incentives/punishments to more forcefully encourage couples to have fewer children.
   2. What were some ways the policy tried to encourage families to only have one child? Were there punishments? Rewards?
      a. Financial rewards, better health care benefits, better access to schools and housing for smaller families
      b. Higher taxes for each additional child, lower access to government jobs for parents with more than one child.
   3. What are some factors that make measuring the success of this policy challenging?
a. Moving migrant population—hard to track where they are and how many children they are having because they are not receiving as many government services as people that are not moving around.
b. Underreporting—rural families and local officials simply don’t report all the births that occur in their area. Local officials want to keep the favor of their districts, so they tell the central government what they want to hear. More girl children are not reported. They are raised in secret (without an education), passed on to other relatives, or abandoned to orphanages.

   a. Answers will vary. Possible answers:
   b. Unsuccessful: Underreporting skews the success of the policy; the same amount of children are probably being born, just aren’t being reported like they were before. Forces sex discrimination against female children. No wives for the large population of men to marry. No one to care for the elderly population; the government must now pay for them. China is still the most populous country in the world.
   c. Successful: Rural families are having less children (even if they are still having two). Fertility rates have gone down. China’s population growth has been reduced by 250 million people. Decreased birth rate has lessened some financial pressure on the government.

5. Is there a better solution to China’s population problems? Would you eliminate the policy? Would you keep the policy as it is? What changes would you make?
   a. Answers will vary.

G. Collect their discussion sheets to grade their ability to evaluate China’s One Child Policy and to make suggestions to it.

EXTENSIONS/ADAPTATIONS:
- Students could make a government propaganda poster that includes their proposed changes to the one-child policy.
- Students could write a letter to the Chinese government that evaluates their one-child policy and proposes changes to it.
- Students could seek out other articles/op-ed pieces speaking against or in favor of the one-child policy.

RESOURCES:
Al Jazeera English News Channel. “China’s One Child Policy Creates Massive Gender Imbalance.”


“Population Campaigns,” in NOVA Beta, by Lexi Krock.
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/earth/population-campaign.html