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Creating A Social Studies Curriculum For Second Grade

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CREATING A SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM
FOR SECOND GRADE

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

Hamline University

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To my family. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me.
A special thanks to my husband for never once doubting my potential. Your faith in me has impacted my own ambition in such a way that has allowed me to fulfill a lifelong goal. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for your support. I love you more than words can say.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction.....	5
Introduction.....	5
A Social Studies Dilemma.....	5
My Journey.....	8
Rationale.....	10
Complications of Achieving Quality Social Studies Instruction.....	11
Summary.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review.....	14
Introduction.....	14
The Evolution of Social Studies Curriculum.....	14
The Early Years of Social Studies.....	15
A Transformation of Social Studies.....	17
Summary.....	19
Creating Unit/Lesson Plans to Generate Student Engagement.....	20
Creating Relevant and Beneficial Unit/Lesson Plans.....	20
Generating Student Engagement in Social Studies.....	23
Roadblocks to Student Engagement.....	24
The Effects of Lack of Student Engagement.....	26
Promoting Student Engagement.....	28
Instructional Strategies.....	29
Establishing Multiple Perspectives in Social Studies.....	31

Conclusion.....35

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology.....36

 Introduction.....36

 Curriculum Writing Framework and Methods of Curriculum Development.....38

 Curriculum Writing Framework and Format.....38

 Curriculum Content.....40

 Summary.....42

CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusions.....44

 Introduction.....44

 My Learnings.....45

 Literature Review.....47

 Methods Used in Developing My Curriculum and its Impact.....51

 Implications and Limitations.....52

 Future Related Research Projects.....53

 Summary.....53

APPENDICES.....55

 Appendix A: MN Social Studies State Standards.....55

 Appendix B: Understanding by Design (UbD) Template.....58

REFERENCES.....59

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Teaching social studies is a key factor in ensuring that our youth will be exposed to essential concepts of culture, economics, and political competence. These concepts and skills are vital to our society because they are needed to create educated and helpful citizens. Social studies is imperative to our developing youth because it unifies the understanding of how our world operates on a social level. Social studies standards, including history, geography, economics, government and citizenship are required for statewide accountability (Minn. Stat. § 120B.02, Subd. 1).

Social studies can be complex in nature due to our continually evolving society. As a result of the continuous development of our society, our youth's exposure to key concepts associated with social studies should further be flexible and free from bias. In addition, it should be current and aligned with the state standards. This can be a tremendous struggle for some due to the existence of a suitable social studies curriculum. The endeavor to ensure that we are educating our students with content that is current with today's society, flexible, free from bias, while making sure it is aligned with the state standards has made me wonder: *how can an unbiased social studies curriculum for second grade be developed that is aligned with the MN State Social Studies Standards?*

A Social Studies Dilemma

I currently teach second grade in a first ring suburb in a major metro area. There is a sense of urgency to pursue the answer to this particular question for me. Recently, our district has found that the social studies curriculum that we have been using is

outdated and certain parts have some biases imbedded into the curriculum. We were notified of this problem at the end of September, 2016. Our district came up with a swift solution to this problem, and that was to discard this social studies curriculum and materials that pertained to it as of October 1, 2016. Our second-grade team was then left without a curriculum, and have since been trying to integrate social studies into other areas such as language arts, and even math. Our initial hopes were that our district would have an alternative curriculum in which we could implement into our instruction. So far there has been no talk about purchasing or piloting new social studies curriculum in the near future for our district. Due to the lack of warning and insufficient time, my fascination with this content area stems from the pressure I feel as an educator, to be able to present a social studies curriculum to my second-grade students that is free from cultural biases, interactive, and engaging for all of my students.

There were many unresolved issues with our district's social studies dilemma, one being that the decision to dispose of this curriculum was made without informing us which parts of the curriculum were found to be biased. This aspect combined with no mention of replacing our current curriculum with one that was sound and free of discrimination, left me feeling a bit panicked. For the most part, I have relied on a published curriculum. Using this type of social studies curriculum in the past, I would modify and extend lessons as I saw fit, but it was always comforting to know I have something to fall back on if needed. I was always under the assumption that the curriculum was reliable and free from any biases. This is why I have discovered the extreme value and importance of teacher developed curriculum. As I have learned, a published curriculum isn't a "one size fits all" solution. By developing my own

curriculum, I can tailor it to my school's population. Being a white, female educator, I have found that my perspective on certain aspects, and events may vary from those of my students. This is why it is imperative that I keep an open mind while developing my social studies curriculum, and continue to keep our class discussions open for all. A social studies curriculum should have many opportunities for students to share what they may know. I personally have always tried my best to view and present things from multiple perspectives, but I have found that I am a work in progress. I can always strive for better.

While I completely agree with disposing of anything that may have aspects of intolerance, the given solution to this in our district has led to quite the predicament. We are left wondering in which direction we should move in order to provide our students with a multi-perspective view and understanding in the content area of Social Studies. It is my belief that by developing my own social studies curriculum for second grade that is free from biases and is aligned with the MN State Standards, it will in turn give me the proper direction and provide my students with the necessary requirements that are expected to be met, while establishing the skills that are essential to contribute to our society. Disposing of our district's current social studies curriculum, although was initially alarming, has come to be a great benefit to me. It has allowed me to direct more attention on social studies and the framework in which it is built upon.

This chapter will explain how my outlook on social studies has matured and developed throughout the years. It will also elaborate on the importance and relevance of my Capstone Project, and touch on obstacles that have impeded on the quality of social studies instruction.

My Journey

In my fourteen-year teaching experience, I haven't really given social studies much concern or attention. I have always known that it is required to be taught by MN state law, and luckily our school district had a published curriculum that required little to no extra preparation. Teaching social studies for me consisted of presenting facts that our curriculum highlighted, completing packets that went along with the particular unit we were teaching, assessing for understanding, and a weekly Time For Kids magazine. Throughout my teaching career, my main concern and focus has always been on language arts and math. These two subjects received the bulk of my attention, leaving my concern and focus for social studies very minimal. It wasn't until my district took our curriculum away, that my concern and focus for social studies shifted in a new direction. This is an area in which I am not as familiar with, and feel like I need more tools in order to implement an effective instruction to my second-grade students.

My new curiosity has made me realize that during my entire career of teaching, only two instances I would consider attempts of including social studies were selected as part of a staff development and teacher training. The focus of both instances addressed behavior, and could be used to work in tandem with our Social Studies MN State Standard 2.1.4.7.1: *Compare and contrast student rules, rights and responsibilities at school with their rules, rights and responsibilities at home; explain the importance of obeying rules.*

The first occurrence was when our district adopted the PATHS Curriculum. This was an extensive curriculum that developed emotional and social proficiencies, while reducing aggression and behavior complications in the elementary grades, and at the

same time, strengthening the academic development in the classroom. This program was designed to be taught at least two times a week with lessons lasting for 30 minutes. The lessons and materials were set up systematically and developmentally to provide instruction to expedite emotional literacy, self-control, positive peer connections, social problem-solving skills, and social competence. I really enjoyed this curriculum because it allowed the students to role play certain situations and allowed for different perspectives to emerge. In addition to the PATHS curriculum, I would make sure to align it to our social studies unit on citizenship and government. I could pull many examples from the curriculum to reinforce following rules in our society and carrying out daily responsibilities in the classroom. Sadly, our district no longer participates in this curriculum.

The second instance occurred just this year. In the past, our special education department was trained to help students identify and cope with self-regulation skills. The curriculum in which they used was called the Zones of Regulation: A Framework to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control (also called the Zones). This year, the entire staff was trained in using the Zones of Regulation. We also had the opportunity of having our school's psychologist present 6 mini lessons of the Zones to our classrooms if we chose. I definitely took advantage of that.

The Zones of Regulation is designed to guide students in the direction of independent regulation. Using the Zones of Regulation with the topic of citizenship and government was useful in enhancing our second-grade students' understanding of the different emotions and impulses, sensory needs, and how to solve conflicts, and how these may affect others in our communities.

I have found it extremely interesting that most of my staff development is normally focused on language arts and math, but there hasn't been much more in the area of social studies. My hopes for this Capstone Project will be to create a social studies curriculum that is aligned to the MN State Standards, and will give ample opportunities to share a multitude of perspectives.

Rationale

The purpose of a social studies curriculum is to provide our youth with skills that can be developed to make decisions that promote social dignity and excellence as citizens of a highly diverse society, as well as to acknowledge and accept a multitude of perspectives. It is a part of our MN State law that social studies is taught. Social studies is a critical piece to our youth's social development, so one might conclude that this subject area would be a priority in instruction for our youth. Social studies is a very crucial part of learning, because it establishes a strong foundation for youth of how our country is run and operates. Thus, it is important that our students have an engaging, rich experience with all of the elements of social studies so that they will be prepared to perform in our society in a positive, balanced manner, and so our society will flourish. Furthermore, exposure to a Social Studies curriculum that is balanced and unbiased is imperative.

In the school in which I teach, we have many students who struggle in the area of citizenship; that is, they do not know where they fit in with society when it comes to behavior, obligations, and the everyday functions of a citizen. By exposing our young to the term "citizen," and modeling what it means to be a citizen would help guide them in many areas of their young lives. Learning about the actions from our society's past from multiple perspectives, and how these decisions have shaped our country to what it is

today, will in turn help instill effective decision-making skills that will assist our youth as they grow and develop within our society. Lessons in economics will assist in demonstrating how the use of money, along with the knowledge of supply and demand, will in turn affect our youth and their future. Thus, the framework of our society must be instilled within our youth, so that together we can create an equitable society in which we can live in.

The more I think about it, the more value I see in incorporating social studies into our daily schedule. Presenting facts surrounding citizenship and government, geography, history, and economics are crucial, but also allowing for a multiple perspective view is just as important. Valuing and accepting others' perspectives can be done a number of ways, such as asking open-ended questions that lead to student-lead discussions, enacting in role-playing, and hands-on activities. These are just some of the ways in which we can achieve a multi-perspective view in social studies.

Complications of Achieving Quality Social Studies Instruction

From my perspective, the priority and value of the content area of social studies has shifted since I started teaching. With the focus on language arts and math in our school, the importance of Social Studies instruction has been lost, or at least pushed to the side. With the boost for increased focus on language arts and math skills, we must remember that those particular skills need to be paired with the skills that social studies delivers. If not, those skills will become counterproductive because they may not be used to make decisions that will in turn help our society flourish. Therefore, social studies must get equal attention and focus as language arts and math, and this curriculum and instruction must be delivered with an appropriate excellence.

In addition to the increased concentration on language arts and math, educators have been struggling to find a sufficient amount of time to implement and teach a social studies curriculum that will in turn benefit our youth. I have seen many changes in our youth's behavior throughout my years of teaching. I realize that our society is changing. But with that being said, it is important that our youth today can interpret what it means to be a contributing member of our society. The lack of attention that social studies is getting feeds certain behaviors that have been emerging in the last 5-10 years in our society. Pairing the importance of social studies with that of language arts and math, would benefit our youth in terms of longevity.

Summary

Social studies is a very important aspect of our society. It needs to be free from biases, it must be current, and it needs to be engaging for students. The dilemma I face today is that our district has instructed us to dispose of our current social studies curriculum, along with any materials that may accompany it. With no current curriculum, our team has been at a loss. The small amount of warning that was given to us didn't allow proper time to prepare lessons/units for our school year. Thus, we have been trying to implement what we know, and integrating elements of social studies into other areas of focus such as language arts, and math. It has been a struggle. This is why I believe it is very important for me to explore how an unbiased social studies curriculum for second grade can be developed that is aligned with the MN State Standards.

In Chapter Two, I will be reviewing the literature on developing a social studies curriculum for 2nd grade, that is free from biases and aligned to state standards. There will be four major themes of Chapter Two; the history of social studies curriculum, what

constitutes valuable lessons in social studies, how to generate student engagement, and establishing multiple perspectives in social studies.

Chapter Three will describe my capstone project in terms of research methods, my target audience, and the project's description, and Chapter Four will focus on my reflection of creating my social studies curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter One was centered on the exploration and journey to my question: *How can an unbiased social studies curriculum for second grade be developed that is aligned with the MN Social Studies State Standards?* It explained the urgency behind my inquiry, and the importance behind ensuring that my Capstone Project will provide a social studies curriculum that will be aligned with the MN State Standards for second grade social studies, engaging for students, and providing an abundant amount of opportunities to gain multiple perspectives from all students.

Chapter Two will concentrate on the evolution of social studies curriculum, how to create relevant and beneficial unit/lesson plans to generate student engagement, and how to establish multiple perspectives in social studies.

Presently, social studies is its own content area within our National and State Standards. For the purpose of this Capstone Project, the focus will be on the MN Social Studies State Standards.

The Evolution of Social Studies Curriculum

Throughout the years, the subject of social studies in Elementary Education has evolved. The end of the American Revolution in 1783 pronounced the course of an undivided union, thus named the United States of America. During the American Revolution, education was primarily accomplished through the home, work, and the church. After the American Revolution, it was clear that American's would need to be educated in a school setting. There would need to be a way to educate American citizens,

as well as the stream of immigrants. Social studies emerged and the primary purpose of this subject was to educate citizens in values and responsibilities, as well as to promote social welfare. Since the American Revolution, social studies has exceedingly transformed, especially in terms of its importance in schools today. The impending literature will illustrate the changes social studies has endured throughout the years. The value in recognizing these changes will help educators enhance Social Studies instruction in the present, as well as prepare them for more changes in the future, making it extremely helpful for educators to ensure that the needs of all students are met in the content area of social studies.

The multitude of changes that social studies has undergone throughout time is due to our country's growth both in diversity and development. Perceptions and beliefs have shaped our country into what it is today. The importance of our country's past is a valuable tool in which can be used to keep our country's development moving forward. Today's social studies aim is to educate our youth in four main areas of focus: *history, geography, government and citizenship, and economics* (Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), (2016). It is important to know how we came to determine these four areas of focus, and that these four areas have taken many years of adjustments to get to where we are today.

The Early Years of Social Studies

The purpose of social studies started out as a means for an understanding of the organization and development of our society (Saxe, 2004). According to Checkley (2007), Horace Mann, who is known as the father of education, feared that the immigrants who were arriving in the United States, would not be able support the

democratic society because they were uneducated and were unaware of their rights and obligations in our society. Cogan (1976) agrees with Saxe (2004), and extends this purpose by offering a chronology which demonstrates just how much social studies has transformed over the years. According to Cogan (1976), during the colonial period (1492-1763), education was mainly made up of a religious structure. But, by 1749 social studies education had finally attained some attention and support. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson reinforced the idea of studying history, geography, and government.

Cogan (1976), Lybarger (1983), Ross (2006), and Saxe (2004), all concur that a major shift in social studies education came in 1916 when the National Education Association recognized that America had considerably grown. According to Lybarger (1983) and Ross (2006), the Bureau of Education published *The Social Studies in Secondary Education*, which was the concluding report of the Committee on social studies of the National Education Association's (NEA) Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. The Committee on social studies of the National Education Association's (NEA) Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education was composed of sixteen committees in which each committee addressed one feature of the social studies curriculum, while placing a heavy emphasis on the development of citizenship values. O'Brien and Smith (2011) go on to explain that many educators today select the development of citizenship skill as their main area of focus, and that teachers and schools play a crucial role in obtaining the goal of passing on democratic beliefs and behaviors that our society regards as beneficial and acceptable.

America's innovative accomplishments, infinite resources, economic and modern power, flourishing cities, and abundant humanity, all rested upon the ability of a citizen

having the ability to handle the issues, obstacles, and concerns that ingenuity created. The instrument of American education would need to be enlisted to serve the people. This is when a scope and sequence was created to ensure that a proper direction of social studies would be observed, and the result was that social studies got its first official definition:

The social studies are understood to be those whose subject matter relate to the organization and development of human society, and to man as a member of social groups (From the 1916 Committee of Social Studies Report, reprinted by Saxe).

A Transformation of Social Studies

The aim of social studies remained essentially the same up until the early 1970's in which there was a major curriculum reform in social studies (Cogan & Lybarger). The logic behind such reform, according to Cogan (1976), was due to the large scrutiny that surrounded the previous structure of social studies. The National Education Association (NEA) concurred that there was too much emphasis on memorization of facts, the subject matter was often inaccurate, and there was too much focus on America and not enough on other regions of the world. Other concerns were that until the reform, most emphasis of social studies was placed on history and geography only, that instruction did not develop independent methods of questioning, and that teaching methods relied too much on expository teaching (Cogan, 1976).

Although there was a scope and sequence, there was a sense of flexibility for school systems to determine their own methods and procedures in which citizenship

education was taught, until the 1990s when the standards movement dominated in most states (Saxe, 2004). It didn't matter if local schools followed a history-centered approach or if it endorsed any one of the many of social studies approaches to citizenship education, such as content-centered, process-centered, or a combination of both (Saxe, 2004). Saxe goes on to explain that curriculum standards for social studies was initiated in 1994 by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and included four traditional areas of study; history, geography, citizenship and government, and economics. Currently, according to Parker (2012), there are two primary goals of social studies education; social understanding, which is the knowledge of human societies, and civic competence, which involves democratic citizenship. Checkley (2007) goes on to explain the importance of implementing social studies at an early age, because it is a critical time in which the students should be able to effectively learn about the world they are embarking upon. Checkley (2007) also states that by the time students enter into the high school years, we have already missed a crucial window in which we are able to instill democratic and civic ideal in students.

Preparing students for partnering with democracy can be a challenge, especially in today's society. Heilman (2001) emphasizes what a challenge it can be for schools to socialize young students due to social conditions that accompany each student. Heilman (2001) agrees with Libresco, Balantic, and Kipling (2011), that in today's society, it is important that effective citizens are able to accept the insight of others, as well as the history, documents, and traditions that have formed our society, nation, and world. Effective citizens must be capable of seeking information from a variety of sources and perspectives in order to develop cognizant opinions and creative

solutions. They must be ready to ask meaningful questions, analyze information, use effective decision-making and problem-solving skills, have the ability to work effectively with others, and actively participate in school and community life. This can be challenging due to the wide variety of individual social circumstances, as well as what Checkley (2007), along with O'Brien and Smith (2011), describe as the shift in education with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This shift caused many educators to place the majority of instruction on reading and math, which caused social studies, to be pushed aside and to be considered not as important. O'Brien and Smith (2011) explain that many educators view social studies as an enrichment or second ranked subject. Heilman (2001) suggests that educators take a hard look at these current situations that accompany youth, and address these social conditions by guiding students towards healthy path to conflict while supporting perspectives on life which will increase students' sense of understanding, control, community, and self-esteem.

Summary

Social studies has expanded throughout time, and continues to do so. Our country has transfigured as well, and has no intentions of slowing the process of change down. It is critical for educators to be aware of how social studies came to be, and the initial purpose behind it. It is also imperative that teachers stay focused and flexible with upcoming reforms in our society, so that the ultimate goal of creating educated and helpful citizens, by exposing our youth to essential concepts of culture, economics, and political competence, can be reached and obtained.

Creating Unit/Lesson Plans to Generate Student Engagement

Social Studies currently has four areas of focus, which include: history, geography, government and citizenship, and economics. Valuable and effective lessons are critical in order to achieve student success. A good lesson must meet the needs of all learners. In order to meet the needs of all learners, lessons and activities must be meaningful to the students, as well as integrative. Lessons must be value-based, meaning that educators must create multiple opportunities for students to discuss different values, participate in real-world problem solving, and make rational decisions. An educator must present content that is challenging, which will in turn, provide an avenue for lifelong learning and effective citizenship. An effective educator must guide, and not dictate content. This should be accomplished by using a variety of approaches such as problem solving, debates, project-based learning, and role playing. In doing so, employing valuable and effective lessons will not only meet the needs of all learners, but it will also cause students to invest their full interest in the area of social studies.

Creating Relevant and Beneficial Unit/Lesson Plans

Finn (1989), and Marks (2000), agree that there are undeniable factors that affect student engagement, and Thornton (2005) includes these ideas when striving to explain how to teach social studies that matter. He reiterates that student investment and effort levels are intertwined. The logic behind a student's lack of effort in social studies is due to the fact that the subject has no interest or significance to that particular individual. He agrees with the ideas of Finn (1989) and Marks (2000), adding that young people can be inspired, and interest levels can be piqued in social studies, but that their motivation does

not solely rely on extrinsic rewards but must include the students' having an input of to the purposes of what they study.

Thornton (2005) adds that when teaching social studies, there is usually a small selection of methods that educators use in lesson planning. What is needed to break up the monotony, says Thornton (2005), is an equitable and inventive technique to selecting methods in the lessons. One should not depend on or overuse a specific method, but must be creative in delivering instruction as well as producing a variety of ways to actively engage the students. This engagement should not replace significant subject matter, but it should reinforce it.

Parker (2012) points out the two essential objectives of social studies as social understanding and civic competence. Usually, schools access these two extensive goals by way of three sub goals; knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Delving into these three sub goals, educators should be able to inquire and furnish an answer as to which social knowledge is relevant by determining the disciplines or fields of study, themes, or content.

Attitudes and values should be limited in the area of intellectual knowledge, and be increased in the areas of emotion, feelings, and beliefs. Thornton's work (2005) appears to exemplify Parker's (2012) and goes further to illustrate the importance of lessons being individualized to some degree. He goes on to say that there should be some flexibility and choice in what the students study, but at the same time, it should follow the state standards. An example that he provides is taking the content area of geography, supporting student choice as to pick a particular state that he or she may be interested in, and then encouraging the students to pick a topic such as music, sports, or architecture to

research. By giving the students the power of choice, an educator will support Parker's (2012) belief that attitudes and values should be enhanced in the vicinity of emotions, feelings, and beliefs.

Parker (2012) emphasizes the importance of establishing the skills that students will need. These skills can be categorized into different groups, such as democratic participation skills, study and inquiry skills, and intellectual skills. Fisher & Neuhauser (2005) concur with Parker (2012), and add that it is necessary to ask, "what should the students take away from this unit?" when designing and planning units/lessons. Taking into consideration the different learning styles that each student has, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic, is also key to developing relevant and beneficial unit/lesson plans.

When planning a curriculum or unit plan, Parker (2012) explains the importance of creating a scope and sequence. The scope of the curriculum or unit plan specifies the subject matter - specifically the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills that will be included. The sequence then is the order in which the distinct subject matter will be presented (Parker, 2012). The scope should include disciplinary knowledge that permits students to gain insight into the social and physical world that surrounds them.

Parker (2012) explains that when planning a unit, an educator must allow at least three to eight weeks for activities that are immersed in the subject area. One must study the curriculum guide, or state standards, determine the learning objectives, and elect a way of assessing, but not necessarily in that particular order. Parker (2012) points out that a teacher's knowledge of the subject matter has great significance.

It is important to note that learning standards are simply educational objectives. These educational objectives are what the students should be learning along with what they should have learned by the end of a course, grade level, or grade span. These are things that I will be cognizant of while demonstrating not only what they will be learning, but how they will learn it.

Generating Student Engagement in Social Studies

A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on cold iron. --Horace Mann

Generating student engagement is essential for learning. Student engagement stems from a mental investment and effort that is conducted toward learning. It connects active involvement, a steady commitment, and captivated attention. The mental investment and effort a student chooses to put forth depends on multiple factors. Common factors consist of their usual tendencies, gratification they have gained by investing in learning in other settings, and the value they place on the topic at hand. This is why developing a meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active atmosphere in will generate student engagement, and will help to reach the ultimate social studies goal: to educate our youth in a way that they can then beneficially contribute to our country throughout the course of their lives.

According to Newman (1992) and Marks (2000), student engagement is the student's psychological contribution and intention directed toward learning, understanding, and mastering the know-how, ability, or crafts of academic work and its intentions. Marks (2000) adds that student engagement involves attention, interest, and the effort that students are willing to exhaust in the work of learning. Mark's (2000)

work is consistent with Newman's (1992) ideas on student engagement and suggests that student engagement involves more than just motivation, but this depends on the student's active interest, effort, and concentration in the specific tasks at hand. Student engagement is not just completing the given tasks at hand, but committing to the degree of what one is willing to put forth in order to actually learn the content (Newman, 1992). Marks (2000) also adds that engagement entails both affective and behavioral support in learning experience. It is an important aspect of students' school experience because of its relevant connection to performance and optimal human development.

Finn & Voelkl (1993) affirm that student engagement is launched when a student begins school, and is introduced at a very basic level. This basic engagement and participation level is created by the student attending school on a regular basis, listening to the teacher, and taking part in educational activities, by responding suitably to directions, questions, and tasks that are given. This fundamental engagement level will become more intricate and involved as the student becomes more involved and invested in his or her school course.

Roadblocks to Student Engagement

Newman (1992) explains why student engagement is so important by pointing out that children don't necessarily have a choice when it comes to education. Our society has already decided that our youth must be formally prepared by a professional, even if the child may not agree. Usual tasks that students are asked to perform in order to flourish in school normally consist of trivial routines and procedures, automated recreation of knowledge, and insignificant forms of learning (Newman, 1992). These supply little freedom for students to use their minds to develop an in-depth understanding, and

enhance critical thinking. He explains this by indicating that generally the teacher establishes activities and tasks that the student may not see any value in due to the fact that the manifestation may not be useful until it is completely mastered, which could take years to do. These circumstances lead to a lack of trust in the teacher. Trust is an essential piece that must exist if the student is going to willingly invest any effort into learning.

Newman (1992) reveals another obstruction of student engagement, and that is due to the fact that teachers must simultaneously serve the needs to more than just one individual at a time, making the focus on the unique needs of students a challenge. He points out the fact that all students vary in the type of interactions and activities that they find appealing. These concepts create a multitude of barriers for teachers when it comes to reaching each student and ensuring that each student is fully engaged and ready to commit to learning.

Another important factor in student engagement is the phenomenon of minimal student engagement. Newman (1992) explains that many students have found that insignificant engagement can actually work for them, at least for the time being. The obvious problem with this is that certain concepts need to be built upon in order to master the main area of focus. If a student only retains a superficial and short-term understanding, also called partial engagement, then mastery in that specific content area will not be obtained.

Student engagement also hinges on other activities and concerns that may occupy students' attention and energy. Home life, parents, siblings, and media, are just a few of a variety of distractions that can hinder student engagement (Newman, 1992).

The Effects of Lack of Student Engagement

Marks (2000) calls attention to the idea that the lack of student engagement unfavorably influences student achievement, which can then lead to a downward spiral. This dissolution can pave the course to socially impaired school behavior, and can lead to students withdrawing from school. Reschly & Christenson (2006) concur with Marks (2000), and note that student engagement has been characterized as the pivotal variable in the prevention of student dropout.

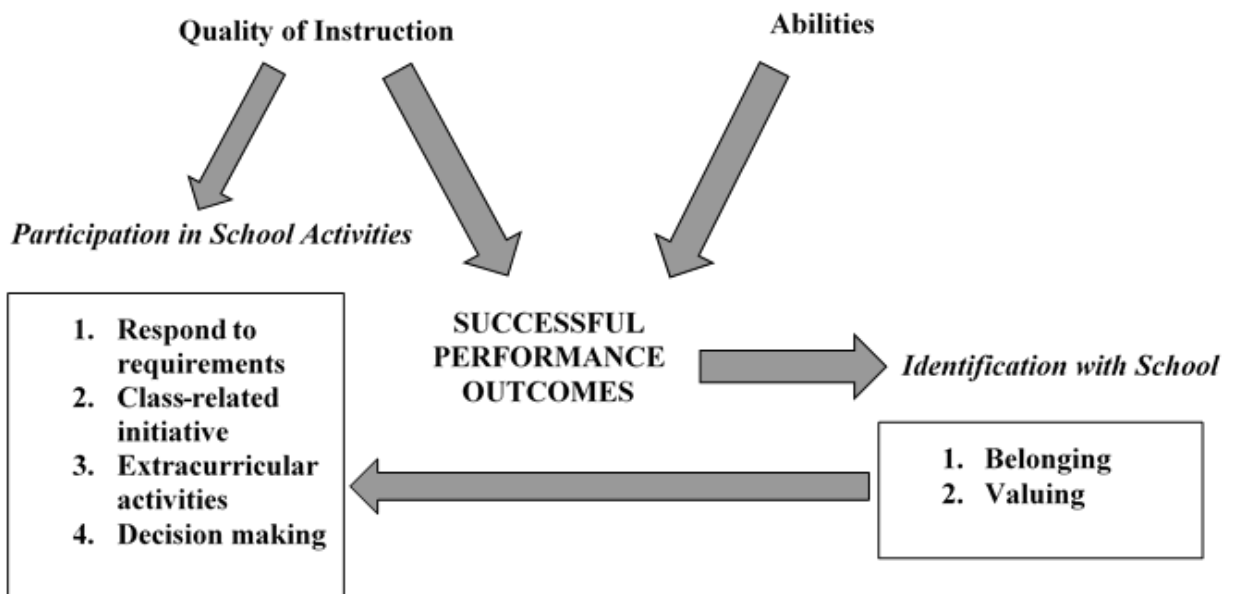
According to Finn (1989), the result of a student's work is based upon his or her active participation in school as well as in classroom activities. An increase in these outcomes also relies upon the student's concurrent feeling of identification with school. According to Finn & Voelkl (1993), identification materializes when students embody the feeling that they "belong" within the school. The feeling of belonging include that they are a prominent part of the school's environment and that the school is a significant element of their own learning experience. Reschly & Christenson (2006) who write about Finn (1989) add that the feeling of belonging at school is an integral piece of student engagement. The sense of belonging contributes to the sense of acceptance, being valued, and the idea of being an essential part of the class.

Elements to consider with school environment include the structural and regulatory environment. The structural environment consists of the school's size, racial, and ethnic configuration. The regulatory environment consists of the school's degree of structure and severity of the discipline and procedural policies (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). Without a positive identification with school, the student is more likely to withdraw from school related activities, and could ultimately abandon school altogether.

Westwood (1993) adds that classroom environment also affects student engagement. Teachers work extremely hard to develop a positive classroom environment that is rich with opportunities to learn. But according to Westwood (1993), there are many instances when planning social studies when teachers might not take into consideration the student's interests. He stresses the importance of student interests and passions because if an educator invests in learning these, then the outcome of student engagement will be one that is extremely positive.

Finn (1989) constructed a participation-identification model that incorporates behavioral and psychological components, concentrating on students' engrossment in areas of the classroom and school activities, and how this involvement can influence their concept of school. Reschly & Christenson (2006), also agree with Finn's (1989) participation-identification model.

Finn's (1989) Recreated Participation-Identification Model



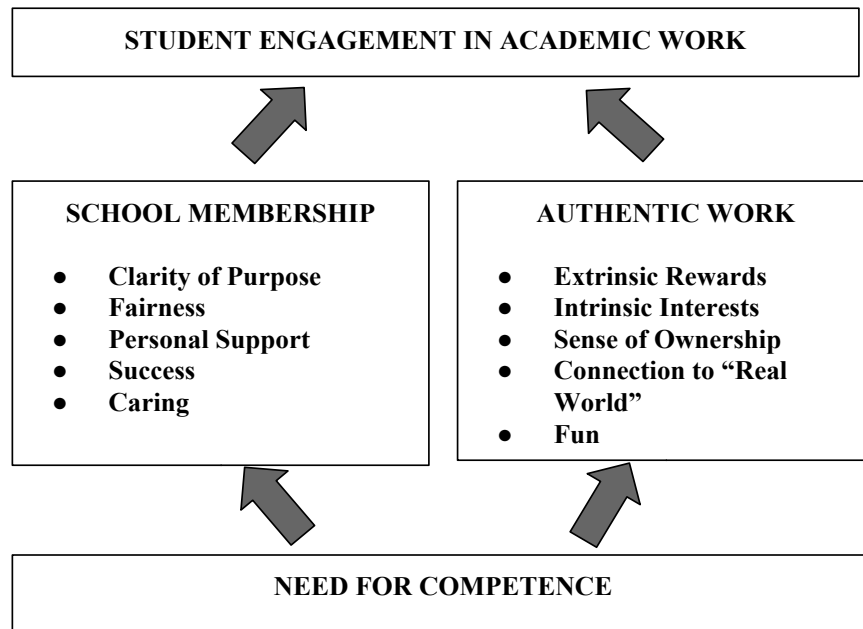
In his model, Finn (1989) points out that in order for a student to invest in his or her learning, he or she must experience some sort of academic achievement. This will increase the student's sense of identification and belonging to the school, and thus additional participation will continue throughout the years.

Promoting Student Engagement

Newman's (1992) work seems to agree with Finn (1989) and adds that in order to promote student engagement educators must first take a good look at how students' perceptions of school differs. The social-cultural orientations that students bring to school are relevant factors that must take careful examination.

Newman (1992), and his colleagues, Gary Wehlage and Susie Lamborn constructed a model that is based upon the factors that affect student engagement. They acknowledge that research on how schools might improve student engagement in academic work is lacking, but expertise in psychology, sociology, and studies of schooling all imply the significance of many factors. Newman and his colleagues (1992) interpreted student engagement in academic work to culminate from three comprehensive factors: students' underlying need for competence, the extent to which students experience membership in school (similar to Finn's ideas), and the accuracy of the work they are asked to complete. He agrees with Finn (1989), expressing the importance of schools generating student membership and credible work that conveys the need for proficiency into academic success (Newman, 1992).

Newman's (1992) Recreated Student Engagement Model



Marks (2000) agrees with Newman's (1992) work, and simplifies by explaining that student engagement is built upon how students allocate their attention. Student engagement depends on the students' natural inclinations, the satisfaction they gain from paying attention in other settings, and the value they attach to the activity at hand.

Instructional Strategies

Prince (2004) builds upon the work of Finn (1989), Marks (2000), and Newman (1992), by clarifying the different kinds of dynamic learning. He defines active learning and identifies the different types of active learning as collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and problem-based learning (PBL). According to Prince (2004), active learning is commonly defined as any instructional method that immerses students in the learning process. It calls for students to undertake learning activities that are purposeful, and

requires the students to reflect upon these activities. Collaborative learning involves any instructional method in which students work together in a small group to achieve a common goal. Cooperative learning is much like collaborative learning, but each student will be assessed individually. Problem-based learning (PBR) is where pertinent questions or problems may be presented at the beginning of the instruction course and is used to contribute the context and motivation for the learning that will follow. Hattie (2012) adds that learning may not always be fun for students. For many students learning is extremely hard work. He goes on to explain that learning calls for two important skills, deliberate practice, and concentration or persistence. In order to keep students engaged, Hattie (2012) suggests that educators give formative feedback during the lesson.

Lintner (2011), adds how using children's literature as a vital element can be a particularly powerful tool in teaching Social Studies, especially in early elementary years. Children's literature is often stocked with core moral approaches, which if used in a read aloud fashion, can promote concepts that will allow young students to approach and contemplate effects and outcomes that are discovered through democratic thought and action.

It is important to see how Prince's (2004) work is interlaced with the work of Finn (1989), Marks (2000), and Newman (1992). Active learning, or student engagement must consist of different teaching methods, but before implementation of these teaching methods, educators must be aware of how each student perceives him or herself as a member of the school, and what perception he or she has of education and school itself. Taking in the ideas that all four authors have described, should be especially

helpful in constructing a curriculum, units, and or lesson plans with a common goal of generating student engagement.

Establishing Multiple Perspectives in Social Studies

The United States' population has changed dramatically over the course of time. It has become more culturally diverse. Establishing multiple perspectives especially while teaching social studies is urgently important. Our classrooms are filled with students from many cultures, while the majority of our educators are white and mostly women. If the goal of social studies is to create educated and helpful citizens by exposing our youth to essential concepts of culture, economics, and political competence, educators must be mindful of more than one perspective. This is why establishing multiple perspectives is imperative in order to ensure that our students receive a well-rounded social studies experience.

According to Misco (2005), implementing multiple perspectives includes the capability to consider various points of view. Learning from and listening to others, appreciating the importance of diversity, and cultivating one's consciousness in order to identify one's correlation to the world are all elements of recognizing and welcoming the relevance of diverse beliefs and perspectives when problem solving. Checkley (2007) adds that students can honor and respect multiple perspectives by obtaining the capability to understand and appreciate a variety of viewpoints, while being able to express their own perspective. Misco (2005) goes on to explain when students recognize and acknowledge diverse opinions and beliefs, moral tools are being developed such as open-mindedness, skepticism, reflection, and fairness. These tools can lead to social responsibility. According to Misco (2005), social responsibility is the capability to

regard others who are not directly involved in one's life, but are able to make affiliations between the individuals, society, and the world. Lintner (2011), agrees with Misco (2005), and adds that by using exceptional children's literature, elementary school teachers can facilitate a class discussion that will be open, honest, and reflective. These discussions can ultimately lead to students processing and constructing self-perception of achievement, possibility, acceptance, and respect.

Westwood (1993) adds that when teachers ask open-ended questions, it not only stimulates the thought process, but also provides an opportunity for students to respond with any previous knowledge, and their own perspectives will emerge. Checkley (2007) adds that teachers can also help students gain perspective by encouraging them to investigate and challenge their own assumptions.

Parker's work (2012) is similar to Misco's (2005), as he explains the importance of individualized instruction. Traditionally, individualized instruction has suggested that learning experiences should be designed to fit each student's potential. This original definition materialized in an era when education was centered mainly around the students' abilities, development, and skill disparities among White, European American, Christian students who embodied the majority language and culture (Parker 2012). According to Parker (2012), the present-day ideal of individualized instruction incorporates not only the student's capabilities but also includes the array of cultural differences that they bring to the class. Social statuses such as ethnic, racial, class, gender, religious, and linguistic are all attached to these differences, which has in turn created the updated term differentiated instruction, that has since replaced individualized instruction.

Along with the change in terms, there has also been a shift in how educators examine cultural differences. Parker (2012) points out the two distinct views. One is the thought that students who are culturally different are deprived due to their less developed languages, values, behaviors, and beliefs. This view is known as the cultural deprivation model. A teacher who maintains this view might expect certain behavior from a student, and expectations for that student may be low.

The second view is the cultural difference model. In contrast to the cultural deprivation model, the cultural difference model presumes that schools need to adapt to students of all cultural groups. This ideal has been interpreted as the American dream, and has attracted many people to the United States from around the world. This view embodies the idea that all people from all cultures are free to be themselves while getting the best education imaginable. Teachers with these beliefs will view cultural differences as strengths as well as resources, and will always search for new ways to incorporate and build upon those strengths (Parker, 2012).

Parker builds upon Misco's (2005) work by listing seven guidelines for teaching in ways that will respect all students while learning in the content area of Social Studies. Guideline number one is culturally responsive instruction. This is when an educator will determine cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students that occupy the class and will adapt instruction respectively. This includes bridging the gap between home and school cultures. Reinhard's (2014) work adds the importance of incorporating social justice in education, which is essentially digging deep to get a better understanding of one's students, then shaping curricular restraints, while maintaining high expectations for all students. Parker (2012) names the second guideline knowing your

“knapsack.” This guideline recognizes that history starts at home. Each student and educator already possesses an existing social position. This social position establishes a person in certain social groups, but not others, which will therefore position that person closer to some individuals than others, sharing similar knapsacks (social perspectives).

Parker (2012) lists the third guideline as multimedia/multiple entry points/multiple intelligences. This guideline ensures that instruction consists of a variation of ways that students acquire Social Studies information, a multitude of ways to think and process new information, and numerous ways to express what they are learning. Students are allowed to use many ways to express themselves, through means of multimedia, music, images, movement and such.

Guidelines four and five consist of high expectations of learning and flexible grouping. Teachers should make sure that expectations are set high for all students, and do so simply by using a system to randomly call on students. This will allow for the opportunity for all students to be able to share their own perspective and gives them a voice which is an extremely powerful tool in learning. Flexible grouping is also a useful tool in ensuring that multiple perspectives will be noted. When grouping students, try to place them in a group that is diverse. By creating diverse groups, not only will student voices be understood, but it also can also give students the opportunity for a chance of peer-mentoring (Parker, 2012).

The last two guidelines that Parker lists are differentiated instruction and multicultural curriculum. Differentiated instruction, as stated before, incorporates not only the student’s capabilities but also includes the array of cultural differences that they bring to the class due to their diverse memberships. The ultimate goal of differentiated

instruction is that every student has equal access to quality instruction (Parker, 2012). He goes on to explain that teachers should instill students' knowledge of Social Studies topics with multiple perspectives as well as include subject matter from various groups and organizations.

Conclusion

While conducting research for my Capstone Project, I have come to realize that I may have been a bit lopsided when it came to teaching social studies in the past. In researching this topic, I have come to recognize the extreme importance in creating social justice and creating equity when presenting this topic to my students. The initial shock that I underwent when instructed to discard our current social studies curriculum has morphed into good fortune. The research made me reflect on how I taught social studies, and I found that I didn't put much effort into preparing my lessons, because I completely leaned upon the published curriculum that was available to me. Now, since we physically don't have this curriculum any more, I am compelled to actually dig into the four areas of social studies, and I can see how very important this subject actually is for the development of sound and responsible future citizens. I also have a new appreciation of multiple perspectives and how this element is key to ensuring that my curriculum is bias-free, and to generating student engagement.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

By conducting my Literature Review in Chapter Two, it has been made very clear to me that the main objective of social studies is to prepare our youth with certain skills that can be developed and used throughout their lives to make decisions that are devoted to our social status as citizens of a culturally varying, free society that dwells in a blended world. Social studies establishes a foundation for our youth to understand how our country operates and functions.

With the continual growth and transformation of our society, and our youth's progression with key concepts within the subject of social studies, many complications have emerged. Due to the steady evolution of our society, social studies curriculum should be flexible and free from bias, and at the same time, should be up-to-date and aligned with the state standards. The effort to establish and provide a social studies curriculum that is current, flexible, free from bias, and aligned with state standards has made me curious as to: *how can an unbiased social studies curriculum for second grade be developed that is aligned with the MN State Social Studies Standards?*

As stated in Chapter One, the district which employs me found that parts of our social studies curriculum were not current, and contained some biases. Our district made the decision to discard this curriculum effective October 1, 2016. We were notified about this decision at the end of September 2016. As one can see, this amount of time didn't allow for much planning in the area of social studies, and left my whole second grade team and myself in a panic. My second-grade team and myself all believe that social

studies is an important and key piece to social development, and it is also a requirement of our MN State Standards. We all felt it was essential that our students have an engaging, rich experience with all of the aspects of social studies so that our students can have the opportunity to develop a strong foundation in decision making and problem solving that they can use for a lifetime.

The MN State Social Studies Standards for second grade specify four main areas of focus. These areas of focus were arranged into four units of study by my district. The four units are as listed; Unit 1: Citizenship and Government, Unit 2: Geography, Unit 3: History, and Unit 4: Economics. My district follows a quarterly timeline for the school year, therefore, each quarter has one unit to concentrate on.

My ultimate goal is to create a year-long curriculum that includes the four areas of focus, but for this project, my focal point was to create Unit 1: Citizenship and Government. I chose this unit simply because it was the unit listed for Quarter One by my district. This will allow me to have a completed unit of study ready to implement this coming fall of 2017.

Chapter Three will explain my curriculum writing framework and methods of curriculum development. This chapter will also include some dynamics that make up the community that encompasses our school. Chapter Three will also contain my Capstone Project description.

These features of Chapter Three will initiate the structure of Chapter Four, which includes what I have learned through the process of creating my Capstone Project. I revisited my literature review and cite sources that were instrumental in creating my Capstone Project, and any new understandings I made. The Capstone Project will

embody my second grade Social Studies curriculum that is free from bias and aligned with the MN State Social Studies Standards.

Curriculum Writing Framework and Methods of Curriculum Development

I started this project by analyzing the MN State Social Studies Standards (found in Appendix A), and asking myself, “What is it that the state requires that I am to cover in social studies?” What I learned is that the main focus of elementary grades kindergarten through grade three is that educators must introduce students to the four foundational social studies areas of civics and government, economics, geography, and history. This is to be done while incorporating thorough understandings in each of these disciplines.

In addition to learning essential concepts, students must begin to implement and practice fundamental skills in each of the four branches of knowledge. These skills include civic skills, economic reasoning skills, geospatial skills, and historical thinking skills (Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), (2016).

Curriculum Writing Framework and Format

Being cognizant of the MN State Social Studies standards, (see Appendix A), my next step was to choose a framework in which my curriculum’s lessons would be constructed. The framework I chose to work from is Understanding by Design (UbD), by Wiggins & McTighe (2011). The organization of this framework is also known as the “backward design” because when planning and designing lessons, one starts with desired results, and ends with the actual lesson’s activities.

Based on eight key principles, the UbD is a way of thinking diligently about curricular planning. Its fundamental purpose is to develop and expand student understanding, taking the “big ideas” and converting those into learning (Wiggins &

McTighe, 2011). As stated in Chapter Two, Finn (1989) and Marks (2000) maintain that there are certain barriers when it comes to creating student engagement. Student investment and effort levels are associated with one another. If there isn't an interest level in Social Studies for particular students, then there will not be a high level of investment when it comes to learning. That is why I decided that UbD was an essential tool I needed in order to create my curriculum.

UbD examines and reconstructs the standards into Stage 1: Desired Results, and then converts those standards into appropriate assessments in Stage 2. A student's understanding is uncovered when he or she independently makes sense of information, and if he or she can transmit their learning through accurate performance, or achievement (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

According to Wiggins and McTighe (2011), effective curriculum is prepared "backward" in a three-step process; Desired Results, Evidence, and Learning Plan. This "backward" process can ensure that an educator doesn't get stuck in the monotonous delivery of instruction, like textbook coverage where there isn't really any clear purpose. Thornton (2005) expressed that when teaching Social Studies, there are minimal teaching methods that are usually applied. The overuse of one particular method can hinder student engagement, but producing a variety of ways to deliver instruction will generate student engagement.

Wiggins & McTighe (2011) believe that teachers are mentors of understanding, and that they concentrate on providing learning, not just teaching. Teachers are constantly checking to ensure their students are learning and can transfer and apply their understanding. Routine examinations of units will increase the value and effectiveness of

each. Because there is an aspect of “one size does not fit all,” UbD follows a continuous development procedure to achievement. The actual results inform an educator if there is a need for adjustments (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). These ideas go hand in hand with what Parker (2012) and Fisher & Neuhauser (2005) explained, which is that it is necessary that when developing a curriculum or unit, one must ask, “what should the students walk away with?” One must also take into consideration the different learning styles that each student possesses.

I believe that using Wiggins & McTighe’s Understanding by Design method not only helped me efficiently create my lesson plans for each unit of my social studies curriculum, but it also helped me to ensure that I am generating student engagement. As I learned from Neuman (1992) and Marks’ (2002) work, student engagement involves more than just ambition. It is also linked to the students’ own curiosity, effort, and concentration for the assignment at hand.

A sample for the Wiggins & McTighe UbD template that I used for my curriculum can be found in Appendix B.

Curriculum Content

The subject of my Capstone Project was to create a social studies curriculum for second grade that is both unbiased and follows the MN State Social Studies Standards. I teach in a first ring suburb in a major metro area. The school in which I teach, consists of 534 enrolled students, from grades K-5.

The community of my school includes a great deal of diversity. The demographics are as followed; 37.8% students that are White, 34.5% students that are black, 12.4% make up two races, 8.1% are Hispanic students, 6.4% are Asian students,

0.6% are American Indian, and 0.4% are Pacific Islander. Males outnumber the females, 53% (males) to 47% (females). The free and reduce lunch percent at this particular school is 61.4%.

The grade level I currently teach is second grade, so my curriculum was developed to cater to my school's diverse population, and it follows the MN State Social Studies Second Grade Standards.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), (2016), there are four areas of focus in the content area of social studies. These include citizen and government, geography, history, and economics. Each strand has three to five academic standards, in which my curriculum will meet. The Minnesota Department of Education defines an academic standard as a "summary description of student learning" in a content area (Minn. Statute §120B.018, Subd. 2). Each standard contains one or more benchmarks that determine understanding and ability "that schools must offer and students must achieve...to satisfactorily complete that state standard (Minn. Statute § 120B.023, Subd. 1). In order to master a state standard, a student must achieve the specific expertise and competence of each benchmark.

Mastery of a benchmark is interpreted to mean that a student acquires and is capable of performing and displaying specific knowledge or skills. It is important to note that currently in Minnesota there is no statewide assessment in the content area of social studies. That leaves the students' mastery of knowledge up to the teacher's discretion, which should be done through formal and informal assessments.

Along with following the MN State Social Studies standards, I also followed Parker's (2012) recommendation of creating a scope and sequence when developing a

curriculum or unit plan. By doing so, I have determined what the subject matter of my curriculum unit plan is, and in which order it is to be taught. I also made sure to allow at least three or more weeks of instruction and activity time for each unit, which was another suggestion of Parker (2012).

I also used the work of Hattie's (2012) list of influences on achievement. I decided for my curriculum I would focus on Student Self-Reported Grades, which is number one on his list. In his work, he explains that children are the most precise when predicting how they will perform a certain task. This strategy allows teachers to figure out what the student's expectations are, and allows them to push the learner to surpass these expectations.

My curriculum unit plan is a combination of self-generated and modified lessons. I used Lintner's (2011) ideas on selecting exceptional children's literature to introduce topics, as well as to reinforce ideas of my curriculum unit plan. Ultimately more curriculum will need to be developed, but for this Capstone Project, I focused on one foundational social studies area, and created a unit based upon that area; Unit 1: Citizenship and Government.

The proof of mastery of a benchmark includes formal and informal assessments that includes a reliable rubric as well as Hattie's (2012) ideas on providing formative evaluation. This allowed me to use any activity as an assessment of learning progress before or during the learning process itself.

Summary

The main focus of Chapter Three has been to answer the questions who, what, when, where, and how. This focus helped me zero in on what my Capstone Project

would need in order to make it a success. I believe that information pertaining to what and how were especially crucial in this chapter. My main goal was to create a social studies curriculum unit plan for second grade that is both bias free, and follows the MN State Social Studies standards. Wiggins & McTighe (2011) helped tremendously when designing my curriculum. By using their UbD, I could start with my end results, and then implement a plan on how to get there. I believe that following the work of Finn (1989), Marks (2000), Neuman (1992) effected my curriculum. Using their ideas, I could incorporate student engagement by really understanding what some barriers may be to student engagement and ways to promote it. I also think that incorporating the work of Parker (2012) and Misco (2005) helped with ensuring that my lessons maintained a high-level of quality, while integrating multiple perspectives.

The MN State Standards for Social Studies was an extremely valuable tool. The Minnesota Department of Education really helped me define and understand the standards and benchmarks, and helped me realize the importance of both. While being cognizant of the MN State Standards, I took into consideration Parker's (2012) ideas about the importance of creating a scope and sequence.

My next step was to write Chapter Four, which includes what I have learned through the process of creating my Capstone Project. I revisited my literature review and cited sources that were instrumental in creating my Capstone Project, and any new understandings I made. I followed a format for the curriculum segment in which I designed my social studies curriculum unit to cover a five-week period of time.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

Introduction

Through my capstone project research and development, I have learned to appreciate and comprehend the subject of social studies in a whole new light. As explained in Chapter One, the district in which employs me had found that our social studies curriculum contained some biases within it. The initial impact that the decision to discard of it immediately definitely rattled me and left me feeling a bit torn. On one hand, I did not want to use any curriculum or materials that would alienate others or skew other beliefs, and to be honest, I felt a bit foolish that I didn't pick up on those biases before. That fact alone really bothered me. On the other hand, I my thoughts went directly to "What am I going to teach my students now, and how will I gather materials that are equitable?" This dilemma turned into an advantage for me, as I was trying to figure out a topic for my capstone project. This quandary compelled me to find the answer to my question of: *how can an unbiased social studies curriculum for second grade be developed that is aligned with the MN State Social Studies Standards?*

Chapter Four will provide insight as to what I have learned through the work of my capstone project as a researcher, writer, and continual learner. In addition, Chapter Four will also point out my many new learnings throughout the whole capstone project process. There will also be an obvious connection between my literature review, methodology, and my actual social studies curriculum.

Along with all my learnings, Chapter Four will also visit the process of developing my social studies curriculum unit, any implications and limitations that I have

found while developing it, future related research projects, and how I will use my project. Finally, Chapter Four will end with a summary of what I feel was the most important learnings I took away from the capstone project process.

My Learnings

The capstone process has allowed me to grow and expand my knowledge in terms of a researcher, a writer, and a learner. At the beginning of this process, I had limited experience as a researcher. As an educator, I have conducted some research such as trying to find effective teaching strategies and best practices in the areas of behavior, English/language arts, and math, but never in the area of social studies. The social studies curriculum dilemma along with this capstone project allowed me to explore an area that I in otherwise wouldn't have ventured.

As I began my research, I admit I was a little overwhelmed, and not very excited about conducting it. The whole process seemed so large, and very daunting. My initial fear was that since social studies seemed to have less importance than math or English/language arts, there wouldn't be enough information for me to find. This was certainly not the case! I was surprised at all of the information and sources that I found on the subject of social studies. These findings reassured me that I could find a multitude of information that would help me on my journey to creating a social studies curriculum that is free from biases and is aligned to the MN State Standards for social studies.

Once I saw all of the sources on the topic of social studies, my next step was to find a way to narrow the information down, so I came up with the most important themes that pertained to creating my social studies project, and that would make my curriculum as success. What I learned during this process was that research at first glance appeared

to be paralyzing and overpowering, but this huge undertaking matured into a challenge for me. I found that once I got started this endeavor turned into an ongoing quest to gather as much pertinent information that would enhance my capstone project. This task to me, turned into a bit of addiction. My mind was engulfed with the determination to find the best suited sources for my project, and I believe I succeeded in that area.

This is when I rediscovered my love for learning. As I searched thoroughly through all of my new sources, I found myself completely absorbed in their content. Through this capstone project process, I have solidified my passion for learning, and strengthened my value in education. This whole process has really made it evident to me that ongoing learning is an essential piece of my internal character. And now that it has become so clear, I believe that I will be able to pass this passion onto my student through my social studies curriculum unit, and it is my hope that they will be able to grab onto a piece and let it grow within them as well.

In terms of writing, I have always been able to express my thoughts on paper pretty effectively, but through the capstone project process, I have surprised myself once again. I have discovered that my writing has taken on a whole new dimension. The capstone process has allowed me to examine and then re-examine my writing, and continue to revamp it until I believe it is truly a reflection of my thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. This has helped me tremendously when creating my unit for this project. Knowing that my initial ideas were just a spring board, encouraged me to check it thoroughly, and reconsider its structure. I feel confident in my work, as I have scrutinized and pored over it from many different angles.

Writing for me has always been a task that is tough to start due to all of the ideas and thoughts I have blanketing my mind. Because of this I have found it hard to find a starting point, making beginning the writing process extremely difficult. Thus, the initial concept of the capstone project had me feeling helpless. The writing itself seemed extremely difficult and daunting. But through this process, I have learned how to organize my initial ideas and thoughts by breaking them down into themes, making myself visualize the project into a set of tasks or sequential steps to be taken one at a time.

As I broke up the project into sequential steps, it surprised me how much more manageable writing seemed. As I started writing, I felt more at ease and confident. Now, I welcome the challenge of writing, because the finished product gives me a sense of empowerment and extreme satisfaction.

After tackling my angst and apprehension on my skills as a researcher and writer, and making new discoveries on my passion for learning, my next big achievement was my capability to take all of my research and relate and use it towards my social studies curriculum development, which will be discussed in the next section of Chapter Four.

Literature Review

As I organized all of my sources and really delved into their content, I found that a central theme began to emerge. I have always known that social studies is an important aspect to student learning, but exploring and coordinating themes within the sources was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle, with the final product conveying the message of which social studies main intention and purpose is to provide our youth with particular skills that can then be developed and practiced throughout their lives, which will help

them make decisions that agree to our social status as citizens of a culturally fluctuating, free society that resides in an integrated world. The subject of social studies provides an infrastructure for our youth so they can comprehend how our country operates and functions.

As stated earlier, conducting my literature review was like piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. I found beneficial pieces, or themes that would be critical to the development of my social studies curriculum. For this particular project, since I am focusing on one single unit, I realize that more curriculum will need to be written, but I do feel confident that because of my research sources and their themes, the ongoing development of this curriculum will be stable and sound.

As for setting the proper foundation for my social studies curriculum, I found that the evolution of social studies curriculum theme was an excellent place to start. This particular theme was needed for me to understand and compare the origins and aims of social studies to the evolution of social studies today. Exploring the evolution allowed me to ensure that my social studies curriculum would be in sync with today's intent of social studies education.

In my literature review, Saxe (2004) explained that the purpose of social studies started out as a system and process for an understanding of the organization and growth of our society. According to Parker (2012) today there are two essential goals of social studies; the knowledge of human societies, and the civic know-how, which includes self-governing citizenship. This finding gave me a direction and drive to which my social studies curriculum would be tailored to.

Preparing students for uniting with democracy can be thought provoking in today's society. Which is why I agreed with Checkley's (2007) ideas on the importance of teaching social studies at a young age in order to set a strong foundation for our youth in the areas of human societies and civic know-how. I also concur with the work of Heilman (2001), Libresco, Balantic, and Kipling (2011), as they also express the importance of early social studies education, especially in today's society. They assert that effective and competent citizens are able to accept the intuitiveness of others, along with history, documents, and traditions that have constructed our society, nation, and world. These ideas just reassured me of how important the subject of social studies and the quality of its curriculum are, and how educators must make room for it in their day-to-day instruction.

Along with the evolution of social studies curriculum, I also found it necessary to research how to create unit/lesson plans that generate student engagement and decided that this theme would be my next layer to the puzzle and to creating a solid social studies curriculum.

Before creating my social studies curriculum and diving into how to create student engagement, I first took the advice of Parker (2012) and created a scope and sequence. He explains that the scope specifies the subject matter, while the sequence is the order in which the subject will be presented. He also suggests that when planning a unit, an educator must allow at least three to eight weeks to implement instruction and that the teacher's knowledge of the subject must be exceptional.

Creating a scope and sequence gave me a specific direction and ultimately a blue print for my social studies curriculum. My next step was to wrap my head around generating student engagement.

Social studies has taken a back seat in terms of importance since the No Child Left Behind Bill, which put most of the focus of education in English/language arts and math. Thus, social studies is not always viewed as a subject of interest for many. This compelled me to really search into ways to create student engagement. In my journey to find ways to create student engagement, I first found two valuable sources that gave me a strong idea of what student engagement is and what it requires. Newman (1992) and Marks (2000) agree that student engagement is the student's emotional input and intention directed toward learning a subject, understanding it, and mastering the know-how of academic work and its objectives.

Newman (1992) goes on to make clear the importance for teachers to find a variety of ways to approach a subject and to incorporate various activities to meet the learning needs and capture the attention of all students. When developing my social studies curriculum Newman's (1992) work helped me to establish a variety of activities. The variety of activities will provide student engagement, and along with the advice of Prince (2004), I made sure these activities included active learning, such as collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and problem-based learning (PBL). Along with Prince's (2004) work, I took the advice of Lintner (2011) and incorporated the use of children's literature as a powerful tool in teaching social studies.

One other important theme that emerged from my literature review was establishing multiple perspectives in social studies. Our society has changed greatly over

time, especially in terms of diversity. This is why establishing multiple perspectives in social studies is critical if we want to promote student engagement, as well as ensuring that all angles of an event or idea are given the chance to be visited. This will strengthen the goal of social studies education, which is to create educated and helpful citizens by exposing our youth to essential concepts of culture, economics, and political competence. As Misco (2005) had explained, when students recognize and acknowledge various opinions and beliefs, moral tools are maturing such as open-mindedness, skepticism, reflection, and fairness, which all lead to social responsibility. I found that Lintner's (2005) ideas on using children's literature will help facilitate class discussions that will be open, honest, and reflective. These types of discussions can lead to students processing and establishing self-perception of achievement, possibility, acceptance, and respect.

The research conducted for my literature review served as an integral tool in which helped me develop a social studies curriculum unit that includes a scope and sequence, generates student engagement, and establishes multiple perspectives.

Methods Used in Developing My Curriculum and its Impact

In creating my social studies curriculum unit, I found that it would be best to start by asking myself what the ultimate results for each standard be and then work towards those results through means of my lessons. I found that the curriculum writing framework called, Understanding by Design (UbD), by Wiggins & McTighe (2011) would be an ideal structure. The organization of the UbD is known for its "backward design" because when planning lessons, one begins with the ultimate results (desired results) and ends with the actual lesson's activities.

As stated before, it is imperative that educators generate multiple perspectives in the subject of social studies, so making sure that I had the desired results as a starting point, helped me to make sure I included many ways to incorporate multiple perspectives in the actual lessons. This framework also served as a springboard to ensure that I incorporated many dynamic learning activities to enhance student engagement. Starting with the desired results kept me on track when planning the actual lessons.

Along with the work of Wiggins & McTighe (2011), I found that analyzing the MN State Standards for Social Studies really helped me determine and truly understand what my students should be able to understand and walk away with after each standard and benchmark is taught.

I learned a great deal through the curriculum development process. The most important thing I learned in developing curriculum was that in order to ensure you are focused in on the end results, you make the conclusion your goal, and make the learning activities the means to meet that ultimate goal.

Implications and Limitations

My social studies curriculum unit is a mixture of influential and productive activities that will not only generate student engagement, but will also ensure that a plethora of opportunities are present to encourage multiple perspectives. I believe those who embrace this social studies curriculum unit will agree that it is free from biases, is appropriate for second grade, meets the needs of all learners, and is aligned with the MN State Standards for Social Studies.

Limitations of this project include the amount of time in which was allowed to create. For this particular project, I have allowed myself enough time to create a social

studies curriculum unit. My ultimate intention is to create a year-long social studies curriculum for second grade that is aligned with the MN State Standards for Social Studies and is free from bias.

Future Related Research Projects

Due to the fact that I have created one unit for social studies out of the four areas of study listed in the MN State Standards for Social Studies, any future related research projects will begin with the continuation of this social studies curriculum. I can also foresee other areas of interest producing the same results as this project, such as the area of science and writing.

Now that I have experienced the whole process of creating such a curriculum, it will be to my advantage to create more as the time goes on. One thing I will execute in the future, will be the input and help from my colleagues.

This first social studies unit will be implemented by myself and anyone else on my second-grade team starting the fall of 2017. I look forward to using it, and adjusting and adapting as needed. I also look forward to the input of my colleagues as they begin to implement it as well.

Summary

The main emphasis and learnings of Chapter Four are focused on my growth and development as a researcher, writer, and life-long learner. It communicates my journey with this project, as well as makes many connections in terms of my learnings throughout the whole process, conducting research for my literature review, and the methods of curriculum development and the framework I chose to create my social studies curriculum unit.

In reflecting upon all that I have learned and taken away from the creation of this capstone project, it is fair to say that my experience has been very powerful and rewarding. I have definitely accomplished a new sense of confidence when it comes to my research and writing skills, in which Chapter Four is based upon. Using the literature review to help me with the creation of my social studies curriculum unit is very evident, and I can plainly see the importance of conducting such research. This whole process has been extremely beneficial for me as I have now been immersed in the contribution of creating a solid curriculum that I believe will help me reach the ultimate social studies goal of creating educated and productive citizens by bringing to light essential concepts of culture, economics, and political competence to our youth.

APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A

Taken from <http://education.state.mn.us/mde/index.html>

Grade 2: Foundations of Social Studies

Students in grade two continue to build their foundational understanding in the social studies disciplines of citizenship and government, economics, geography and history. They learn about the need for fair voting processes, and the importance of constitutions and obeying rules. They study indigenous people and the influence of a variety of cultures on our society, gaining an understanding of the United States' common heritage and diverse roots. Students begin to understand how resources and physical features influence the distribution of people around the world, and use maps and other geographic tools to explain the characteristics of places. They use calendars and timelines to track the passage of time and chronicle events. By describing the trade-offs of a decision, students learn the concept of opportunity cost and its connection to scarcity of resources.

Grade	Strand	Substrand	Standard Understand that...	Code	Benchmark
2	1. Citizenship and Government	1. Civic Skills	1. Democratic government depends on informed and engaged citizens who exhibit civic skills and values, practice civic discourse, vote and participate in elections, apply inquiry and analysis skills and take action to solve problems and shape public policy.	2.1.1.1.1	Demonstrate voting skills, identify rules that keep a voting process fair, and explain why voting is important.
2	1. Citizenship and Government	2. Civic Values and Principles of Democracy	2. The civic identity of the United States is shaped by historical figures, places and events and by key foundational documents	2.1.2.2.1	Explain the importance of constitutions. <i>For example:</i> Examples of constitutions—a classroom constitution, club charter, the United States Constitution.

Grade	Strand	Substrand	Standard Understand that...	Code	Benchmark
2	1. Citizenship and Government	4. Governmental Institutions and Political Processes	7. The primary purposes of rules and laws within the United States constitutional government are to protect individual rights, promote the general welfare and provide order.	2.1.4.7.1	Compare and contrast student rules, rights and responsibilities at school with their rules, rights and responsibilities at home; explain the importance of obeying rules. <i>For example:</i> Rules at school—follow the leader, put jackets in one's cubby. Rights at school—be treated with respect by teacher and other students, speak when called on, participate in activities. Responsibilities at school—follow school rules, listen to teachers and adults, treat other students with respect. Rights at home—be safe, fed, clothed, warm. Responsibilities at home—listen to parents or guardians, treat family members with respect, help when asked.
2	2. Economics	1. Economic Reasoning Skills	1. People make informed economic choices by identifying their goals, interpreting and applying data, considering the short- and long-run costs and benefits of alternative choices and revising their goals based on their analysis.	2.2.1.1.1	Given a goal and several alternative choices to reach that goal, select the best choice and explain why.
2	2. Economics	3. Fundamental Concepts	3. Because of scarcity individuals, organizations and governments must evaluate trade-offs, make choices and incur opportunity costs.	2.2.3.3.1	Describe the trade-offs of a decision; describe the opportunity cost of a choice as the next best alternative which was not chosen. <i>For example:</i> Joe can visit his grandparents, go to a park, or see a movie. He only has enough time to do one activity, so he must choose. His opportunity cost will be whichever activity he would have selected second.

Grade	Strand	Substrand	Standard Understand that...	Code	Benchmark
2	2. Economics	4. Microeconomic Concepts	5. Individuals, businesses and governments interact and exchange goods, services and resources in different ways and for different reasons; interactions between buyers and sellers in a market determines the price and quantity exchanged of a good, service or resource.	2.2.4.5.1	Classify materials that come from nature as natural resources (or raw materials); tools, equipment and factories as capital resources; and workers as human resources. <i>For example:</i> Natural resources—trees, iron ore, coal, pigs. Capital resources—hammer, computer, assembly line, power plant. Human resources—teacher, carpenter, mechanic, nurse.
2	2. Economics	4. Microeconomic Concepts	5. Individuals, businesses and governments interact and exchange goods, services and resources in different ways and for different reasons; interactions between buyers and sellers in a market determines the price and quantity exchanged of a good, service or resource.	2.2.4.5.2	Identify money as any generally accepted item used in making exchanges. <i>For example:</i> United States currency and coins today; beaver pelts and other furs used in Minnesota territory in the early 1800s; salt used in the Roman Empire; cowry shells used in ancient China, metal coins used in Anatolia (Turkey) in 500 BCE.
2	3. Geography	1. Geospatial Skills— The World in Spatial Terms	1. People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.	2.3.1.1.1	Create sketch maps to illustrate detailed spatial information about settings from stories; describe the spatial information found on the maps. <i>For example:</i> Spatial information—cities, roads, boundaries, bodies of water, regions.
2	3. Geography	1. Geospatial Skills— The World in Spatial Terms	1. People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.	2.3.1.1.2	Locate key features on a map or globe; use cardinal directions to describe the relationship between two or more features. <i>For example:</i> Key features—city, state, country, continents, the equator, poles, prime meridian, hemisphere, oceans, major rivers, major mountain ranges, other types of landforms in the world.
2	3. Geography	1. Geospatial Skills— The World in Spatial Terms	1. People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.	2.3.1.1.3	Use maps, photos or other geographic tools to identify and locate major landmarks or major physical features of the United States. <i>For example:</i> Physical features—the Atlantic Coast, Rocky Mountains, Mississippi River, Lake Superior. Landmarks—Statue of Liberty, Angel Island, Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial.
2	3. Geography	1. Geospatial Skills— The World in Spatial Terms	1. People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.	2.3.1.1.4	Use maps, photos, or other geographic tools to answer basic questions about where people are located. <i>For example:</i> Where are we? What is this location like? What are the characteristics of this location? How has this place been affected by the movement of people, goods and ideas? How do people modify the environment to fit their needs? How do people organize locations into regions? How is this place similar to or different from other places?
2	3. Geography	4. Human Environment Interaction	9. The environment influences human actions; and humans both adapt to, and change, the environment.	2.3.4.9.1	Identify causes and consequences of human impact on the environment and ways that the environment influences people.
2	4. History 3. Geography	1. Historical Thinking Skills	1. Historians generally construct chronological narratives to characterize eras and explain past events and change over time.	2.4.1.1.1	Use and create calendars to identify days, weeks, months, years and seasons; use and create timelines to chronicle personal, school, community or world events.

Grade	Strand	Substrand	Standard Understand that...	Code	Benchmark
2	4. History	1. Historical Thinking Skills	2. Historical inquiry is a process in which multiple sources and different kinds of historical evidence are analyzed to draw conclusions about how and why things happened in the past.	2.4.1.2.1	Use historical records and artifacts to describe how people's lives have changed over time. <i>For example:</i> Historical records—photos, oral histories, diaries/journals, textbooks, library books. Artifacts—art, pottery, baskets, jewelry, tools.
2	4. History	2. Peoples, Cultures and Change Over Time	4. The differences and similarities of cultures around the world are attributable to their diverse origins and histories, and interactions with other cultures throughout time.	2.4.2.4.1	Compare and contrast daily life for Minnesota Dakota or Anishinaabe peoples in different times, including before European contact and today.
2	4. History	2. Peoples, Cultures and Change Over Time	4. The differences and similarities of cultures around the world are attributable to their diverse origins and histories, and interactions with other cultures throughout time.	2.4.2.4.2	Describe how the culture of a community reflects the history, daily life or beliefs of its people. <i>For example:</i> Elements of culture—foods, folk stories, legends, art, music, dance, holidays, ceremonies, celebrations, homes, clothing.

APPENDIX B

UbD/DI Unit Plan Template

Stage 1 - Desired Results

Established Goal(s):

Understanding(s): <i>Students will understand that . . .</i>	Essential Question(s):
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Knowledge <i>Students will know . . .</i>	Skill <i>Students will be able to . . .</i>
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Stage 2 - Assessment Evidence

Performance Task(s):	Other Evidence:
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Stage 3 - Learning Plan

Learning Activities:

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