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Perspectives On American History: An Integrated Social Studies and English Language Arts Curriculum For Fifth Grade

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PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN HISTORY: AN INTEGRATED SOCIAL STUDIES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM FOR FIFTH GRADE

By

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Social studies holds prominent place in my life: memorizing a silly rhyme about Christopher Columbus when I was six; poring over state maps in a beat up old AAA road atlas on trips in middle school; volunteering for the local historical preservation association as an adult. As a fifth grade teacher, however, social studies instruction accounts for less than two hours of my entire week. More concerning to me is that I am an anomaly in my school district. From word of mouth and observations, most teachers are lucky to squeeze in two hours of explicit social studies instruction in a *month*. As the literature reviewed in this project will show, the district in which I work fits a nationwide pattern of ever decreasing social studies instructional time.

Social studies is the catch-all phrase for the multiple fields of social sciences that are taught in the K-12 school setting. Social studies, as a subject, encompasses history, geography, civics, political science and, in some schools, philosophy, psychology and economics. It is shocking to me that such a broad field of study is getting such little teaching time. This led me to ask the question: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?* In this first chapter I will discuss my own learning background, historical considerations that have affected social studies instruction, observations from my teaching experience, the significance of the

final project, and an overview of the research question and project. Finally, I will preview the remaining chapters and the curriculum project.

My Learning Background

I was born and raised in a rural town in the upper midwest. When I was in first grade, the state legislature unanimously passed a state law seeking reconciliation with the indigenous tribes who historically called our state home. In an effort to recognize and reconcile the trauma and oppressive culture of the education system, some school districts reconsidered the social studies standards being taught in their schools. In my school district, American Indian history was to be taught at all grade levels and in equal measure to white European history. American Indian leaders, especially those of the Plains indians, were taught alongside white leaders. The whitewashing of history was not tolerated, even in the elementary grades. As such, I received an education rich with the history of both my European ancestors and the Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, Arikara and Cheyenne peoples. My school career was marked by passionate educators who picked materials and led instruction with a clear intention to tell more than a singular perspective of history, geography, civics, politics and economics. I was taught to think critically, wrestle with ideas that made me uncomfortable, and to engage in rigorous, respectful academic conversations with peers and adults. I was encouraged to participate in the civic life of my community, even before I could legally vote. My education inspired a lifelong passion for history, politics and geography, leading me to pursue degrees in government and international affairs before becoming a teacher.

Historical Considerations

I graduated from high school in 2003, a year after the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, legislation that would prove to be a watershed moment in education. In the wake of its passage, English language arts and math were pushed to the forefront and dominated the school day. Test scores became the indicator of effectiveness by which schools, and their teachers, would be measured. The Common Core standards initiative did little to alleviate the instructional imbalance. The other subjects – science, social studies, the arts, and foreign languages – took a well-documented step back in importance and, in some schools, were dropped from the school day completely. In 2017, on Columbus Day, I asked a group of 20 fifth graders what they knew about Christopher Columbus. Most had heard of him, but only two could tell me he was the man who supposedly discovered America. Compared to the nuanced version of history I received as a student, my students had not received even the basics, fitting the national pattern.

I am not alone in noticing an absence of social studies instruction. In 2013 *The Atlantic* magazine compiled data related to social studies instruction after the passage of No Child Left Behind. Despite an increase in the total amount of instructional time across all content areas, social studies instruction took a 2% drop in yearly instructional time (Kalaidis, 2013). At the National Center for Education Statistics, researchers found that this change in instructional time resulted in a loss of 4 weeks of social studies instruction every year (Morton & Dalton, 2007).

Some researchers believe the decline of social studies in schools started long before No Child Left Behind or the Common Core initiative. Researchers Byford and Russell (2007) point to the 1957 launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik. Americans,

furious about falling behind in the space race, deemed schools ineffective at training students for a technological future. Policy and money were funneled towards math and sciences, while the social studies were asked to better prepare students for "the life-and-death ideological and technological global struggle with the Soviet Union" (Byford & Russell, 2007, p. 41). Civic participation became highest priority, while also pushing each of the social studies disciplines to emphasize inquiry and practical simulations. Over 50 curriculum design projects popped up across the United States, but none would have a lasting impact. Nearly all pulled on college curriculum, most did not address the realities faced by teachers in the field, and many flew in the face of teacher ideologies at the time (Byford & Russell, 2007). Social studies instruction became splintered, unorganized and, for many teachers, an ideological dilemma.

Observations from the Classroom

In the last six years, I have had the privilege of teaching in radically different settings. In all, no matter the location or demographics, social studies has been an afterthought. My first three years of teaching were in a midwest urban city at an elementary school that served low-income English language learners. For the first 18 months or so, social studies did not come up once in professional learning community (PLC) discussions or in conversations with administration. As school leadership became increasingly committed to racial equity, however, social studies inched its way forward as a means for teaching racial identity and building bridges between the diverse racial groups at our school by talking about shared experiences. We did not follow any set curriculum, and we never explicitly taught a single established social studies standard

but, rather, we created materials and teaching resources that fit our needs, and we actively integrated our version of social studies into our literacy program.

For the last two years, I have been teaching fifth grade in a small city in a Montana. Social studies instruction is totally dependent on the teacher and their knowledge or comfort with the content. In talking with other fifth grade teachers in my district, there is always a noticeable look of surprise when I mention plans for social studies lessons. In an instructional day, a set number of minutes are committed to English language arts, math, and interventions in those two subjects. Most teachers are lucky to have a spare 40 minutes a day to devote to something besides math or language arts. Fifth grade teachers express to me that they want to explicitly and intentionally teach all of the academic areas, but time and district priorities are not working in their favor.

Significance of this Capstone Project

The collapse of social studies instruction in the years since No Child Left Behind means that an entire generation of students have graduated from high school with only a passing and limited knowledge of history, geography and civics. The Carnegie Corporation of New York found that one third of Americans could not name a single branch of government, and only one third of Americans could name all three branches of government (Gould et al., 2011).

Inversely, however, explicit and intentional social studies instruction can mobilize young voters and prepare them for public engagement and careers, which leads to the significance of this project. The Carnegie Corporation of New York argues that students who receive meaningful, competent social studies instruction are more likely to vote, four

times more likely to volunteer, and feel more confident in their ability to speak publicly and communicate about their values (Gould et al., 2011, p. 6). Through social studies instruction, students develop the skills necessary to meaningfully participate in community and civic life.

Hart Research Associates (2015), working on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, surveyed employers in the business and non-profit sector. They found that 96% of employers want students who can solve problems with people whose views are different than their own, and 91% agree that a candidate's ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve complex problems is more important than their college major. Thinking critically, effectively communicating with people who hold different views, and solving problems have long been considered key tenets of effective social studies instruction.

Capstone Project

This capstone project is designed to answer the question: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?* The project will develop a fifth grade social studies curriculum, and because of the restraints of instructional minutes in the district in which it will be primarily used, the units will be integrated with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA], 2010). The units will use the events of early American history as a lens to explore the tenants of civics and geography, and to build reading, critical thinking and

communication skills. The units of study align with the Montana Office of Public Instruction elementary social studies standards (Montana Content Standards for Social Studies, 2000), the district's elementary social studies curriculum guidelines (Missoula County Public Schools, 2014), and the pedagogical practices recommended by the National Council for the Social Studies (2016). This project cannot solve the huge time imbalances and priorities imposed by legislation and district administrators, but it can meet the need to deliver meaningful, intentional social studies instruction in the English language arts block.

In a period of divisive and partisan politics, it is critical students develop the skills necessary for active civic participation. In keeping with the findings from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, this capstone seeks to give fifth grade teachers the tools necessary to deliver social studies instruction.

Summary

The preceding chapter summarized what led me to asking: *how can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?* I explored my experiences with social studies as both teacher and learner, key events that need to be considered to understand what happened to social studies instruction in the elementary classroom, the significance of social studies instruction in both civic life and work life, and the goals of this capstone project. I believe explicit social studies instruction is critical to building students who are ready to confront and solve the problems facing our country, and I seek to start my own students on this path by developing a fifth grade social studies and English language arts curriculum.

As shown, much has happened to social studies instruction over the last 50 years. I want to better understand what is presently going on in schools in social studies instruction. I also want to know more about best practices and common social studies pedagogies, like culturally relevant teaching. I also seek to understand how the unique development needs of fifth graders can be harnessed in a curriculum. Chapter two will take an in-depth look at the current research on these topics. Chapter three provides an overview of the curriculum project, and chapter four provides a reflection of the capstone experience, including a discussion of the implications and limitations of the final project.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

My school experience, as a student, was steeped in social studies. As a teacher, social studies instruction has looked different depending on the school setting. This experience has led me to ask: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?* I currently teach fifth grade in Montana and, therefore, will be developing units of study aligned with the Montana Content Standards for Social Studies (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2000) and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects ((National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA], 2010). Chapter Two will be a review of the literature pertinent to this project. I will review what is known about adolescent development and its influence in curriculum design. I will look at current practices and barriers in social studies instruction, including instructional time, curriculum integration and teacher preparation. I will review culturally relevant teaching practices and how they influence high-quality social studies instruction. Finally, I will review key components of effective social studies curriculum design, including culturally relevant teaching and lesson design strategies like Understanding by Design, as well as the guidelines outlined by the National Council for the Social Studies.

I will start first by reviewing what is known about adolescent development and how it influences curriculum design.

Adolescent Development

Adolescence is a distinct stage of development between childhood and adulthood. In this phase of life, adolescents begin to develop their personal identity by responding to social influences, risk taking, and experimenting (Schuck, Chemers, Johnson & Bonnie, 2013). Since this curriculum project is being developed for fifth graders, I need to better understand their development. This section of the literature review will look at the development of adolescents and how this unique period of development can be addressed in the curriculum design.

Patterns in Adolescent development. Adolescence is the stage of development between childhood and adulthood. Schuck et al. (2013) note that it marks the transition of regulation of behavior from being the responsibility of the parents to the responsibility of the individual, and a move to less dependence on parents through the development of self-identity, independence and the ability to find resources to meet needs and wants. During the this time, however, adolescents lack the maturity needed to self-regulate during emotionally charged situations. According to Schuck, Chemers, Johnson and Bonnie (2013), adolescents are also sensitive to peer pressure, lack self-control, and struggle with decision making, especially decisions that require consideration of future consequences. Adolescence is a critical stage of development where young people develop their sense of self, but need support from parents and teachers with

self-regulation, responding to external pressures, and considering the future implications of their decisions.

Meeus (2016) found patterns of development amongst most adolescents. In particular, relationships with parents become more egalitarian while becoming less supportive and relationships with peers become more important, especially as adolescents work through conflicts and power balances. Empathy, or the understanding of another's viewpoints and the response to another's misfortunes, develop around age 13, growing the most around age 16 (Meeus, 2016). As shown in a later section of this literature review, perspective taking is an important factor of effective social studies instruction. Based on Meeus's research, younger adolescents will need scaffolds for taking other perspectives and understanding viewpoints different from their own as they develop their capacity for empathy.

Eccles and Roeser (2011) researched the role school plays in adolescent development. They found it crucial for development that adolescents be presented curriculum that is substantive and considerate of social-historical realities, cultivates students interests, and is meaningful and engaging, both cognitively and emotionally (p. 226). This leads me to believe that pedagogical approaches like culturally relevant teaching and many of the best practices touted by experts in the field can meet the developmental needs of adolescents. These pedagogies are explored further in this literature review.

Summary. Adolescent development is a critical time of cognitive and emotional growth. Teachers and curriculum designers can maximize their impact by tailoring their

instructional practices in accordance with the typical patterns of adolescence. Social studies teachers, in particular, can leverage their high-interest content to engage students in critical analysis of social and historical issues, and can assist students in developing empathy through structured perspective taking, especially in viewing current or historical events that they may have never considered from a different perspective.

Next, I want to better understand the current constraints elementary social studies teachers face in effectively teaching social studies in their classrooms, as well as the practices and policies that influence their decision making. In this section, I will explore issues related to instructional time and how that led to curriculum integration and the diminishing role of social studies in elementary classrooms. Finally, this section will look at how teachers are prepared to approach social studies instruction.

Instructional Time, Curriculum Integration and Teacher Preparation

It is widely reported that the amount of time allocated for social studies instruction has dramatically dropped during the typical elementary school day. The first part of this section will look at national trends regarding instructional time for social studies. Two researchers in particular, Tina Heafner and Paul Fitchett, have done numerous studies on instructional time and teacher attitudes. Their research will factor heavily in this section. The next part will show how instructional time constraints led to curriculum integration, or teaching social studies as part of English language arts. The final section will focus on teacher attitudes and preparation, again pulling on the work of Heafner and Fitchett.

Instructional time for Social Studies. Teachers face many pressures on their instructional time. Numerous researchers have studied how instructional time is allocated in the day and why it is allocated that way.

Morton and Dalton (2007) at the National Center for Education Statistics reported on the changes in instructional time across four content areas - English language arts, math, science and social studies - in grades one through four. There research showed that over the course of 17 school years, total instructional time across the four key content areas (English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies) increased by about 36 minutes a week (p. 4). Instructional time for English language arts and mathematics both increased, yielding an additional two weeks and three weeks of instruction, respectively, from 1987 to 2004 (p. 2-3). Science and social studies, meanwhile, suffered a loss in instructional time in that same period, resulting in five fewer weeks of instruction for science and four fewer weeks for social studies (Morton & Dalton, 2007, p. 3).

Knowing the ever increasing time constraints faced by elementary teachers, Fitchett and Heafner (2012), studied the effects on social studies teaching. They found that instructional time constraints wreaked havoc on even the best social studies teachers as they had less time to deliver quality instruction and dynamic curriculum, perpetuating a stigma of "bad" social studies instruction (p. 2). Based on their findings, quality social studies instruction requires additional instructional time.

Imbalances in instructional time can be ascribed to policy changes. Fitchett, Heafner and Lambert (2014) point to federal legislation, like No Child Left Behind, as

well as more recent state efforts to develop common standards, and the emphasis on testing to gauge student knowledge and teacher effectiveness (p.41). Teachers, in turn, spend more time on tested subject-matter. The consequence is social studies being tossed aside and, as they describe it, marginalized within the elementary curriculum (p. 41)

Seeking to better understand the system of marginalization, Fitchett et al. (2014) examined potential indicators of social studies instructional time. They found that state testing policy was the most significant indicator of social studies instructional time, followed closely by teachers' perception of autonomy and grade level (p. 57-59). This means in states that annually test English language arts and mathematics, there was less time being allocated for social studies compared to states that also tested social studies. Teachers that felt they had freedom to teach social studies did so at noticeably higher rates, and teachers in older elementary grades more often taught social studies than younger elementary grades. Autonomy factors heavily into teacher attitudes towards social studies, and is explored more in a later section of this literature review.

Given the time constraints, numerous researchers have found that many elementary classrooms rely on subject integration to teach social studies. The next subsection will explore subject integration.

Integration with English language arts. A strategy employed by many school districts to increase elementary social studies instructional time while still meeting the instructional needs of English language arts is to integrate the two subject areas together.

Heafner (2018) sought to know more about the successes and challenges of elementary English language arts and social studies integration. While the integration

mindset helped combat social studies marginalization, Heafner found it of little benefit to social studies instruction unless clear and explicit expectations were given to teachers, as well as explicit preparation with the materials (p. 6-7).

Furthermore, Heafner (2018), building on the work of researchers Grant and Brophy, found that the classroom teacher must be “ambitious” and “maverick” (p. 3). Grant (2007) suggests that ambitious teaching is “...is nuanced, complex and contextualized both because of and in spite of state social studies tests and the consequences they hold” (p. 253). Brophy uses the term maverick to describe teachers who are autonomous and inventive in using the structures of the elementary classroom to teach social studies (Heafner, 2018, p. 3). Heafner (2018) find that ambitious and maverick teachers are persistent about teaching social studies, subverting instructional time constraints to focus on the high-order skills found in most social studies lessons (p. 3). This means the demand, interest, insistence and effort to teach social studies as part of English language arts must come from the teacher, not the administration. In fact, Heafner found that teachers who were not considered maverick did not fully integrate social studies into the English language arts block even when given the time and materials to do so. Most often, these teachers viewed the two content areas as separate, not subjects that could be effectively and easily integrated (p. 9). Heafner lauds the successes of ambitious teachers, marking even limited social studies integration as a promise for the future, but notes at present, it has little effect on marginalization of social studies (p. 9).

In sharp contrast, Hinde (2009) argues that the integration of social studies and English language arts is not effective at all, at least as it is currently taught in most schools, because teachers, administrators and researchers have lost sight of the original purpose of subject integration. Hinde argues that early European and American education researchers believed curriculum integration would create children who could use the disciplines to advance democratic ideals by using their own thinking processes to confront issues facing society. In short, an integrated curriculum should have created integrated thinkers (p. 119-120). In contrast, however, Hinde notes that as the marginalizing effect of No Child Left Behind wore off, teachers began attempting to integrate social studies related topics into reading specific lessons, perhaps sprinkling in a topic related to a book or story (p. 119). While some social studies instruction is better than none, it missed the point of integration. Students were not learning the values and knowledge necessary to make informed decisions. Hinde (2009) writes, “In a truly integrated curriculum, social studies helps students to think like disciplinarians, that is to think historically, spatially, civically, and economically” (p. 120). This means any attempt at social studies and English language arts integration must use reading as a tool for developing the disciplinary knowledge, values, and dispositions needed for students to participate in democratic society, and the disciplines within social studies (civics, geography, history, etc.) must also be integrated, not taught in isolation of the others (Hinde, 2009). This leads me to believe that the focus of an integrated curriculum cannot solely be the English language arts standards, but rather using the language arts are a tool

for helping students understand the social studies topics in order to participate, think critically, and communicate knowledgeably.

As noted earlier, teacher attitudes and preparation factor in to the amount of instructional time allocated for social studies, and how that time is used. The next subsection will explore those attitudes, as well as teacher preparation.

Teacher preparation and attitudes. Heafner (2018) found that to maximize English language arts/social studies integration, teachers needed explicit expectations for instructional time and preparation with materials. In contrast, however, Heafner's earlier research with Fitchett and Lambert (2014) found that teacher preparation factors very little in a teacher's willingness to teach social studies and does not impact the amount of instructional time allocated in the day.

Teacher preparation, however, can be a limiting factor in how a teacher uses the given instructional time. Wills (2007) found that teachers with limited content knowledge show an over reliance on textbook based curriculum and spend less time exploring concepts in depth (as cited in Fitchett et al., 2014). Additionally, Bolick, Adams and Willox (2010) found that because of continued marginalization of social studies, many pre-service teachers have limited or no exposure to to social studies lesson planning and instruction during their student teaching.

Grant (2003) found that an attitude tied to increased social studies instructional time is perceived autonomy resulting in student-centered social studies instruction (as cited in Fitchett, Heafner & Lambert, 2014, p. 42). These teachers act as a "gatekeeper" in their classroom, resisting the intensification of English language arts and math

instruction in order to offer a balanced curriculum to students. These teachers are more likely to design meaningful and engaged social studies lessons (Fitchett, Heafner & Lambert, 2014, p. 59). Efforts by curriculum writers like myself, then, must help teachers maximize instructional time while providing the information needed to help teachers feel knowledgeable and prepared to deliver instruction.

Summary. This section sought to understand the time constraints impacting many elementary classrooms and found that social studies is, in general, marginalized in elementary curriculum. Additionally, this section found mixed results regarding the integration of social studies into English language arts instruction, though it is promising in its opportunity increase social studies instructional time. Finally, this section reviewed the attitudes of social studies teachers and found that ambitious and maverick social studies teachers are more likely to adequately use both preparation and instructional time.

The next section of this literature review will look at culturally relevant teaching, a pedagogical theory used by many teachers, especially in the social studies classroom.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally relevant teaching, also known as culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy, came to prominence in the 1990s. Culturally relevant pedagogy intentionally recognizes the background of the students and uses that background in instruction, thus making school relevant and relatable for students from all backgrounds. Culturally relevant instruction appears throughout the literature as a means for enhancing social studies instruction as it can pull in the stories and experiences often intentionally excluded from traditional textbooks. The first part of this section will

provide an overview of culturally relevant pedagogy, its successes and pitfalls, and its champions. The second part will look at how culturally relevant pedagogy is used in social studies instruction.

An overview of culturally relevant teaching. In her book *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) describes the concept of culturally relevant teaching as intentionally incorporating the students' home culture and language within the school culture as a means for negating the impacts of the dominant culture. The negative effects are the consequence of not seeing one's culture, history or background represented in textbooks and curriculum, being presented a distorted view of one's history in textbooks and curriculum, or being in a school with very people of color in leadership or teaching positions. Ladson-Billings notes that culturally relevant teachers, then, are using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes by intentionally building a transfer of knowledge between home and school and vice versa.

Ladson-Billings's (2014) later research shows that the success of culturally relevant teaching comes in the philosophical and pedagogical change in the teacher as the they learn to connect the principles of learning with an understanding of culture. For teachers, this means shifting the focus from classroom behavior management to a focus on student learning, from assimilation to cultural competence, and from real-world application (what Ladson-Billings calls "sociopolitical consciousness") instead of school-based tasks.

Byrd (2016) writes that culturally relevant teaching uses three primary approaches: high expectations, promoting cultural competence and promoting critical consciousness. Byrd writes that culturally relevant teachers with high expectations offer challenging curriculum while scaffolding for student needs and creating an environment that values respect, inclusivity, cooperation and academic experimentation. To promote cultural competence, Byrd finds that teachers encourage students to understand themselves, use their previous knowledge in order to build a bridge between student knowledge, identity and values to the curriculum and, most importantly, the outside world. Finally, Byrd says culturally relevant teachers promote critical consciousness by addressing social justice issues and inequities in the classroom. Teachers acknowledge oppressive social dynamics and empower students to challenge those dynamics by participating in decision making.

Ladson-Billings (2014) writes that a pitfall of culturally relevant teaching, or at least of how culturally relevant teaching is being practiced in schools, is the challenge of knowing and understanding the complexity and fluidity of culture. Even amongst teachers who had embraced culturally relevant teaching and were using the pedagogy with good intentions, Ladson-Billings found that many were resistant or unable to teach students the sociopolitical implications of this learning. Students were not being pushed to consider how policies and practices have impact on their lives and, therefore, culturally relevant teaching had lost its edge for inspiring meaningful change in the lives of marginalized communities. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (2014) argues that many

schools have corrupted and distorted the pedagogy, using occasional cultural celebrations or a few images of people of color as their version of being culturally relevant (p. 82).

In response to the pitfalls and challenges of culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings calls on the research of other educators who seek to save the pedagogy. Paris (2012) put forth the idea of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which works to acknowledge the complexity and fluidity of the global cultures represented in many schools. McCarty and Lee (2014), among others, offer the practice of critical, culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy, a powerful framework amongst indigenous communities fighting to save and revitalize their distinct cultures, languages and histories after centuries of forced assimilation and cultural eradication.

Despite its challenges, culturally relevant teaching is an effective, highly-researched instructional pedagogy. Jones, Pang and Rodriguez (2001) found culturally relevant teaching to be an effective practice because it encourages dynamic, ever-changing social interactions between students and teachers, and encourages learning in multiple contexts. It also creates a student-centered learning environment.

Byrd (2016) also studied the efficacy of culturally relevant teaching but, in comparison to Jones et al. (2001), gathered student perspectives. Byrd found students exposed to culturally relevant teaching expressed greater interest in school, a greater sense of belonging, and a deeper sense of racial-identity, amongst both students of color and white students. Byrd notes that teachers who balanced celebrations of diversity and social progress with discussions of contemporary and historical oppression were able to buffer the negative psychological effects suffered by students of color when racism and

systems of oppression are overlooked and, simultaneously, increase the awareness of implicit bias among white students.

Based on her research, Byrd (2016) recommends three things for teachers. First, leverage knowledge of students and their backgrounds to engage and make connections. Second, teach cultural diversity even if the class is not diverse to prepare students for life outside of the classroom in a diverse country. Third, acknowledge current inequities and embrace students' abilities to handle challenging ideas Byrd writes, "Opportunities to explore racism and anti-racism in school will help students to see that school is relevant to their everyday lives and can build their sense of agency and civic engagement" (2016, p. 7).

Based on this research, I am led to believe culturally relevant teaching is an effective pedagogy to use in curriculum design. Research shows increased engagement and opportunities for students to explore both their own and unfamiliar cultures, histories and perspectives. The next subsection will look specifically at how culturally relevant teaching is used in social studies.

Culturally relevant social studies teaching. A natural and obvious starting point for many teachers hoping to use culturally relevant teaching, especially as a tool for sociopolitical awareness and change, as intended by Ladson-Billings, is social studies.

Fitchett, Starker and Salyers (2012) acknowledge that many social studies classrooms present a harsh contradiction. While the standards and experts in the field call on social studies as tool for developing socially competent citizens, most curriculums are a standardized version of the dominant Eurocentric history and cultural norms, with race

and diversity being minimized in importance, and teachers unwittingly propagating the continued teaching of the dominant culture norms and history. In a study of preservice teachers put through a rigorous culturally relevant teacher training with tools to develop curriculum, practice, and self-efficacy, Fitchett et al. found that preservice teachers could more easily identify cultural bias in curriculum and develop lesson plans addressing the cultural bias. Teachers felt more confident in their ability to deliver culturally relevant instruction, particularly in unpacking the Eurocentricity of American history.

Martell (2013) studied the implications of challenging, what he calls, "teaching White history." He incorporated lessons into this teaching of American history that directly addressed the students of color in his classroom, including the Battle of Wounded Knee, the Detroit Race Riots, and many others, as well as offering individual research topics that allowed student to explore their own cultural history. Through his research, Martell found that the overwhelming majority of his students said the class helped them see the different perspectives in American history, they liked learning about history after his class, they felt connected to people in history, and they could better recall historical information compared to their previous history classes.

Metzger, Box, and Blasingame (2013) looked at the ways Native American history was or was not being taught and found a tremendous gap in knowledge, even amongst Native American students. With the development of a unique curriculum designed by Box to teach Native American history, literature and current issues, however, students became notably more engaged, more willing to share learning with peers outside of their classroom, and students who would not typically participate became empowered

to participate in reading and discussion. Students noted that they learned more in one semester than they have in their entire schooling.

The body of research, including the research described above, shows that culturally relevant teaching is a powerful tool for teaching the diversity of cultural and historical experiences and for promoting the intentional inclusion of diverse perspectives in social studies instruction.

Summary. Culturally relevant teaching has, rightfully, been embraced by many teachers, though its efficacy can be hindered if used inappropriately, like teaching only the holidays and heroes of a racial or cultural group. Culturally relevant teaching in the social studies classroom has led to increased student engagement and, among students in culturally relevant classrooms, a sense of enhanced knowledge and knowledge retention.

The final section of this chapter will review the components of effective social studies curriculum design.

Key Components of Effective Social Studies Curriculum

Social studies instruction has transformed significantly and continuously since the Cold War, but nearly all curriculum models developed in the last 50 years have been pushed aside due to time constraints or unrealistic expectations put on teachers (Byford & Russell, 2007). This, therefore, makes it necessary to know more about what experts in the field consider “best practice” in both curriculum design and, more specifically, in a social studies unit. This first part this section will look at the Understanding by Design model for unit development, as this is the curriculum paradigm used in the district where this curriculum project is being designed for use. The second part of this section will look

at the recommendations by the National Council for the Social Studies and, more specifically, how those recommendations intersect with Understanding by Design. The third part of this section will look at other instructional practices.

Understanding by design. Understanding by Design is the curriculum paradigm used in the district where this curriculum project is being designed for us. *The Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High-quality Units* by Wiggins and McTighe (2011) marries the need for curriculum writing with the current research on student cognition and the role of the teacher. The authors emphasize a strategy they call "backward design," or starting with the long-term desired results, then designing a lesson plan that is constantly checking for evidence of student learning towards those results. Understanding by Design prompts a teacher to provide coherent, focused lessons that prioritize the ideas in the content to make them meaningful, interesting and relevant. Understanding by Design, then, is a means of thinking about lesson planning, not a prescriptive approach to teaching, that allows for teacher autonomy, which as previously noted is important to teacher attitudes about social studies instruction. As a means for social studies instruction, Understanding by Design encourages teachers to focus on helping students make meaning of the content, or as Wiggins and McTighe say, "'uncover' the content, not merely 'cover' it" in order to transfer the big ideas to the other content areas and real life (p.9).

Understanding is revealed through a student's transfer of learning. This means students can explain information in their own words through inferences, making connections, and teaching others. Students can interpret information by making it

personal to their lives. Students can apply their learning in a different context, and they can have perspective to see it as part of a bigger picture. A student's understanding is finally shown in empathy towards others and self-knowledge in reflection. The goal of understanding is the transfer of knowledge so that students can, eventually, use that knowledge and skill independently (Wiggins and McTighe, 2011).

As the approved and encouraged approach for lesson planning in the school system where this curriculum is being developed, the curricular units created in this classroom will align with the tenets of Understanding by Design. More information about the UbD paradigm in context of the curriculum project is provided in Chapter Three.

Next, it important to understand how Understanding by Design converges with the standards and practices outlined by the National Council for the Social Studies and the research of other professionals in the field of social studies curriculum.

The National Council for the Social Studies recommendations. After the revising the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies in 2008 and 2010, the National Council for the Social Studies released a series of statements clarifying what they had dubbed their vision for powerful teaching and learning in social studies and the Council's (2008) position that effective social studies learning leads to well-informed and civic-minded citizens that sustain and build upon democratic traditions. This position is in keeping with the findings of the Carnegie Corporation that competent social studies instruction can encourage discourse and civic participation (Gould et al., 2011).

Additionally, the Council's position papers outlined the principles of effective teaching. The Council (2016) states that a meaningful social studies curriculum builds a

network of skills, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs around enduring understanding, important ideas and essential questions (p. 180). Similarly to Wiggins and McTighe (2011), the Council (2008) seeks both "hands on" and "minds on" learning (p. 277). Through the position papers, a correlation to Understanding by Design begins to appear, though the Council intentionally does not recommend any specific curriculum design. Like Understanding by Design, the Council seeks to help students make meaning of content and to transfer that understanding to new contexts in order to become active and engaged citizens.

Other curricular approaches. The lack of clear curricular recommendations is one of the biggest shortcomings of the revised standards and the National Council for Social Studies vision for powerful teaching and learning. Misco (2014) writes that the vision of the National Council for the Social Studies is not being met, years after their vision was drafted, because the National Council for the Social Studies refuses to give any specific guidelines on curriculum writing. Misco, however, agrees with both the Council's vision for powerful teaching and learning and Wiggins and McTighe's emphasis on enduring understandings. To meet these convergent needs, Misco recommends four curricular approaches that resist "the tyranny of historical progression as presented in textbooks or presented by standards and testing" (p. 245) and allow for powerful social studies unit design. These approaches are:

1. Issues-centered social studies. Best defined by the researchers Evans, Newmann and Saxe in 1996, this approach starts with problematic questions that lack conclusive answers that inspire student-centered debate and inquiry. These

questions bridge the past and present as students work through complex issues (Evans, Newmann & Saxe, 1996, pp. 2-5).

2. Project-based learning. In project-based learning, students choose a driving question that is of particular interest to them, and then engage in an inquiry-based project to find the answer to their question. Misco (2014) found authentic inquiry allowed students to explore the content while developing problem-solving, critical thinking and communication skills" (p. 245).
3. Thematic units of study. This curricular strategy uses all areas of content - math, science, language arts - to contribute to the overarching understanding of a concept (Misco, 2014).
4. Reverse chronological units. Student start with a present issue, and then reach historically backward to use the past to better understand the present (Misco, 2014).

The four approaches recommended by Misco can be used in planning a lesson aligned to Understanding by Design. Each approach starts with the long-term results in mind, then work backwards to design a big idea and/or essential question and plan for instruction. All focus on the transfer of knowledge from social studies to other areas of the student's life, ensuring the knowledge is used in varied contexts and meeting the vision of the National Council for the Social Studies that all students use their knowledge to become informed and active citizens.

A common strain in all four approaches recommended above is the need for perspective taking. Gehlbach (2011) argues that students make meaning of the content

through social perspective taking, either taking the perspective of other learners in the room (interpersonal social perspective), or by taking the perspective of historical figures (academic social perspective) Social perspective taking humanizes the content and the people involved while helping students cultivate their own unique perspective, pulling on two of the traits of understanding outlined by Wiggins and McTighe, empathy and self-knowledge.

Summary. The literature shows that best practices, the curriculum model used in the school system of this curriculum project, and the recommendations of the National Council for the Social Studies align in common values and goals, namely designing units with the end goal of advancing social studies knowledge.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of literature relevant to this project. The goal of the literature review was to increase my base of knowledge in order to answer the question: how can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade? The first section of this literature review looked at current research on adolescent development and provided analysis on how this can influence curriculum design. The second section looked at current constraints on instructional time for social studies in the typical elementary, the implications of subject integration, and the teacher attitudes that can impact use of instructional time. Additionally, I provided analysis on how these factors will influence the final design of the curriculum project. The third section reviewed the literature on culturally relevant teaching and its use in social studies instruction. The final section reviewed literature on best practices in social

studies curriculum design, specifically looking at the recommendations of the National Council for the Social Studies, and the curriculum model used in my school system, Understanding by Design.

The next chapter in this capstone, Chapter Three, discusses the methods that will be used to write the curriculum, with additional information about Understanding by Design. I will also provide a rationale about why this curriculum project is important and necessary. I will provide information about the intended audience of the curriculum, looking at both the student and teacher I would want to access the curriculum. Finally, chapter three will also look at how the curriculum can be implemented.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

My school experience, as a student, was steeped in social studies. As a teacher, however, social studies instruction has looked different depending on the school setting and instructional time allocated. This experience led me to ask: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?*

This chapter discusses the methods used to develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum that is time-conscious, uses culturally relevant teaching and other best practices identified in the literature review, and provides teachers much needed instructional resources. The curriculum provided is as a unit of study, aligned to the Montana Content Standards for Social Studies (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2000) and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA], 2010). The curriculum was designed with the question in mind: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?*

This chapter explains the rationale behind writing the curriculum, as well as giving an understanding of the school that it will be used in and the students who will

primarily be using the curriculum. It will also discuss the curriculum design paradigm that I used to create the units, Understanding by Design.

The School

The curriculum was designed to be implemented in a public K-5 school located in a small city in a Montana. The school is one of nine elementary schools in the district. The curriculum could also be implemented by any of the other elementary schools in the district, or any school teaching the state elementary social studies standards or similar state content standards.

Instructional time. The school follows a traditional school day, with time structured and allocated amongst core content and specialized content, like music, health and physical enhancement, and technology. Elementary instructional time is mandated by district administration. Each elementary grade level team is required to meet the instructional time in their schedule, but autonomy is given to each grade level team to structure their instructional day around those requirements. In the elementary classroom, 600 minutes a week, or 90 minutes a day, must be allocated to English language arts, with a specific mandate for instruction around phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. An additional 450 minutes a week, or 90 minutes a day, is allocated for math, specifically for the explicit instruction and practice of mathematical skills and concepts. 200 minutes a week, or 40 minutes a day, is allocated for Units of Inquiry, which encompasses both science and social studies. Teachers can teach science, social studies, or both in this time, but the content must include an integrated English language arts skill practice. Finally, 150 minutes a week, or 30 minutes a day, is set aside

for targeted academic intervention and enrichment, which can include additional instruction in science and social studies as part of an integrated English language arts or math skill practice.

Demographics. The school has the largest student population of all elementary schools in the district, with over 490 students. 92% of students are white, 3% of students are American Indian, and about 2% of students are Black, Latino or Asian. Approximately 26% of students received free or reduced-price lunch. Less than 1% of students are English language learners. Students are placed in classes ranging from 20 students, in lower grades, to over 30 students in higher graders.

Current curriculum. The district currently uses a task-force designed curriculum guideline, but does not require the use of any particular curriculum-product or text book. Each grade level, in turn, receives a set of standards and key topics for instruction, guiding questions for the year of study, and connections to the Essential Understandings and the Common Core standards for English language arts. The curriculum guideline, however, does not provide any instructional materials or guidance on preferred materials for use in the classroom. Autonomy is given to the teacher to select materials and deliver instruction of the standards.

The fifth grade standards address the history and geography of the land now known as the United States from 1492 to 1850, the timeframe in which western Europeans moved onto traditional tribal lands. Students will study the consequences of colonialism, the crafting of the Declaration of Independence and the many causes of the Revolutionary War, the drafting of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and the

influence of the Iroquois Confederacy on the founders' ideas on democracy and protection of rights.

All teachers are required to teach the standards in a stand alone social studies block or integrated with English language arts, though if integrated into the English language arts block, a specific English language arts skill must also be used. Teachers feel that the imbalance in instructional time and lack of instructional resources limits their ability to effectively teach the standards.

Rationale

This curriculum was designed to address a key problem faced by teachers in my school district, which is a lack of social studies instructional time. Because of the pressure to spend more instructional time in English language arts and math, this curriculum was intended to be delivered in short amounts of time as part of a social studies Unit of Inquiry or as part of an integrated English language arts lesson. The unit of study overview and each individual lesson clearly presents the essential understanding and learning goal to provide a clear connection to the state standard, as well as connections to the Common Core standards, and leverages materials and instructional best practices so that teachers spend less time scrambling to create materials.

Another problem standing in the way of effective social studies teaching is a lack of instructional materials. The district curriculum document served as a launching point for the unit of study, fleshing out the big ideas taught. My curriculum provides materials for teachers to use in their classroom so that students are engaged in reading, writing, and

discussing for understanding, perspective taking, and critical thinking, ensuring students receive high-quality social studies instruction.

Finally, by using culturally relevant teaching, the curriculum provides an opportunity for students of color to see themselves in the curriculum, and provides a window to different perspectives and experiences for the primarily white students in the school and district.

The curriculum follows Understanding by Design (Wiggins and McTighe, 2011), which was already used within the district for unit development, but was used to specifically address the time and material constraints present in the district.

Audience

The curriculum was intended for fifth grade teachers in my school and district seeking to improve the effectiveness of their social studies instruction. The curriculum is useful to teachers who have not yet taught social studies as part of their daily or weekly schedule, or to teachers outside of my district who teach similar standards about United States history. The curriculum was designed for fifth graders, but teachers in shouldering grades may find it appropriate for their grade level with or without modifications.

The unit of study was created for students with limited knowledge of social studies, geography or civics, based on my years of experience with fifth graders in this district. For students with no knowledge or background in these areas, some pre-teaching is necessary to fill in gaps of understanding. Prerequisite knowledge for both students and teachers is included with each unit of study.

Curriculum Design Paradigm

The curriculum was designed with the goal of answering the question: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?* Because the curriculum was intended to provide a structured integration of two content areas, I used a design paradigm that emphasizes helping students understand important ideas and is steeped in research on student learning. I used the curriculum-planning framework Understanding by Design as described in the *Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High-Quality Units* by Wiggins and McTighe (2011). Understanding by Design was adopted by the school district as the preferred model for designing lessons. Understanding by Design uses a backwards design model. This model prompts teachers to start their lesson planning with the desired learning outcome, determine the evidence of student learning, and then work backwards to determine the best learning activities to accomplish the task. The Understanding by Design model follows three stages of implementation: identifying desired results, determining appropriate evidence that the desired results were achieved, and planning the sequence of learning activities. The lessons in this curriculum used a common template (Appendix A) that follows the Understanding by Design stages of implementation.

Stage one describes the desired results of the lesson. This was stated as a performance expectation aligned to, primarily, a social studies content standard and, secondarily, a Common Core standard for English language arts. This stage stated the key understandings of the lessons, phrased as "Students will understand…" and formally documented the knowledge or skills students were expected to gain in the lesson that can

later be transferred to other areas of learning or other grade levels. Finally, this stage provided an essential question to pose to students that will focus the lesson.

Stage two of the lesson plan looked at the assessment evidence and described how to assess if students had achieved the desired results of the lesson. Stage two provided information regarding formative and, if appropriate, summative assessments.

Stage three was the sequence of learning activities for each lesson. Stage three summarized the learning activities and how these tasks ensure students meet the desired result of the lesson.

In addition to Understanding by Design, the curriculum used the paradigm of culturally relevant teaching in selection of instructional materials and techniques for content delivery. Developed by education researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant teaching is the intentional incorporation of the students' home culture and language within the school culture as a means for negating the impacts of the dominant culture. The negative impacts stem from not seeing one's culture, history or background represented in textbooks and curriculum, being presented a distorted view of one's history in textbooks and curriculum, or being in a school with very people of color in leadership or teaching positions (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In the particular case of the school where this curriculum is used, the overwhelming majority of students are white. For these students, culturally relevant teaching serves as a bridge to the narratives, perspectives and experiences that are often whitewashed from elementary social studies lessons. This helped students build empathy by accessing and taking on perspectives

different than their normal, and encouraged them to think critically about the events that have shaped a version history that so heavily reflects European-white ideals.

Guidelines

The curriculum was aligned to the Montana Content Standards for Social Studies (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2000) and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA], 2010) A full list of the standards addressed in this curriculum can be found in the appendices.

Summary

This chapter has explained the reasoning for designing a curriculum to answer the question: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade teachers?* I described the intended audience of the final project by providing context about the school where it will be primarily implemented. I discussed limitations with social studies instructional time and the opportunity presented by integrating social studies into the English language arts, as well as the limitations of the current district social studies guidelines, particularly with instructional materials. This chapter also delved into the rationale for this project, specifically how this curriculum will integrate social studies into English language arts so teachers use instructional time and the much needed instructional materials this curriculum will provide. I also described the intended audience for the project, both the teachers and schools I see benefiting from use of the curriculum, as well as the students who would most benefit from the

curriculum. Finally, I described the paradigm being used to create the curriculum, Understanding by Design, and why it is the best method for this project.

The next chapter will provide a conclusion to the capstone project, including a summary of the literature that influenced the final outcome and a reflection on the project process.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Introduction

Inspired by a lifelong love of history, and a desire to spark a similar interest in my students, this project has explored the question: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade?* I have been stretched as a thinker, researcher, and writer to prove the importance of my work, and to create a final project that is both useful for teachers and engaging for students. This final chapter is a conclusion to my professional journey in the capstone project. Chapter Four examines the critical learning that was done in the creation of the project, including a discussion of the literature that most affected the final product. This chapter will also examine the implications of the project, as well as future projects or research that could stem from this work, and the limitations of the curriculum. Finally, I will discuss plans for communicating the results of the project and its benefits to the profession of teaching.

Roles in the Project Process

The capstone project process required taking on the roles of learner, researcher and writer. In this section of the chapter, I will reflect on my experience in each role.

Learner. As a naturally curious person, and a proud know-it-all, the capstone process felt like a natural extension of my love for learning and my desire to refine and improve as an educator. I enjoyed whittling down my experiences as a teacher to identify

a key concern and research question, and then investigating what other educators, researchers and experts had already done around my research question. I felt both affirmed in recognizing this area of concern, and inspired to move in a direction that others had not before.

The individual components of the capstone process, in particular the literature review, stretched me as a learner and prompted me to think, analyze, write, and reason in new ways. Now, at the end of the process, I find myself wanting to do it all over again with a dozen different research questions that influence my daily practice as a teacher.

Researcher. Prior to starting the capstone project, I never considered myself a researcher, though I was asking questions all the time and, like many other teachers, turning to expert resources online or in my community to address questions and concerns. To me a researcher was an academic with a long list of titles behind their name, sequestered in an elite university, not a fifth grade teacher in the middle of Montana. The capstone process has shifted my perspective on the role of the researcher and, more importantly, who the researcher is. As the teacher in the field, responding to the daily challenges in my classroom, I now see I am in the best position to call myself a researcher. It is empowering to know that the simple thought of, “I wonder what the research shows?”can be used to implement best practice, launch new ideas, and change local and national policy. I am excited to continue in the role as an educator-researcher.

Writer. The capstone project process has made me acutely aware of my faults as a writer. I am prone to hyperbole and an abundant, unnecessary overuse of adjectives. My writer’s voice sounds, as my eleventh grade English teacher once wrote on a paper,

like a self-righteous know-it-all. I struggle with verb tense. I am insecure in my abilities, so I revise and revise and revise until I am pressing against deadlines.

Thankfully, however, the writing process has also brought to light some unexpected strengths. I am organized and task-oriented, and approach each writing session with a clear objective in mind. I can write for hours without a break. I feel more like a professional educator than ever before. I was stretched the most by the role of writer and, often, felt my most insecure while writing. Despite that, however, I am exceedingly proud of completing the process of writing a capstone project. I am certain I will continue to write, though I look forward to a break from the deadlines.

The next section of this chapter will revisit the literature review and call attention to the research that most influential in the creation of the final curriculum project.

Revisiting the Literature Review

Key pieces of the literature review affected the outcome of my project. First, the intent of curriculum integration drastically altered the course of the project. Second, the power of culturally relevant pedagogy affected elements of the lessons.

When initially thinking about my project, I had imagined a curriculum of study focused solely on social studies content. My experience as a teacher has shown, time and time again, that social studies content is often sacrificed for English language arts skills. I remember, for example, once delivering a lesson on Cesar Chavez that became focused on teaching students how to identify the main idea of a nonfiction text, not on the historical or social importance of Chavez's work. While teaching reading and writing skills are critically important, dressing them up as social studies made me aware that my

students were missing out on something equally important. My ambition was to remedy the absence of intentional and specific social studies content at the elementary level with new curriculum.

As the curriculum evolved, however, a new idea set in - an integrated social studies and English language arts unit. The district in which I teach mandates that, at the elementary level, social studies and science instruction must include an integrated English language arts skill. This reality, coupled with the research of Hinde (2009), led me to an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum. Hinde found that early European and American education researchers believed curriculum integration would create children who could use the disciplines in their own thinking processes to confront issues facing society. In their view, an integrated curriculum could create integrated thinkers. While integrated curriculums, in practice, have fallen short of this ideal, I wanted to harness it in my own project.

Now with the goal of successfully integrating social studies and English language arts, my lofty goals of a whole curriculum were refined down to an intentionally crafted unit of study. Based on Hinde's writing, I use reading English language arts skills as a tool for developing the disciplinary knowledge needed in a successful democratic society. Reading and writing skills are tools for students to access and understand the social studies content and, inversely, the social studies content is a springboard for thinking critically and thinking as a writer. Integrating the curriculum also makes it feasible for teachers to use these lessons within time constraints and mandated instructional time.

The project is also influenced by the power and potential of culturally relevant teaching, in particular two fundamentals found in the literature review. First, social studies instruction, even at the elementary level, can develop what Ladson-Billings (2014) calls "sociopolitical consciousness," or awareness of the opinions, decisions and systems that promote inequity and, in the best classrooms, empowerment to challenge those dynamics by participating in discourse and decision making. Second, based on the research of Eccles and Roeser (2011) culturally relevant social studies instruction can meet the developmental needs of adolescents, specifically a need for curriculum that is substantive, cognitively and emotionally meaningful, and considerate of social-historical realities.

The lessons in this unit of study are tailored to upper elementary aged students and sequenced in a way that allows students to grapple with the systems of oppression that have shaped the typical narrative presented at the elementary level. It is cognitively rigorous, and engages students in conversations they find personally meaningful and empowering. It strips away the whitewashing of American history, allowing students of color an opportunity to see themselves in the story, and engages all students in discussion about ways to change instruction for future students.

The next section of this chapter will look at the implication of the final curriculum project.

Implications of the Project

Creating any curriculum unit has implications. This curriculum unit provides the background research to design and implement additional elementary social studies units.

By sharing this research and unit with other teachers, there is an opportunity for collaboration around deeper and more meaningful social studies instruction. This unit serves as a starting point for a year-long exploration of American history at the upper elementary level. Providing elementary students with the skills to explore the history through a critical lens allows them the chance to think critically, engage in rigorous and meaningful academic conversation, and develop the skills necessary to meaningfully participate in community and civic life.

There is also an opportunity for schools to pursue continued integration of curriculum, especially within the constraints of instructional time. My hopes is this unit serves as a model for integration and an example of teaching disciplinary ideas in conjunction with literacy skills.

Finally, this curriculum unit is part of an ever-present conversation on educational theory, practice, time and, ultimately, what is best for students. The research provided in this project comes down quite heavily in favor of intentional, high-quality social studies instruction. Unless policy shifts in line with the research, implementing this project at a local level requires what researchers call a maverick teacher, or someone willing to buck district and state mandates in interest of delivering high-quality content.

The next section will discuss the limitations of the project.

Limitations of the Project

The biggest limitation of this project is its limited scope as it is only one unit covering about 200 years of American history. The unit, however, serves as a launching point for teachers and students to engage in conversation about how history is told, and

will ideally serve as inspiration for teachers hoping to encourage critical consciousness in their young learners.

An additional limitation of this project is the timing of teaching content and skills. As noted in the lesson plans, the unit is best delivered after students are familiar with the indigenous groups that were present in North America before settlement. I live in state that celebrates indigenous history and, as such, have access to dozens of resources and lessons already designed to teach indigenous history. I know teachers elsewhere lack these vital resources, and teaching prerequisite skills could be a barrier to using this unit. Additionally, this unit presumes that the teacher has not already taught research and opinion writing skills as it provides extensive teaching and scaffolding around those skills. Teachers who have already taught those skills may not find enough new content in these lessons.

Next, I will discuss how my capstone project could inspire future projects.

Future Projects

The project focuses almost exclusively on social studies and English language arts instruction at the upper elementary level. There is potential for others to pursue similar projects at both the primary level and the middle or high school level. At the lower elementary level, another writer could pursue increasing social studies instructional minutes, as research has shown primary students receive shockingly little social studies instruction. Additionally, the research around adolescent development and culturally relevant teaching shows social studies instruction to be both necessary and hugely impactful as students develop as young leaders.

The following section of the chapter will discuss how results will be communicated.

Communicating Results

The results of the capstone project will be immediately shared with my cohort of fifth grade teachers and to other fifth grade teachers within the district. In the short term, I will continue using the curriculum model to develop additional integrated social studies and English language arts units and will release those units to interested teachers. In the long term, I hope to present results to the district curriculum task force as they begin revising social studies curriculum in the next two to three years.

In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss how the project benefits the teaching profession.

Benefits to the Profession

I believe my capstone project brings benefit to the teaching profession in a few ways. First, and most obvious, the project provides a curriculum resource to teachers who want to increase their social studies minutes within tight instructional time constraints. Second, and more profound, is that this project inspires what Heafner (2018) calls maverick and ambitious teachers, or teachers who insist on teaching quality social studies lessons despite ever tightening time constraints. I believe my project shows that by integrating high-priority content, like English language arts, with under-taught but critically important content areas, like social studies, a teacher can subvert time constraints in order to offer the best possible instruction for their students.

Summary

This chapter provided reflection on the capstone project process and how a curriculum was created to answer the question: *How can I develop an integrated social studies and English language arts curriculum for fifth grade teachers?* In this chapter, I reflected on the various roles of the capstone project, key pieces of literature from the literature review, the implications, limitations and benefits of the project, and how this project could inspire future projects. The creation of this capstone project was both personally and professionally fulfilling, and I am happy to bring my passion for history to my current and future students.

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APPENDIX A: UNIT TEMPLATE

Title of Unit		**Grade Level**	
Topic		**Time Frame**	
Developed By			
Stage 1: Identify Desired Results			
Content Standards			
Understandings		**Essential Questions**	
Knowledge ***Students will know...***		**Skills** ***Students will be able to...***	
Prerequisite Knowledge or Skills			
Stage 2: Assessment Evidence			
Performance Task		**Other Evidence**	
Stage 3: Learning Plan			
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4

APPENDIX B: STANDARDS

State standards

CONTENT STANDARD 1:

Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

CONTENT STANDARD 2:

Students analyze how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance to understand the operations of government and to demonstrate civic responsibility.

CONTENT STANDARD 3:

Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and regions).

CONTENT STANDARD 4:

Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

CONTENT STANDARD 5:

Students make informed decisions based on an understanding of the economic principles of productions, distribution, exchange, and consumption.

CONTENT STANDARD 6:

Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies (“ Standards for Social Studies,” 2000).

District standards

PEOPLE, PLACES AND CHANGE:

Identify locations and names of the Tribal Nations who first made contact with Western Europeans, i.e. the Puritans; Describe the relationships that existed between the colonists and Tribal Nations and how the culture of each was impacted by this contact during the 1600's and 1700's; Describe the internal conflicts within Tribal Nations that included competing claims for land.

CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES:

Identify Tribal Nations' influences on the Constitution including the Iroquois Confederacy; Interpret and explain the first ten amendments; Explain the historic reasons for each amendment.

POWER, AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE:

Explore the views, lives, and impact of key individuals during the period from 1600 through 1700 (for example: Massasoit, King George III, and Tecumseh); Demonstrate knowledge of land policies developed under the Continental Congress and those policies' impact on the land inhabited by the first people/Tribal Nations of what is now known as North America ("PreK-12 Social Studies Curriculum," 2014).

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.5

Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.6

Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7

Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8

Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.7

Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.8

Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4

Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.