

August 2015

Expanding Democracy in Classrooms: History Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Student Feedback as a Democratic Teaching Practice

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<https://doi.org/10.7275/6956526.0> https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/376

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**EXPANDING DEMOCRACY IN CLASSROOMS:
HISTORY TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS OF
STUDENT FEEDBACK AS A DEMOCRATIC TEACHING PRACTICE**

A Dissertation Presented

by

IRENE S. LAROCHE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2015

College of Education

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Approved as to style and content by:

Robert W. Maloy, Chair

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DEDICATION

In the words of one of the teacher candidate's from the first year of my pilot study,

"It's amazing what I hear, when I stop to listen."

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the teachers who have been pulled from their original path of good intentions by the many competing demands of the profession today. Just as it has helped me, I hope this work can help them to find their way back, guided by the voices of their students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my chairperson, Robert Maloy who has encouraged, prodded, supported and championed this dissertation from infancy to maturation. I am a better student, teacher, researcher and educator because of you.

Thank you to my other committee members, Ruth-Ellen Verock and Joye Bowman for their many years of support and seeing this work through to the end.

For their enduring patience and support, thank you to my mother, Marge LaRoche, my husband, David Hale and my children, Teagan and Gavin.

I am grateful for Sharon Edwards, who first asked the question that helped me return to the roots of why I teach and at the same time find my wings for my research direction.

It has been my pleasure to explore history and social studies education as well as democratic teaching practices with my Amherst Regional Middle School students and colleagues and my University of Massachusetts undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Education. Without them, this work would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

EXPANDING DEMOCRACY IN CLASSROOMS: HISTORY TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT FEEDBACK AS A DEMOCRATIC TEACHING PRACTICE

MAY 2015

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This study examines the perceptions of middle and high school history teacher candidates about the use of student feedback as a democratic teaching practice. It explores preservice teachers' responses when asking students to comment about the use of interactive, student-centered teaching. In a collaborative action research approach, qualitative research methodologies were used to document experiences of candidates as they designed and implemented student surveys in classes and responded to what students said. Participants included 14 history teacher license candidates at a public university in the Northeast United States who were completing their pre-practicum and student teaching field experiences in history and social studies classrooms in public middle and high schools during the 2013-2014 school year. Data was drawn from field notes, focus group discussions, papers, and online responses written by history teacher candidates as part of required teacher license courses.

Based on themes generated from participant data, student feedback holds promise as a democratic teaching method in history classrooms. As candidates integrated democratic feedback in classes, their attitudes and behaviors changed from being reluctant inquirers to active solicitors. They became eager to learn what students had to say and prepared to make changes to curriculum content and instructional practices based on feedback. Some candidates acknowledged that asking students for feedback had transformed the culture of their classrooms and broadened their daily practice as a teacher.

This study has implications for improving the preparation of new history teachers at every grade level, redefining the traditional supervision model in which student teachers receive feedback from university program supervisors but not from students. This study demonstrates ways to engage K-12 students as learning partners in history education. Student feedback reinforces and encourages future teachers' engagement with continual reflective practice in their teaching. The implementation of the feedback as a part of reflective practice offers an alternative to the use of student surveys for teacher evaluation purposes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

A. Statement of the Problem

Finding ways to improve history and social studies education in K-12 schools remains a vexing problem for policymakers and educators alike. Report after report decries the historical and civic illiteracy of today's youth (Boser & Rosenthal, 2012; Farkas & Duffett, 2010; National Center of Education Statistics, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Lane & Barnette, 2011), offering emotionally-charged examples of students who cannot remember when the Civil War was fought or who are more familiar with the names of the judges of the television show *Dancing with the Stars* than the justices of the United States Supreme Court. From the other side of the desk, students tell teachers that they dislike the study of history, constantly repeating the old refrain of "What does the past have to do with me?"

Virtually every state has adopted curriculum standards to guide the teaching of history and social studies in elementary, middle and high schools (Stern & Stern, 2011). Professional and policy organizations including the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Center for History in the Schools, the Center for Civic Education, the National Geographic Society, and the National Council on Economic Education have issued voluntary standards to guide teachers and administrators in developing curriculum that will improve the learning of students. At the same time studies have shown that students' knowledge of history and social studies has not improved (Hess, 2008). Commentators worry that future citizens will lack a basic understanding of how our democratic system of government is intended to function.

Mandated curriculum frameworks and standardized tests have not been the only response of educators to the troubled state of history and social studies education in schools. A group of progressive reformers have proposed that one reason why students are turning away from history and social studies is the way those subjects are taught (Cuban, 1984, 2006, 2009; Apple & Beane, 2007). For these observers, the field of history and social studies education rests on a fundamental contradiction in terms—young students are expected to learn about the institutions and practices of democracy in classrooms that function in passively undemocratic ways. A teacher-centered, lecture-based learning approach, these critics contend, fails to engage students intellectually or emotionally. History and social studies content becomes just names, dates, facts and places to be learned for the test rather than important, relevant ideas to be thought about and acted upon by members of a democratic society.

Mandated top down reforms marked by standardized testing and bottom-up teacher driven efforts to change the learning experiences of students are at two opposite ends of the current education reform continuum. They frame the sides of current debates over how to best change and improve schools. They challenge researchers to examine and assess the effectiveness of all educational reform efforts in terms of how they impact the performance of students, teachers, and schools. This dissertation enters that discussion by exploring one teacher-driven process of educational change, examining how it came to be and what it produced in one group of schools.

B. Purpose of the Study

This study explored how history teacher candidates used student feedback as a democratic teaching practice during the pre-practicum and student teaching phases of a university teacher license program. It explored how teacher candidates responded when they asked students to comment on the use of interactive, student-centered teaching methods as part of instructional practice. This study further examined whether teacher candidates plan to incorporate student feedback in the future teaching practice.

Three research questions framed the study:

- Do history teacher candidates perceive student feedback about teaching methods to be a useful instructional practice for them as teachers?
- Do history teacher candidates make changes in their instructional practices based on student feedback about their teaching methods?
- Do history teacher candidates plan to use student feedback in their future once they enter the teaching profession as full-time teachers?

This study used a collaborative action research approach featuring a combination of qualitative research methodologies to document the experiences and thinking of new history teacher candidates as they used student feedback in their classes.

C. Background and Significance of the Study

"It often seems that the only important things are the standards, data, and keeping the students from misbehaving."--a teacher candidate from an urban middle school

The background for this study emerged from my personal experiences as a public school teacher, a university course instructor, and a doctoral researcher in the field of history and social studies education. When I began working with new teacher candidates more than a decade ago, the student teaching practicum offered a testing ground where future teachers could experiment with best practice teaching methods. In recent years, I have seen a shift in the practicum experience as more schools emphasize high-stakes tests that accompany the coverage-oriented state framework for history and social science. The issues new teacher candidates grapple with in figuring out what to teach and how to teach have become more complicated as they face increasing demands for covering the state history standards, and now the Common Core standards.

New teachers become frustrated trying to implement best practices learned at the university in school placements that emphasize rote memorization over authentic learning. Recent research shows that accountability measures such as testing serve to create classroom environments that undermine meaningful learning and critical thinking (Ravitch, 2010, 2013; Cornbleth, 2002).

At a public university college of education, I have served as history and political science clinical faculty for the secondary teacher education program, as co-instructor of the history and political science teaching methods course, “Teaching History and Political Science in Middle and High Schools” and as a university supervisor for history and political science teacher candidates. I also developed and co-taught a new advanced methods course for history teacher candidates, “History, Culture and Social Studies” (see Appendix A: Education 743 Syllabus).

The university's history and teacher education program is the site of this study. An NCATE-accredited institution, the university offers two distinct pathways to history and political science teacher licensure: one-year, school-based teacher residencies and a two-year university-based graduate program. Candidates in the one-year programs take two history and social studies teaching methods courses—one in the fall term and the other in the spring.

In the history and political science teaching methods course, we highlight student-centered teaching methodologies. Students use cooperative learning, role-play, controversial issues, literature, writing, dialogue and debate, technology, art, music, primary sources, community service learning, and multiple perspectives to engage in history and social studies inquiry. Throughout the semester, new teacher candidates are expected to reflect on their ideas for teaching social studies content with these methods, consider issues which may come up when using these methods with secondary education students, problem solve ways to address these issues, and form insights about the value of teaching social studies with student-centered methods.

Teacher candidates have placements in schools throughout the region where they work in a veteran social studies teacher's classroom as part of a pre-practicum teaching experience. Students observe the veteran teacher teaching social studies lessons, assist students with their coursework, act as co-teachers, and several times throughout the pre-practicum take on responsibility for planning and teaching lessons using a variety of the teaching methods we discuss in class.

Candidates write several reflection papers focused on the use of the student-centered method in their lessons. In class, and in their writing, candidates indicate that there is a lack of support for student-centered methods in the schools. Pre-service teachers often adopt more teacher-centered methods once they are in their placements in schools away from the university (Christensen et al., 2001).

Tensions between theory and practice confound new teacher candidates when they find cooperating teachers who do not want to “take time” from the rote learning of the curriculum frameworks to have students engage in active learning. Social studies educators and experts recommend using student-centered teaching practices (Dunn, 2000). Despite this recommendation, most secondary education social studies teachers teach their classes using traditional, teacher-centered methods rather than constructivist, student-centered methods and have done so since the inception of history as a specific subject taught in schools (Cuban, 1984). An emphasis on coverage-oriented standards and standardized testing has increased teachers’ inclination to use teacher-centered methods (Vogler, 2005, 2008).

While there is a place for teacher-centered instruction within a social studies course, making it the heart of the course in content and in pedagogy contradicts one of the basic goals of social studies: citizenship education (Adler, Dougan & Garcia, 2006; Berci & Griffith, 2006; Newmann, 1988). The National Council for Social Studies (1994) recognizes citizenship education in its position statement,

“The aim of social studies is the promotion of civic competence—the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life. Although civic competence is not the only responsibility of social studies nor is it exclusive to

the field, it is more central to social studies than to any other subject area in schools. By making civic competence a central aim, NCSS has long recognized the importance of educating students who are committed to the ideas and values of democracy. Civic competence rests on this commitment to democratic values, and requires the abilities to use knowledge about one's community, nation, and world; apply inquiry processes; and employ skills of data collection and analysis, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving. Young people who are knowledgeable, skillful, and committed to democracy are necessary to sustaining and improving our democratic way of life, and participating as members of a global community."

Social studies education researchers believe that in order to teach students to be capable and active citizens, teachers need to model democracy in the classroom through student-centered methods and academic content (Brophy & Alleman, 1998; Martinson, 2003; McMurray, 2007). Allowing students to share power in a classroom will teach them the skills of democratic citizenship (Bryant, Daniels, Storm, Kiser, & Wood, 2008, p. 32). Pahl (2003) reminds social studies educators to resist teacher-centered teaching as a response to the current trend in standardized testing and rote memorization of facts. Banks and Parker (1990) cite a need for further research on how pre-service teachers turn theory into practice by studying how they use academic and pedagogical knowledge in their classrooms. Others have called for additional research of strategies for increasing discussion and civic understanding in social studies classrooms (McMurray, 2007) as well as how to most effectively encourage pre-service teachers to take up student-centered methods (Doppen, 2007).

1. Learning from Pilot Studies

My interest in having new history and social studies teacher candidates collect feedback from students began in 2008-2009. As a university supervisor

working with new teacher candidates in the history and political science licensure program, I observed new pre-service teachers in their school placements throughout the semester, met with them individually and in three-way meetings with cooperating teachers, and engaged in online journaling on a weekly basis. In an effort to get the candidates to use more student-centered teaching methods, I began encouraging them to ask their students for feedback about their lessons. Those candidates reported that the feedback from students helped them to feel more confident in using student-centered methods while showing them ways to refine their instruction to more fully address student needs. Each of the new teacher candidates said that they wanted to obtain more student feedback and input in the future.

One of the most successful and surprising experiences with receiving student feedback came from a fourth year teacher who was taking the student teaching semester as part of moving toward professional certification. This teacher's traditionally run classroom became more student-centered after the first round of student feedback. She reported with amazement that her students could teach so much to her about best practices once she took the time to ask. That semester's experience working with new teacher candidates as they received student feedback led me to wonder what a more structured research process might yield.

Over the next few years, I explored democratic practice concepts with pre-service teachers enrolled in my courses and working under my supervision during their student teaching practicum. Each year, I asked the new teacher candidates to seek feedback from their secondary education students specific to teaching

methods. For two groups of pre-service teachers I was able to make it a yearlong process while they were enrolled in two consecutive semesters of social studies methods graduate courses with me as the co-instructor. I was able to engage in collaborative action research where teacher candidates sought student feedback about teaching methods from secondary education students as I investigated the pre-service teacher perceptions about seeking this feedback. All of these experiences have culminated in this dissertation study of 14 new history teacher candidates during 2013-2014.

2. Significance in an Age of High-Stakes Teacher Evaluation

A study of student feedback, new teacher candidates and democratic practices has great significance within the current climate of school reform and high-stakes teacher and student evaluation. Student feedback is being discussed in school districts around the nation, but in many cases it is part of a top-down model for teacher evaluation. Student ratings of teachers are being used in some districts to help determine teacher salaries and even teacher retention. But that form of student feedback is very different from the feedback model being examined in this study. This dissertation documents classroom-based change and improvement through the building of student and teacher collaboration and trust. The student feedback process used by the participants in this study is not about evaluation, but about collective action to improve education. Student feedback and how new teacher candidates use it may offer new directions and new possibilities for improving education at the classroom level through open and participatory action.

That can be a significant step in helping to realize the goals of history education for a democratic society.

D. Definitions of Terms

- Best practice – Those approaches to teaching that have been proven through research to be the best ways to help students to understand curriculum content and skills.
- Democratic teaching – Teaching that considers the philosophy of democracy and seeks to model that philosophy in the classroom through expanding student participation in a variety of aspects of teaching and learning from content topics, to teaching methods, to assessment.
- Instructional or teaching methods – Strategies used by teachers to instruct students on curriculum content, part of the pedagogic platform for a teacher.
- Pre-service teacher –individual in a teacher license program at the graduate level, also called new teacher candidate
- Reflective practice – The act of looking back at components of teaching such as an individual lesson, unit, student performance assessment, etc. to determine what worked and what did not work to enhance student learning and to plan for future action.
- Social studies – In terms of teaching in secondary schools, social studies is a broad heading for the fields of history, geography, civics, economics, government, anthropology, sociology, and psychology.

- Student-centered teaching – Teaching methods or instructional practices that focus on the students engaging with each other to learn the content and skills of a lesson.
- Teacher-centered teaching – Teaching methods or instructional practices that focus on the teacher conveying information to students

E. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its duration, by the number of participants, and the location of the study. Teacher candidates were asked to collect student feedback, and while they were encouraged to collect often, the formal collection was required only four times. Additionally, the time frame of the study was limited. Student feedback was collected in a period of a couple of weeks to a couple of months.

The study was conducted with a relatively small number of participants; data from 14 teacher candidates from one academic year was examined. While pilots of the study totaled roughly one hundred participants over five years, a larger group would help to determine if the perceptions are found in a wider population. The study was with pre-service teachers from urban, suburban and rural schools in programs at a major university in one northeastern state. A population that studied perceptions from teacher candidates in different programs from a variety of universities across the country could also be conducted to compare the results.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I review the literature on the tension between teacher-centered and student-centered teaching methods in history and social studies classrooms. I will also review literature that addresses the tension new teacher candidates face between reflective practice and traditional practices in school placements. Lastly, I will review literature on democratic classrooms and democratic teaching practices as an alternative to teacher-centered classrooms.

A. The Politics of Social Studies Education

Educating the public is a political act. Debates about who should be educated, how learning best occurs, and about what content people should learn have been argued since the early days of public education in this country (Evans, 2004). Education in America has been viewed as a tool which people can use to access freedom, as evidenced by the numerous slave codes that prohibited slaves from being educated. Education has also been viewed as a way to train the workforce and shape the economy. With each decision about who to teach, what to teach and how to teach, the lives of students are shaped. When education reforms are raised, debates are often impassioned and changes are not easily made (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Ravitch, 2010; Cuban, 2013). Advocates of change are confronted with the “grammar of schooling” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), which can prevent new reforms from having a lasting impact on education.

Like any other deeply personal and emotional topic, it has been difficult for people to come to common ground and move forward beyond the debates on education reform. In the meantime, children need to be educated, so traditional practices persist while teachers wait for the dust to settle around the newest reform movement. Perhaps more than any other subject taught in school, social studies has been impacted by the debates on education and the “grammar of schooling” which prevents real change from happening (Evans, 2004). Like public education in general, debates over content and pedagogy in social studies have been present since its inception as a distinct subject one hundred years ago (Cuban, 1984; Evans, 2004).

Social studies education is intimately tied up with society’s vision of itself. “Proposals for change in the field of social studies often serve as a lightning rod for commentary and criticism regarding the nature of the field, the purposes of schooling, and competing visions of the worthy society” (Evans, 2004, p.2). A main goal of social studies education is citizenship (NCSS, 1994). The way an individual defines citizenship can impact what he/she believes about what should be taught in a social studies class. Because of the link between social studies and citizenship, the discussion over what takes place in a social studies class is about more than just the practices within the class. It extends to how best to educate students to behave as adult citizens in society. Over the last hundred years, interest groups with different visions of society formed to promote “not only an approach to curricular content and method, but also a particular conception of citizenship and what it means to be a ‘good citizen’” (Evans, 2004, p.2). Some groups have perceived a change to social

studies education as an attack on the “American way of life” as long standing American institutions and beliefs have been called into question by some issues-centered, or meliorist movements (Evans, 2004).

Few social studies reforms have had lasting impact on classrooms as social studies education has remained one of the most traditional subjects taught in school (Cuban, 1984; Evans, 2004). This is due in part to the fact that competing groups have gained control at different times. Those groups who lose ground do not tend to disappear entirely, but lie waiting in the wings for their turn to impact social studies education (Evans, 2004). As each group takes control, some changes may be made, but can quickly be swept away by the next group who rises to power. Evans (2004) uses the metaphor of a civil war “with competing armies of American educators clashing on the battlefield of curriculum development and their recommendations breaking over the anvil of classroom constancy” (Evans, 2004, p.4). It is against this backdrop of heated politics that new social studies teachers enter the classroom and have to make their own decisions about what to teach and how to teach the subject.

B. Social Studies Classrooms in an Age of Standardized Testing

Cuban (1984) researched one hundred years of classroom instruction using observations, photos, lesson plans, reports and other data to determine what was actually happening in social studies classrooms from 1890 to 1980. Cuban found that the pedagogical debate between traditional teacher-centered instruction and student-centered instruction has been ongoing from the beginning of public schooling in the United States. The typical teacher-centered classroom focuses on

teachers transmitting knowledge and skills to students according to the teacher's plan and under authoritarian management by the teacher. In a student-centered classroom, students have more responsibility for their learning. Cuban spoke to the different physical arrangements one might find in each classroom with a teacher-centered room of desks in rows and the teacher talking at the front while students listen and a student-centered class that arranges furniture so students can work collaboratively while the teacher guides their studies.

While Cuban acknowledged that each practice draws on a different set of beliefs, teacher-centered viewing students as "empty vessels" and student-centered seeing students as knowledge "constructors", he found the debates between the two practices to be unproductive. He revealed, "the evidence that actual classroom practices have produced desired student outcomes consistent with each tradition has been, at best, mixed and, at worst unconvincing" (Cuban, 2006, p.793). Through his research Cuban concluded that what was actually happening in classrooms was more of a hybrid of both instructional strategies as classrooms have incorporated more student-centered components into the teacher-centered instruction of the past. Teachers fell somewhere along a continuum between teacher-centered and student-centered, rather than demonstrating a pure form of either practice. Cuban pointed to evidence in the physical environment of the class that transitioned from fixed desks in rows to movable furniture configured for small or large group instruction. Student projects became a feature appearing in social studies classes. Cuban noted that more of the hybridization occurred in the elementary grades than the secondary classrooms reflecting society's changing practices in child rearing.

Despite the increasing use of student-centered practices, the majority of classes fell more towards the teacher-centered than the student-centered in most practices (Cuban, 1984).

Cuban initially reported his findings in the early 1980s, prior to the current trend of standardization and testing in schools. Many teachers have reported that standardized tests have forced them to use more teacher-centered practices in the classroom (Cuban, 2006). Cuban conducted a follow up to his original research on teacher practices to determine if teacher reports of a shift to more teacher-centered instruction in the current testing era were accurate. Cuban (2006) found that the earlier hybridization he had documented had continued. He also found that more of the student-centered classes continued to be in the elementary grades rather than in secondary classrooms. He concluded that his findings “reveal the lack of evidence that either pedagogy trumps the other” (Cuban, 2006, p.796) and called for an end to the “pedagogy wars”. But, Cuban failed to ask teachers about what influenced their practice. Additionally, the fact that his study concluded that teacher-centered instruction, even with student-centered mixed in, was still dominant in social studies classes demonstrates that traditional practices continue to be an issue in social studies education.

Grant (2007) also looked at teacher practices in the era of standardized testing. Grant reviewed some of the early findings in the research of social studies teachers teaching in high stakes testing environments. While Grant conceded that many teachers were making changes to their teaching, he felt that the research was showing that high stakes tests were just one complexity that teachers must respond

to and that most teachers were adapting without making “wholesale instructional change” (Grant, 2007). The biggest area Grant found that was changed by high stakes tests was content, which meant that pedagogical decisions were still an area where teachers could exercise autonomy. Grant also critiqued the notion of “defensive teaching” as the way most teachers were responding to high stakes tests and instead used the term “ambitious teaching” to capture the nuanced ways in which teachers responded. “Ambitious teachers” folded high stakes tests into other factors impacting their classes, such as their knowledge of the subject and their students. Ambitious teachers understood “the challenges that state tests pose and they factor those challenges into the mix of ideas and influences they consider” (Grant, 2007, p.255) in their teaching.

The studies of both Cuban and Grant failed to take into account the teachers’ perceptions of the tests and how they may have impacted the decisions they made about classroom practice. A turn to Vogler (2005) provides some insight in to teacher practices and teacher decision-making in the era of standardized testing.

Vogler (2005) studied the survey responses of 107 social studies teachers in Mississippi who taught the subject tested on the state mandated test for graduation. He was interested in discovering what instructional practices these teachers used and how the Mississippi state high school graduation examination influenced their choice of instructional practices. Teachers were given a survey asking them about their instructional practices in teaching the subject tested for graduation, the influences on their instructional practices and demographic information.

Vogler used the survey data to compute frequency and means of the questions asked in the survey. The most common instructional practice used by the teacher was the textbook (94.4%). All but one, open-response questions (84.1%), of the top seven instructional practices used were categorized as teacher-centered methods. Further, according to Vogler, the instructional practices that teachers reported using the least were primarily student-centered, with the exception of the use of true-false questions.

An additional comparison was made between teachers who spent between one to two months preparing students for the graduation examination and those who spent over two months explicitly focusing on the test. In this comparison, those teachers who spent the most time preparing students for the test used the most teacher-centered methods of instruction. In looking at the influences on teaching practice, Vogler found that teachers focused on the high-stakes graduation examination had a strong influence with 96.3% agreeing that their choice of instructional method was influenced by an interest in helping their students pass the test. At least in the case of these particular teachers of social studies in Mississippi, it appears that the presence of a high stakes test does limit the amount of time spent on student-centered instruction in social studies.

Vogler (2008) extended his original study of Mississippi social studies teachers to include teachers in both Mississippi and Tennessee in a follow up comparative study. In this study, Vogler again found that teachers were teaching with more teacher-centered instructional methods and that they attributed the test and the state standards as the reason for this choice. In the case of teachers in

Tennessee, more of them than those in Mississippi also cited personal-related factors such as “personal desire” which may be attributed to the fact that the standardized test in Tennessee is not as high stakes as the one in Mississippi so teachers may feel more freedom to exercise some control over their classroom practice (Vogler, 2008).

Christensen, Wilson, Anders, Dennis, Kirkland, Beacham, and Warren (2001) found that teachers struggle with the tension between their belief that student-centered instruction makes social studies more meaningful and the knowledge that they are expected to cover certain material in a limited amount of time to meet state standards. They conducted a collaborative study with administrators, K-12 social studies teachers, and university faculty to explore how K-12 teachers’ ideas about teaching social studies have changed in recent years. The collaborative research team used an ethnographic research design gathering data in reflective responses to guiding questions, classroom observations, interviews, videotaped sessions, and anecdotal documents. Each teacher commented on the tension of time and how to teach social studies the way they felt it ought to be taught in the limited amount of time that they had. Among other tensions the teachers “reported feeling conflicted, stifled and silenced because of the school system’s administration, state mandates, standardized tests, and pressure from fellow teachers.” (Christensen et al., 2001, p.208). One teacher said that social studies was designated as less important than reading and math. The teachers viewed testing as influencing the curriculum in negative ways.

C. Standardization: Standards Impact on Social Studies Content

While researchers gather important information on how teachers are teaching in response to the tests, one may also look at the impact of standardization and the tests on what teachers are teaching. Most states have adopted curriculum standards for social studies. It is interesting to look at how the standards are doing in terms of meeting the widely accepted goal of social studies as a means for citizenship education. Again, the measure which one uses to judge this is tied up in the definition and meaning that one places on the term citizenship. For Journell (2008), the standards fell short of educating for citizenship because they failed to adequately portray the roles of different Americans in the story of American history.

Journell (2008) conducted a study of nine state frameworks for teaching social studies to determine the treatment of African Americans in the standards. Journell looked at states that have high stakes tests: California, Georgia, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Journell used documents and standards posted on these states' websites to evaluate the treatment of African Americans in the state mandated curriculum. Although there was some discrepancy between the states, overall they depicted instances of oppression of African Americans and struggles for equality. The states generally had few, if any instances of African American achievement outside of the struggle for equality. Journell concluded that the lack of balance in the portrayal of African Americans, particularly the omission of cultural contributions in the nine state curricula was problematic.

The prescriptive nature of fact-oriented standards means that students may not learn the complexities of America's history. The multiple narratives of an inclusive approach to America's story are supplanted by a singular version of the past. This may in fact be what policy makers had in mind when they sought to "promote the teaching of traditional American history in elementary schools and secondary schools (emphasis added by author)" under the No Child Left Behind act (NCLB, 2001).

One solution to Journell's criticism of the standards is to expand curriculum by adding information to more fully represent all of the different groups that have contributed to the American experience. Doing so may lead to a dilemma, Newmann (1988) critiqued: the damaging desires to cover all possible topics in social studies.

Newmann (1988) found the classic problem of coverage versus depth plaguing social studies classrooms was exacerbated by standards and standardized tests. Newmann called the "addiction" to coverage destructive and outlined the many ways it prevented real learning from happening in the classroom. First, he noted that it is impossible for humans to master all knowledge. It was futile for curriculum designers to create increasingly comprehensive curriculum since it was impossible to keep up with events and time. The body of knowledge was too immense, thus decisions needed to be made about what to include and what to leave out. Secondly, the more comprehensive a course, the more likely the pace was such that students acquired information, got tested on it, then quickly forget it to make room for the next round of information and tests. Newmann felt that this pace interfered with real learning and taught students the "habit of mindlessness" as they

took in and regurgitated facts without thinking about them. Because they tended to “rely primarily on short-answer, multiple-choice tests that cover a broad range of subjects, the states contribute to the disease of coverage” (Newmann, 1988, p.10).

Coverage oriented curriculum undermines intellectual achievement and prevents students from developing complex understandings about social studies (Adler et al., 2006; Newmann, 1988). It also prevents students from developing necessary skills to be informed and active citizens (Adler et al., 2006). Skills and dispositions are seldom part of information-based state standards; yet these skills are critical in citizenship education. The standards movement has created social studies curriculum that is composed of lists of decontextualized information (Adler et al., 2006). Information is important to social studies, but only in developing understanding, not as an end unto itself. The National Council for Social Studies advocates for students to understand the thinking of the different disciplines within social studies and to bring these disciplines together in making sense of their world (NCSS, 1994). Students must use facts in curriculum focused on getting in-depth on a subject, but they should use them as part of an inquiry process to create and answer questions moving into higher order thinking skills of differentiation, elaboration, qualification and integration (Newmann, 1988).

To conclude, the findings of early studies on the impact of high stakes tests and standards on teaching practice are limited. Additional research is needed to further illuminate these early findings. There is some evidence that teachers were teaching with more teacher-centered methods and that they attributed the tests as the reason for this pedagogical choice. Moreover, the content of social studies has

become more coverage oriented as required standards list information for students to memorize. The facts that students were asked to know have left out information about diverse groups in history and prevented students from learning the skills needed to develop as critical and active citizens. A review of the literature on democratic practices in social studies education may provide some solutions to these issues.

D. The Need for Democratic Practices in Social Studies Education

Early education reformers called for an expansion of public education to promote a literate and active citizenry who would create a successful democratic society (O'Brien, 2006; Rogers & Oakes, 2005). "Exercising 'voice' in public affairs for the normal duties of citizenship requires that individuals have found their voices" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 89). In many classrooms, students are taught that being a good citizen "means listening to authority figures, dressing neatly, being nice to neighbors, and helping out at a soup kitchen—not grappling with the kinds of social policy decisions that every citizen in a democratic society needs to learn how to do" (Westheimer, 2008, p. 5). Some teachers are afraid to appear political so they stick to neutral, "safe" portrayals of history. "This stance of neutrality often serves to make school curricula devoid of the very commitments that support the democratic spirit" (Schultz, B. & Oyler, C., 2006, p. 426). Moreover, many practices in schools serve to reinforce privilege by a few, rather than to create equity and democracy (Oakes, 2008; Rogers & Oakes, 2005).

The current standards and test-based curriculum neglects the needs of the primary stakeholders in schools, its students. Too “many students (and their teachers) have histories that have led them to presume school knowledge is created by authorities who are remote from students’ personal lives” (Johnston & Nicholls, 1995, p. 96). Some argue that school reform itself should include students in the process and implementation of changes (Cook-Sather, 2002; Corbett, D. & Wilson, B., 1995; Mac An Ghaill, 1992; Wachholz, 1994). Students learn that the education process is undemocratic as they are left out of the decision-making that affects them. “There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is ostensibly designed to serve” (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 3).

An individual teacher cannot ensure students are part of systemic education reform, but he/she can make student voice a central feature in the classroom, thereby creating a more democratic environment. “Students must share in the power that is inherent in every schooling experience” (Bryant, Daniels, Storm, Kiser, & Wood, 2008, p. 32). Teachers must be willing to facilitate this power shift by engaging in student-centered activities. Schools should construct curriculum around the lives and experiences of students (Bryant et al., 2008; Smyth & Hattam, 2002). Social studies is particularly well-suited to engage students through projects they direct using issues that are relevant to them (Schukar, 1997).

Student directed learning borrows from effective practices of after school programs which young people say they enjoy because they provide them with “voice and choice” (Quinn, 1999). Issues-based learning can draw on student interests and

skills beyond academics. As students engage in a study of issues which are relevant to their lives, this “enriched conception of school competence might help many students recognize the connection between school learning, academics, and ‘real life’” (Wanlass, 2000, p. 514). This connection can also cut down on discipline issues at school. Research has found that students are involved in fewer school problem behaviors if they “find school interesting, important, and instrumental for attaining other life goals” (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000, p. 452).

Student-centered teaching provides the skills students need to be capable and active citizens, a main goal of social studies education (NCSS, 1994). NCSS calls for social studies to provide the knowledge, intellectual skills, and attitudes necessary to deal with society’s issues. To do so, teachers should keep in mind that “social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are active” (NCSS, 1994). NCSS supports teaching which gradually moves from “modeling, explaining, or supplying information that builds student knowledge, to a less directive role that encourages students to become independent and self-regulated learners” (NCSS, 1994). By engaging students in problem solving activities, student-centered learning teaches critical thinking and prepares them for life beyond the classroom.

E. Democratic Practices in Social Studies Content and Instruction

Foundational theorists on democratic practices in social studies advocate for content relevant to students that will help them to practice higher order thinking skills necessary for participation as active citizens. Dewey (1916) believed that students should learn about the past in order to make decisions about the present,

otherwise learning about the past becomes a meaningless set of trivia. Dewey advocated for education to be a means for students to gain the skills and knowledge to problem-solve and make contributions to society.

Engle (1963) called for a curriculum that emphasized “decision making” where students analyze various interpretations of events, determine their modern implications, then make their own decisions about how to interpret the past and apply their new understanding to the present. The heart of these approaches to social studies content is the student. These student-centered methods ask students to construct their knowledge rather than accept a pre-established “correct” version of history from the teacher.

Shaver (1992) questioned the ability of the coverage-oriented approach of survey courses to teach students about citizenship. Shaver wondered if the abbreviated and simplified content would assist students in developing the skills necessary to solve problems of society. “Must students first develop a storehouse of information and concepts before being asked to consider the issues that face adult citizens, or will the learning of information and concepts take place most effectively in the context of confronting issues?” (Shaver, 1992, p.95). Rather than a coverage-oriented, teacher-centered curriculum, Shaver advocated an issues-centered approach where students draw on issues from a variety of sources: personal life situations, history, and societal concerns that are of interest to them. Shaver noted that an issues-centered approach teaches about the conflicts that occur in democracy so it supports citizenship education.

Similarly, Oliver, Newmann, and Singleton (1992) advocated for what they called a “public issues approach” to social studies. They defined “public issues” as cases affecting the community. They viewed this approach as a solution to the broad-based coverage of content that too often proved to be superficial. “The public issues approach deviates sharply from the view that there is an encyclopedic corpus of substantive content to be covered.” (Oliver, et al., 1992, p.103). Students engaged in public issues education ask questions, gather information, and use evidence to clarify their positions on the subject. Students also engage in dialogue and come to understand differing points of view. All of these skills are essential to civic participation and democracy. Students can then generalize what they learn to other events in history. Oliver et al. (1992) called for teachers to have a broad knowledge base from which to draw the public issues rather than making that broad content the focus of the course.

Berci and Griffith (2006) also noted that the traditional methods of teaching as knowledge transmission did not work for students. Berci and Griffith advocated for a “hermeneutic approach” as a methodology for teaching social studies. The hermeneutic approach seeks to have students construct their knowledge, not receive it. Because history itself has debates over interpretations, it makes sense that students should use evidence to construct their own meanings of what happened. Berci and Griffith believed that a hermeneutic approach would contribute to higher-order thinking. The hermeneutic approach focused on the inquiry method and process skills, content is necessary to learn the skills, but is not the end result as in factual or information-based curriculum. In the hermeneutic

process students “recognize the issues inherent in the event, identify the positions possible on those issues, pinpoint the values underlying any argument and as a reward for these inquiries, earn the right to determine the best response.” (Berci and Griffith, 2006, p.49). Berci and Griffith found the hermeneutic approach meshed well with the democratic emphasis in social studies because it taught dialogue as a way to seek understanding. Students used evidence in dialogue and critiqued the evidence presented by others. Additionally, the traditional method of instruction put the student in a passive mode that was contradictory to the goals of social studies as a preparation for the civic role and civic participation. In order to be prepared to participate in society, students need to be able to participate in class (Berci & Griffith, 2006).

Social studies teachers need to use student-centered instruction to combat the “hidden curriculum” which contradicts the democratic goals of social studies education (Martinson, 2003). The “hidden curriculum” reproduces unequal power in a system where race, class, gender and other identifiers can determine whether or not one has access to success. Martinson’s goal in social studies education is to help students find their political voices so that they are more willing to participate in the political process. Martinson outlined three considerations for social studies teachers to disrupt the social reproduction of inequality: the classroom atmosphere must be democratic with democratic values practiced, instruction must be around issues which are relevant to students, and students must be taught how to critique mass media. Martinson also commented that memorization in and of itself is not a negative aspect to a classroom, but it is what the students are being asked to

memorize that is important. Martinson advocated for use of memorization of key speeches or documents that have significance for students' lives. He also emphasized the need for finding relevant applications of social studies principles for students to consider rather than a distant topic to which they cannot relate.

Scheurman and Newmann (1998), like Martinson, did not advocate abandoning memorization in social studies, but sought to have the facts that are memorized be meaningfully located within broader concepts. They advocated for identifying what they called "authentic intellectual achievement" in social studies. The authentic intellectual achievement has to have value beyond simply learning the information. Authentic intellectual achievement applies knowledge to questions within a particular area. There were three guidelines put forth by Scheurman and Newmann: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school. Students must construct knowledge or meaning of events for themselves; they should draw on the facts to form an opinion of an event. The construction of this knowledge has to be grounded in disciplined inquiry. This means the student must understand the issue as experts in the field would, this is similar to recommendations by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS, 1994).

F. Democratic Practices in Classroom Management

Brophy and Alleman (1998) recommended the merging of classroom management with democratic principles taught in social studies. "One basic principle of good classroom management is that it must support instructional goals" (Brophy & Alleman, 1998, p.57). A strict, authoritarian classroom is incongruous

with active learning instructional approaches emphasizing higher order thinking skills. Instead of taking an authoritative role, teachers can work with their students to develop classroom rules, norms, and procedures that work for the collective group, not just those that suit the teacher.

Brophy and Alleman (1998) concluded that social studies classrooms were particularly well suited for a collaborative approach to classroom management since a major goal of social studies is to teach democracy. By establishing democratic classroom practices, the classroom management, instruction strategies and content of the course merge. They promoted the idea of teachers using classroom management shared with the students to teach students to work collaboratively in the classroom and to become more actively involved.

Martinson (2003) also recommended that in a social studies classroom, the atmosphere must be democratic with democratic values practiced. The authoritarian teacher will contradict the lessons of democracy, while the teacher who shares power with students in classroom structures will reinforce values of democracy. Martinson cited school administrators concerned with avoiding conflict and maintaining order as an obstacle to democratic classrooms (Martinson, 2003).

McMurray (2007) also found that administrators can be an obstacle to democratic classroom practices because they want to keep the peace and order in their schools. McMurray advocated for a classroom that allows students to practice democratic principles. McMurray cautioned that the teacher should facilitate this process, in other words students should not be allowed to have complete freedom of decision-making that would for example allow them to decide not to do the work

or to disrupt the work of others. Rather, students should be taught to use the democratic processes to maintain order “in an effort to stimulate and encourage civic behavior and meaningful discussion” (McMurray, 2007, p.55).

The democratic practice of sharing power with students in the classroom serves to reinforce critical content about democracy. The teacher-centered class where the teacher makes all decisions about curriculum and instruction demonstrates an authoritarian model. The student-centered class indicates that diverse people can come together in cooperation toward common goals. This model demonstrates how a democracy can work. It is also more egalitarian in nature as the teacher is just one member of the group whose wishes are put above the good of the class.

G. Teaching Democratic Practices to Pre-service Social Studies Teachers

Dinkleman (1997) conducted a case study of three pre-service social studies teachers in his methods course to determine if they could develop a critical approach to social studies education in their program. Dinkleman explored teacher identity with his students with two references: social education for democratic citizenship and for social transformation. He hoped to help “students critique standard interpretations typically conveyed in social studies classes” (Dinkleman, 1997, p. 33). Dinkleman used interviews at the start, midpoint, and conclusion of the semester, observations during the methods course, and field notes from observations. Dinkleman found that each of his three participants demonstrated critical reflection and critically reflective teaching. He concluded that the focus on

social transformation was not as successful and may have been due to the limited time (only one semester) that students had to learn and engage with the concepts.

Doppen (2007) conducted a study of 19 pre-service social studies teachers to determine what impact the students' methods course, field experiences and student teaching had on their beliefs about teaching and learning social studies, particularly with respect to student-centered instruction. Prior to the semester, the pre-service teachers did not have a well-formed idea about teaching and learning social studies other than that they wanted to provide better instruction than what they knew. Through the methods course, the pre-service teachers were introduced to and became proponents of student-centered methods. The field experience and student teaching offered opportunities for the pre-service teachers to try out the student-centered methods, further solidifying their belief that they were the best way to teach social studies to their students. Doppen concluded that it is useful for teacher preparation programs to focus on beliefs and student-centered methods in predisposing pre-service teachers towards adopting student-centered methods.

Both Dinkleman and Doppen set out to promote a democratic, student-centered approach to social studies. In the spirit of democracy, it may be important that pre-service teachers are educated about the different approaches to social studies and choose the one that makes the most sense to them.

Evans (2008) engaged in action research of his social studies methods course that emphasized issues-based teaching and reflective practice. While researching the statements of various interest groups regarding the best way to teach social studies, Evans decided to have his methods class review the same literature and

write their own pedagogic creed as they entered the field of teaching. Evans divided the approaches to social studies in to four categories: traditional history, social science inquiry, reflective, issues-centered approach, and critical pedagogy. The students in Evans' class completed readings on each of the approaches, watched video of classrooms with each approach in action, wrote position papers, and conducted a symposium to discuss the different approaches. Evans found that his students were responsive to this exploration and that the formation of their own pedagogic philosophy was a more true strategy then forcing them to take on his belief in the issues-centered approach. Most of the students in Evans's study chose a student-centered approach for their pedagogic creed.

H. Student Feedback Emerges in the Field of Education

In the past decade, attention has turned to student feedback as a central element in efforts to evaluate teachers, improve schools and raise standardized test scores. This new focus on student feedback and teacher evaluation has been spurred by the federal government's Race to the Top Initiative. As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the White House created the Education Recovery Act that included financial incentives awarded by the national government to winning state proposals that included the pursuit of higher standards and improved teacher effectiveness (White House, n.d.). The Race to the Top proposals had to demonstrate a plan to link teacher evaluation systems to student achievement. Student achievement measures, often in the form of standardized tests, have been a controversial component of educational reform since the 2001 No

Child Left Behind Act. More recently, new student growth models, also known as value-added models, have gained popularity as being a more effective measure than a current status model achievement score (Center for Public Education, 2007). The intention of the value-added, or growth model, is to obtain a more accurate assessment of student learning outcomes, but often still focuses heavily on much criticized standardized tests.

Furthermore, measuring a teacher's effectiveness based on any criteria, whether from student achievement score or student growth percentiles, from a standardized test or a different measure, does not necessarily outline the critical steps that might be taken to improve that teacher's effectiveness. Research shared in a report from the Economic Policy Institute indicated that "states have focused heavily on developing teacher evaluation systems based on student test scores, but not nearly as much on using the evaluations to improve instruction, as intended" (Weiss, 2013).

In an effort to respond to this critique, many new features have been added to teacher evaluation recently, even in states that did not receive Race to the Top funding. Forty-one states now recommend that teacher evaluation uses multiple measures for teacher performance including student achievement or growth, classroom observations, lesson plan reviews, teacher self-reflections, classroom artifacts and, student and parent surveys (Hull, 2013).

School districts across the country are beginning to use student surveys as a teacher evaluation tool (Farhad, 2014). Large-scale student feedback programs are underway in large urban systems including Pittsburgh, Denver and statewide in

Georgia while in Memphis, student survey scores account for five percent of a teacher's annual professional evaluation. Advocates believe student survey scores will predict student achievement gains and thus can be used to distinguish more effective from less effective teachers.

1. Feedback as High Stakes Teacher Evaluation

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project (2010, 2012, 2013) was a large-scale effort to identify what constitutes effective teaching in K-12 schools. Since 2009, the MET Project researched and reported on pilot programs using student feedback surveys as part of teacher evaluation. This large-scale project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has influenced the adoption of student feedback surveys in many state teacher evaluation systems.

In addition to examining student achievement gains on standardized tests, doing classroom observation studies of teachers in action, and collecting teacher perceptions about the work of teaching, MET surveyed 100,000 students about how they are experiencing teachers and schools. Under the leadership of Harvard University economist Thomas Kane, project researchers collected data during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years in six large school systems: Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, Dallas Independent School District, Denver Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Memphis City Schools and the New York City Department of Education.

MET researchers have announced dramatic findings: 1) Effective teaching can be measured using a variety of measures including classroom observations, test scores, and student perception surveys, 2) Students will give honest and compelling

feedback about teaching practice; 3) Student perceptions of classrooms and teachers differ greatly, not only between schools, but within schools; 4) Classrooms where students rate their teachers higher on a series of seven teaching behaviors tended to produce greater student achievement gains (Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2010; 2013). Concluded the MET Project's initial report of findings: "the average student knows effective teaching when he or she experiences it" (2010, p. 4).

The MET Project used student questionnaires developed by the Tripod Project, an initiative begun by Harvard University Professor Ronald F. Ferguson as a way to close academic achievement gaps among students from different racial, ethnic and economic class backgrounds in schools. More than one million elementary, middle and high school students nationwide have been Tripod participants in the past ten years (Ferguson, 2012, p. 25). Through survey questionnaire statements, students are asked how effectively their teachers created favorable conditions for learning in seven areas of teaching practice:

- Caring—students feel encouraged and supported in class
- Captivating—students feel learning is interesting and engaging
- Conferring—students feel their ideas are heard and respected
- Controlling—students feel there is an atmosphere of order and cooperation
- Clarifying—students feel their questions are answered clearly
- Challenging—students feel encouraged to work hard and perform well
- Consolidating—students feel ideas and information are explained fully (Ferguson & Ramsdell, 2011)

Ferguson and his co-researchers discovered that students were happier, worked harder, and felt more satisfied academically in classes where teachers ranked higher on each of the seven areas of teaching practices. In these classrooms, students also performed better on high-stakes achievement tests. The researchers concluded that educators need to view student success in school as dependent not only on achievement gains as measured by tests, but on additional factors such as positive student attitudes about educational ambition and the belief by students that they belong to a community that values each individual as a worthwhile and contributing member.

The data contained surprises too. First, there were no significant differences based on students' race or income. Second, thinking effective teachers would most likely be found in schools with smaller class sizes and greater instructional resources, researchers found a greater "variation within schools—from one classroom to another—than between them, from one school to another" (Ferguson & Ramsdell, 2011, pp. 8, 11). They concluded students have widely varying educational experiences in different classrooms in the same school. Third, a student's rank in class standing did not significantly alter the teacher rankings—students earning A's rated their teachers merely 10 percent higher than students earning D's.

This early research on the use of the student feedback surveys in teacher evaluation has been criticized. Critics of using feedback surveys in this way contend students should not be placed in anything resembling a teacher evaluation role.

From this perspective, students lack full knowledge of curriculum requirements,

classroom management policies and other factors that structure what teachers do in classrooms on a daily basis (Hanover Education, 2013, p. 12). Even among those who favor student feedback as a teacher evaluation tool, there is little agreement as to how much weight should be given to survey results in determining teacher promotion or school restructuring.

A different approach to student feedback surveys comes from Sarah Brown Wessling, the 2010 national teacher of the year. Like individual teachers in classrooms around the country, she decided on her own, not as part of a formal state or district-mandated teacher evaluation system, to be a regular surveyor of students about their classroom experiences. Wessling notes that the most important part of her student surveys is the comments section, a component she had used on her own prior to adopting some of the Tripod project questions and continues to incorporate as she reflects on her teaching. Wessling (2012, p. 1) concluded: “What really drives my reflection is the comments they offer. It is the comments that in the end—nine times out of 10—will change my instruction, or solidify my instruction.”

Beyond the addition of these important comments, another key difference in Wessling’s use of student surveys compared to the MET Project’s use is that Wessling sought feedback from her students to inform the improvement of her practice and for her own use in that reflective practice, rather than for formal evaluation. Wessling notes that part of her reason to ask students for feedback is that it is formative, “we need to make sure that we use these kinds of things in order to create cultures of learning.” (Wessling, 2012, p. 2) Wessling cautions that student

surveys used in a high stakes environment such as in formal evaluation must be done with great care for professional growth that is supportive and not punitive.

I. Conclusion

Education to support a democratic society has long been a goal of public schools in America (O'Brien, 2006; Rogers & Oakes, 2005). Social studies is often charged as the school subject where democratic principles are taught and explored (NCSS, 1994). Consequently, social studies education has a long history of being intertwined with debates about the meaning and purpose of citizenship. These debates have made it difficult for lasting reform in the teaching of social studies (Evans, 2004). But such reform is necessary.

Over the past hundred years, social studies classrooms have been more teacher-centered than student-centered (Cuban, 1984, 2009). In recent years, standards-based reform has made curriculum content more coverage-oriented with an emphasis on discrete facts students need to memorize for standardized tests (Grant, 2007; Journell, 2008). As standardized tests have increased, teachers report using more teacher-centered methods (Vogler, 2008). Teacher-centered classrooms do not model the principles of democracy and may prevent students from learning the skills necessary to operate in a democratic society (Berci & Griffith, 2006).

The literature makes a clear case for a variety of democratic practices in the content and pedagogy of a social studies classroom. Democratic practice in a social studies class means starting with topics relevant to students, and teaching them about issues they will encounter and need to solve as active citizens (Engle, 1963;

Oliver et al, 1992). It involves identifying problems, collecting evidence, and drawing conclusions as a professional in a field of social science would (Berci & Griffith, 2006; Sheurman & Newmann, 1998). Students use facts and information to support their conclusions rather than simply as a means to pass a test (Martinson, 2003; Scheurman & Newmann, 1998). Students practice problem solving and other higher order skills that they will need to participate in a democratic society. Teachers can also use collaborative classroom management techniques with students to teach them democratic processes (Brophy & Alleman, 1998; Martinson, 2003; McMurray, 2007).

Despite the fact that social studies classrooms remain more teacher-centered, over the years teachers have incorporated some student-centered methods (Cuban, 1984). Research indicates that high stakes standardized tests are just one complexity teachers take into account as they make decisions about how to teach (Grant, 2007). Additionally, when pre-service teachers have been asked to employ student-centered methods, they have found success (Doppen, 2007). This provides some hope for the use of democratic practices and student-centered learning in the social studies classroom.

Trends in social studies education may ebb and flow as different groups influence school curricula (Evans, 2004). Yet, the overarching goal of teaching students the skills of living in a democracy remains at the center of history and social studies education. The challenge is to continue to find ways to prepare students for citizenship in a democratic society regardless of the current educational trend. This dissertation study emerges from this context, exploring as it

does how student feedback can change the teaching approaches of new teacher candidates while promoting more active and democratic participation by secondary school students.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

Creating a classroom community where teachers and students learn together is critical to inclusive and culturally conscious history and social studies teaching (Sanchez, 2007). This study investigated what happened when history teacher license candidates solicited feedback from middle and high school students regarding their use of teaching methods highlighted in university methods courses and then asked those candidates to reflect on the feedback they received from the students. The study used collaborative research methods as well as reflective practice and action research.

1. Engaging in Collaborative Research

The use of collaborative research methods allowed me to form learning partnerships with the new teacher candidates. Paugh (2004) advocated for the use of collaborative research as it creates a democratic research relationship between elementary and secondary education teachers and university researchers. Collaborative research involves elementary and secondary education educators in research studies typically reserved for university academics, different from a more traditional model of research.

A traditional model typically involves a research topic and questions designed by a university researcher about an educational area or question. The

researcher might contact the elementary and secondary education professionals to seek permission to conduct their studies in or about the school setting and population. The researcher's involvement with the school concludes when the data has been collected and the researcher retreats to the university to write about the results of the study. In many cases, this is where the relationship ends. On some occasions, the university researcher might contact the school personnel to share findings, a finished report, or perhaps to member check, but not always. The dynamic established by this type of research is a hierarchy with the university researcher at the top occupying the position of knowledgeable and analytical problem definer and problem solver while elementary and secondary educators and educational sites are simply data sources to be mined.

As a full time secondary education teacher with a part time clinical faculty position in a university college of education, I have a dual role that allows me to see the shortcomings in the traditional paradigm of research. University researchers sometimes ask questions that do not have authenticity in a school setting because they lack the knowledge of the daily realities of schools and classrooms. University researchers do not always ask questions that are of interest to schools. Instead, they might be responding to the political climate and interests of funding sources rather than the needs of teachers and students.

Similarly, traditional researchers often lack the ability to implement timely actions to solve problems. A study might have implications for or make suggestions about instruction, for example, but the population that was studied will often not be impacted by those implications. If a researcher studies and describes Student A, by

the time the findings of the study and potential suggestions are made, Student A will have moved on. The study's implications will then be available for Student B or Student C, but Student A will never benefit from the work.

Lastly, I believe a hierarchical relationship between university and elementary and secondary educators is inappropriate, especially because education is a field that aims to equalize society. Collaborative research, by contrast, offered an appealing alternative to this model, making it an ideal research approach for this study. Collaborative research functions as a more egalitarian and participatory form of research. Rather than the typical model of the university academic studying teachers and then forming theories based on that research, the collaborative process allowed me to research with the new teacher candidates to identify areas of concern related to teaching methods and student feedback and to analyze the data jointly to draw conclusions and form theory.

Galvez-Martin (1997) considered reflective practice to be essential to social studies teachers who need it to avoid falling into traditional practices of delivering information for students to memorize. To aid the reflective practice of the pre-service teachers, middle and high school students acted as the "observer" for the teacher candidates providing data about teaching methods used in the classroom. The data was given in the form of student surveys created by the pre-service teachers. The new teacher candidates engaged in reflective practice as they considered the data from the students and made changes to their future pedagogy. The practice also gave middle and high school students voice and agency, creating a more democratically run classroom which is a sensible approach not only for

student learning, but for teaching students principles of democracy, a cornerstone of social studies education (Wolk, 1998).

2. An Action Research Approach

The new teacher candidates utilized action research methods. The pre-service teachers identified the methods to be studied, developing a research question. They created a plan and enacted it, then collected student feedback to inform their analysis and reflection. This was both an independent and collaborative action research project where the student feedback data helped teacher candidates to reflect and then implement changes to their personal future practice, and also share their findings with their fellow pre-service teachers in their university course to make meaning and draw conclusions as a group. While I was interested in the research questions of the pre-service teachers individually and as a group, I also focused on my own research questions about how the process of collecting student feedback from students impacted the teacher candidates. The collaborative research model allowed me as the university researcher to work alongside the pre-service teachers as they conducted a study with their own questions about their practice. In this partnership, both the teacher candidates and I were able to collect data and analyze the data from an angle that had the most meaning to each of us.

Additionally, as the process unfolded, I wondered if it would reinforce democratic practices with the new teacher candidates. I hoped that the feedback that the new teacher candidates received from their students would encourage them to use more student-centered teaching methods to teach social studies. I

questioned if the pre-service teachers would come to see their middle and high school students as essential actors in their classes, and further seek out student voices, thereby creating more democratic classrooms.

In this study, I used qualitative research methods to gather data with a small portion of quantitative research in the form of surveys. I used field notes, focus group discussions, formal and informal written reflections, and anonymous middle and high school student survey feedback sheets.

B. Research Questions

This study has examined the perceptions of history teacher candidates about the use of student feedback as a democratic teaching practice. It explored what happens when teacher candidates ask middle or high school students to comment on the use of interactive, student-centered teaching methods as part of regular classroom instruction. This study further examined the reactions of teacher candidates to student feedback including whether they intend to incorporate feedback as a regular feature of future teaching practice.

Three research questions framed the study:

- Do history teacher candidates perceive student feedback about teaching methods to be a useful instructional practice for them as teachers?
- Do history teacher candidates make changes in their instructional practices based on student feedback about their teaching methods?
- Do history teacher candidates plan to use student feedback in their future once they enter the teaching profession as full-time teachers?

This study used a collaborative action research approach featuring a combination of qualitative research methodologies to document the experiences and thinking of new history teacher candidates as they used student feedback in their classes. Action research is based on the core idea that useful educational knowledge can be discovered when educators systematically and thoughtfully examine their own instructional practices and the activities and actions of their students (McNiff, 2002).

In a collaborative action research model, researchers of schools might work in conjunction with students, teachers, staff and parents to gain a deeper understanding of the setting. "Context is not controlled but is studied so the ways in which context influences outcomes can be understood. Data from a variety of sources, including qualitative and quantitative measures, are collected and analyzed for the purpose of informing practice" (Hendricks, 2009, p. 3).

C. Participants

The participants in this study were 14 history teacher license candidates enrolled in "field-based" or "immersion" programs offered by the college of education at a major land grant university located in the northeast section of the United States during the 2013-2014 school year. All the participants were graduate students in college-based teacher preparation classes taught by the researcher or co-taught by the researcher and the college of education faculty member who was the coordinator of the university's history teacher education program. There were 7

men and 7 women. Eight taught in an urban school, four taught in a rural school, and two taught in a suburban school.

The overall framework for the study was developed through a series of pilot surveys, online discussions, and in-person classroom meetings that took place between the 2008-2009 and 2012-2013 academic years. These pilot studies were used to develop the overall approach to the study. Student feedback assignments were given to teacher candidates in different college of education courses in different semesters depending on university staffing for the teaching of those courses. Some participants in pilot studies were enrolled in the two year university to schools program and were given an assignment to collect student feedback during either Education 592S (a pre-practicum accompanying Education 514 or Education 510 (a seminar accompanying student teaching). A total of 93 history teacher candidates were enrolled in the history teacher license program during the four academic years covered by the pilot studies.

D. Pre-service History Teacher Licensure Programs

There are two distinct pathways to teacher licensure at the university used for this study. A two-year university-based masters level graduate degree and licensure program that features a year of intensive graduate coursework in the fields of history and education followed by a year of pre-practicum and practicum work in schools. In the first year of this program, graduate students take advanced courses in their content area, in this case, history or political science. The program

also includes courses in educational theory, foundations of education, and adolescent or educational psychology.

The second pathway is an alternate field-based or immersion route that has gained increasing popularity with university students seeking licensure. The pathway has two program initiatives, one serving a large urban district, and another serving a collection of rural and suburban communities. The goal of these partnerships was to provide a yearlong practicum and degree program with teacher candidates interning for the entire school year in the high need schools of the partner communities. For this reason, these programs are often called “field-based,” “immersion” or “teacher residency” programs.

The immersion programs responded to needs in both the university and the schools. From the university perspective, pre-service teachers gained a powerful laboratory in which to practice instructional methods presented in their pre-service teacher education courses. At the same time, participating school districts gained an intern teacher for placement in high need classrooms as well as a potential hiring pool of skilled teachers trained in the methods and approaches of the district. The success of the initial urban focused program was so overwhelming that within a few years of its incarnation, a second program was started with placements in rural and suburban school sites in the area.

All the participants of this study were enrolled in one of the two immersion program pathways during the 2013-2014 school year.

E. History Teaching Methods Courses

As part of requirements of the university's masters degree and teacher license program, participants took two courses focusing on student-centered teaching methods in history and social studies middle and high school classrooms—"Education 514: Teaching History and Political Science in Middle and High Schools" (Fall semester) and "Education 743: History, Culture and the Social Studies" (Spring semester). An overview of each course is as follows. (See also, Appendix A: Education 743 Syllabus).

1. Education 514: Teaching History and Political Science in Middle and High Schools

The first semester methods course, *Teaching History and Political Science in Middle and High Schools*, took place in the fall term. The course was a requirement for all pre-service teachers seeking licensure in history or political science in the middle grades (5-8) and at the high school level (8-12). Pre-service teachers learned about best teaching methods for history and political science teachers. Best teaching practices explored included: interactive discussions, group work, cooperative learning, primary source analysis, writing, literature, dialog and debate, controversial issues, community service learning, role-plays and simulations, art, music, research and technology. Two areas addressed weekly were teaching multicultural history and teaching to the National Council for Social Studies themes.

The objectives of the course were to a) utilize best practice teaching methods in the fields of history and political science education in middle and high schools; b) develop lesson and unit plans that incorporate best practice teaching methods into

standards-based curriculum; c) examine the connections between teaching methods and learning standards set forth by the state and the National Council for Social Studies.

The course met weekly over a university semester of thirteen or fourteen weeks, depending on holidays. Teacher candidates met with instructors for a two and a half hour weekly seminar, completed readings, wrote papers, created lesson plans and wrote a curriculum unit to be used during their student teaching practicum. Each class meeting was centered on a different best practice teaching method which students were encouraged to try out in their pre-practicum placements. This pre-practicum was an important component of the course as it provided the laboratory for students to experiment with teaching methods with real secondary education students of social studies. Pre-service teachers observed, assisted, co-taught and taught in social studies classes of area middle and high schools. These placements then became the site of the practicum for the pre-service teachers. After teaching with the methods in their pre-practicum sites, teacher candidates were asked to write reflection papers about the ideas, issues, and insights which came up for them when they taught lessons in school classrooms.

History teacher license candidates were required to develop teaching lessons using the following best practice, student-centered teaching methods:

- **Group Work**—Teachers can put students in various groupings of pairs, trios, groups of four and so on. Groups can be student chosen or teacher selected. Teacher selected groups can be random or intentional. Groups might explore readings, write together, analyze documents, perform simulations and role-play.

Working in a group engages the social aspect of learning allowing students to learn from each other's ideas and more closely representing many work situations.

- **Cooperative Learning**—Teachers use group work with an eye toward teaching cooperative skills. Students may be assigned a part of an assignment that they contribute to the group while others are assigned different parts. Tasks may build to a whole product. Groups are made with purpose with roles such as scribe, facilitator, choreographer, etc. A component of cooperative learning includes assessing the effectiveness of the both individual and group contributions toward the learning goals.
- **Primary Sources**—Teachers use primary sources to illuminate events in history. Students analyze documents such as diaries, speeches, photographs, letters, etc. Primary source analysis is the work of doing history the way historians do. Students determine for themselves the meaning of the documents.
- **Writing**—Teachers use writing, creative and expository, formal and informal, with students as part of the process and the product of their social studies. Formal writing includes such assignments as paragraphs, editorials, essays, reports etc. and informal writing includes poetry, letters, journals, etc.
- **Children's, Adolescent and Young Adult Literature**—Teachers use children's, adolescent, and adult literature related to historical topics. Children's literature makes for interesting lesson openers, while adolescent and adult literature can help bring the people of an era alive, students read part or all of these pieces.

- **Dialog and Debate**—Teachers ask students to take a position on a historical topic or contemporary issue and use evidence to discuss it. A distinction between dialog and debate is that dialog focuses more on problem solving and consensus while debate typically ends with one group as a “winner.”
- **Controversial Issues**—Teachers use controversial issues, current events and contemporary topics to engage students. Students engage in evidence analysis, understanding multiple viewpoints, and problem solving.
- **Community Service Learning**—Teachers connect topics in social studies classes to action plans. Students develop and implement in their school, local, state, national, and international communities. As they learn to make history, students also learn lessons in civics and problem solving. Community service learning is often a multi-day lesson.
- **Role-plays and Simulations**—Teachers use drama with students asking them to perform skits, plays, and simulations to take on the personas of people from the past.
- **Art and Music**—Teachers use art to help students understand culture and society. Students may interpret art of the past or create their own art to make sense of history. Teachers play music from different eras and about historical topics. Students may also create their own music about events
- **Technology and Research**—Teachers use a variety of technologies such as video, Powerpoint, Internet, and software programs to teach social studies. Teachers teach the skills of historical research to students. Students learn to uncover evidence and determine historical significance for themselves.

2. Education 743: History, Culture and Social Studies

History, Culture, and Social Studies is a required course for History and Political Science/Political Philosophy teacher license candidates who are pursuing their master of education degrees through one of two year long immersion teacher preparation programs at the university where this study took place. This spring semester course is designed to explore student-centered and democratic teaching methods for history and social studies education using strategies presented in the fall methods course, including interactive discussions, group work, cooperative learning, primary source materials, writing, literature, controversial issues, role-plays and simulations, research, and technology. A primary focus of the course is on the “Seven C’s of Democratic Teaching” (see Appendix B. The Seven C’s of Democratic Teaching Concept Paper) that have been named and identified by the instructors:

- Conversing (democratic discussion methods)
- Contrasting Content (hidden histories and untold stories)
- Collaborative Classroom Management (students assist in establishing class rules and maintaining classroom management)
- Conducting Classes Democratically (students have voice and choice in what is taught, students have input in how lessons are conducted and assessed)
- Co-Constructing Knowledge (students take responsibility for teaching all or part of the content and skills of a lesson or unit)
- Conferring with Students (seek and use student feedback as part of reflective practice)
- Connecting with Communities (community service learning that links curriculum to people and issues beyond the classroom)

Students attended class on campus after a full school day at their placements in public secondary education institutions in the local area. Some of the class meetings were held online. Students completed readings, wrote papers, presented and critiqued peer lessons, conducted an action research project using the democratic practice of collecting student feedback, and created a plan for how to incorporate democratic teaching in to their classrooms in the future. Each class was focused on a different democratic teaching practice identified by the instructors. Students were encouraged to experiment with these methods in their teaching practicum and reflect on how they impacted their students as well as themselves as teachers.

Together, the two courses served to first teach the pre-service teachers about promising best practices in social studies teaching methods, then provide for several months of practice with these teaching methods in secondary school placements, and finally to introduce democratic teaching practices to enrich many components of teaching social studies with one emphasis on using democratic practices in their classrooms as a way to seek feedback on their teaching methods.

F. Data Sources and Instruments

Multiple data sources are a key in action research because they allow researchers to establish the “credibility” and “validity” of their findings (Hendricks, 2009, p.79).

The sources of data for this study include formal and informal written papers and digital communications. All of the participants conducted an action research study using student feedback from their secondary education students. (See Appendix D. Feedback On Teaching Methods Assignment). These papers were a primary data source for this study. Participants also conducted observations and interviews about democratic practices in their school sites, which they wrote about in the second term course. (See Appendix C. Democratic Practices Observation Assignment). Participants completed informal written responses to prompts posed during class and as part of the Education 743 online Moodle class management system.

Participants also wrote a spring semester final paper describing their plan to incorporate the democratic practices highlighted in the second term course in to their classrooms. (See Appendix E. Final Paper For Education 743). Throughout the semester, participants were involved in online discussions responding to prompts and readings posted by instructors in the second term course. In keeping with the democratic philosophy of the course, students were encouraged to post comments to each other as well as create their own prompts for their classmates in the online portion of the second term course.

While data was collected regarding all of the highlighted democratic practices, one “democratic C”, “Conferring with Students,” was the focus of this study. “Conferring with Students” is defined as seeking and using student feedback as part of reflective practice. During the second term course, participants conducted

an action research study using student feedback from their secondary education students regarding instructional methods they were taught in the first term course. The pre-service teachers selected two teaching methods that had been showcased in the first term course. They chose a method they considered a “comfort” method, one that they found they could implement with ease, and a method that was a “reach”, one that they found challenging to implement. Using these methods, they taught at least two lessons with a focus on each, for a minimum total of four lessons. They then surveyed their secondary education students to collect feedback on how the students felt the pre-service teacher had conducted the lesson. After collecting anonymous feedback from their students, the pre-service teachers reviewed it to determine points of interest and respond to a series of questions in a formal paper for the second term course.

G. Data Analysis

This study used triangulation among data sources as a primary data analysis strategy. Triangulation is also known as “structural corroboration” and it allows researchers to “look for recurrent behaviors or actions, like those theme-like features of a situation that inspire confidence that the events interpreted and appraised are not aberrant or exceptional, but rather characteristics of the situation” (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). The findings of the study are reported in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study about the use of student feedback as a democratic practice by history/social studies teacher candidates during their teaching internship year in a middle or high school classroom. The chapter's presentation of findings begins with how student feedback was presented to candidates and continues with how candidates initially responded to the idea of feedback, how they collected feedback from students.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Candidate Definitions of Democracy and Democratic Teaching
- Protocol for Conducting School Observations
- Themes from Candidate Observation Papers
- Introducing Student Feedback as a Democratic Teaching Practice
- Conferring as a Democratic Teaching Strategy
- Resistance and Reaction by Teacher Candidates
- Collecting Feedback on Teaching Methods
- Candidates Analyzed and Responded to Student Feedback

A. Candidate Definitions of Democracy and Democratic Teaching

An initial course activity in Education 743 asked candidates to write their personal definitions of the terms “democracy” and “democratic teaching.” They

were also asked to identify democratic teaching practices they had observed or implemented in their teaching placements. A more formal observation and paper about democratic teaching practices followed the initial informal responses.

Candidates were asked to read and respond to two readings about democratic teaching:

- Apple, M. W., & Beane, J. A. (eds.). (2007). *Democratic schools: Lessons in powerful education*. Second edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Westheimer, J. (2007). *Pledging Allegiance: The Politics of Patriotism in America's Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

1. Personal Definitions

Overwhelmingly, teacher candidates defined democracy in terms of political and social systems. A democratic society, they concluded, is one where voices are heard, rights are protected, and participation is essential for the system to succeed. Familiar concepts of freedom, equality, and decision-making strongly resonated with these soon-to-be classroom teachers, as in the following comments:

- *"Democracy is a social system that promotes equality. Democratic principles ensure that people's voices are heard and the majority's beliefs are represented accordingly. In a democracy, people's choices and opinions are valued and respected."*
- *"I see democracy as the practice of taking all opinions into account when making decisions in a community . . . Most of us are willing to go unheard and unrepresented some of the time so long as we can be heard on issues that matter to us."*

- *“I go back to a simple idea when thinking about democracy—everyone has a say in decision-making, and everyone is considered equal, with the same rights.”*
- *“Democracy is a philosophy that encourages all opinions to be heard but can’t necessarily assure everyone will be happy with the end result.”*

B. Protocol for Conducting School Observations

After candidates discussed their ideas about democracy in class and in an online forum, they conducted formal observations in their school placements, looking for evidence of democratic teaching as well as obstacles to the practices of democracy. Candidates conducted these observations in their varied settings, resulting in a mix of urban, rural, suburban and middle and high school accounts.

Prior to conducting the observations, candidates discussed their ideas about what they might look for as democratic practices, creating a checklist and then turning it in to individualized data collection tools they shared with each other. Candidates were required to conduct observations in a minimum of three classes, including their own (it was recommended that another party collect the data for their own class as teaching and collecting data simultaneously can be challenging). Candidates then used their data to respond to prompts about benefits to democratic practices for students and teachers, as well as obstacles to democratic practices in schools. Some chose to extend their observations beyond the required sessions and wrote about their observations in the school day and school structures in general,

especially in terms of obstacles to democratic practices.

Data collection included information on the:

- amount of teacher talk versus student talk
- student input in to class rules and environment
- level of engagement of students
- number of students who raised hands, but did not get called on
- percent of students who spoke in class and how they were selected to speak—voluntary versus “cold-calling,” a practice where the teacher calls out names as they see fit
- evidence of the teacher seeking and accepting feedback from students
- presentation of multiple view points for historical events
- use of multiple teaching methods catered to different learning styles
- evidence of students forming their own conclusions about history versus being given the teacher’s perspective
- freedom of student movement within class and to bathroom, nurse, water fountain, etc.

C. Themes from Candidates' Classroom Observation Papers

Data collection tools created by the teacher candidates revealed disconnects for some pre-service teachers for whom the assignment of looking for democratic practices was challenging. The request to consider schools and classrooms from a democratic perspective was so foreign to them that they included measures instead for district defined “good teaching” like posted objectives and using department-

approved protocols. Others looked for practices that could be considered an antithesis of a democratic practice such as one teacher candidate's criteria to check that *"students accept the teacher's authority and belief in the presented concepts."*

A few teacher candidates identified democratic practices, but inserted caveats that indicated misgivings about democratic practices in classrooms, such as *"Students comfortable to speak freely, so long as it is school appropriate"* or restrictions put on their construct of effective classrooms by district policies, *"The teacher effectively presents a mini-lesson to the students following department protocol utilizing various teaching strategies"* and *"Students actively participated in their activity segment of the lesson."* These examples of criteria that did not seem to connect in specific ways to democratic practices indicated further work was necessary in defining democratic teaching for teacher candidates who had not had the experience of seeing it in action.

Observation papers were shared with fellow teacher candidates in the university course and themes were identified for discussion. Candidates were also asked to determine which democratic practices held merit for them and which practices caused concern. The pre-service teachers were able to draw connections between their field, social studies education, and the benefits of democratic practices in schools. There was an understanding that the content of teaching about democracy could be enhanced by the practice of teaching the skills of democracy. They also recognized the elements of social justice and of historical inquiry that could be addressed through democratic practices in the classroom. One candidate created the following list of what a democratic social studies teacher needed to keep

in mind, teaching about *“the social inequalities and differences that exist in our society...presenting historical information in a non-judgmental way...allowing students to draw their own conclusions...(and) allowing students to work together often in order to share their own ideas.”* On a practical level for new teachers entering the field, some candidates felt a pull toward democratic practices from a classroom management perspective: *“seeking and implementing student input regarding curriculum formation gives students a stake in the direction of the class, increasing their engagement with the material.”* This candidate’s comment demonstrates a practical reason for the application of democratic practices with secondary education students.

Candidates were asked to cite specific instances of democratic practices they witnessed in their observations. One candidate found an example of student voice and democratic discussion, *“the students, unprompted, would talk about the subject with each other when they had finished their work.”* He observed that this time, *“allows the students time and a place to discuss and change their way of thinking about issues around the country and the world.”* It is interesting to note that this example occurred only after the work of the class was done, it was not a central and intentional element of the lesson design. A more democratic strategy would have been to create the lesson around the student initiated topics and insights.

A major opportunity for teaching students elements of democracy came in class discussions. A candidate wrote that democratic practices in school *“prepare students for the real world by modeling elements of a democracy, including dialogue between equals, giving greater weight to student voices, learning to listen to peer*

voices, and accepting a consensus that one does not like". Some pre-service teachers found examples of classroom conversations they deemed democratic such as a current events discussion spurred by student interest and questions. Candidates identified these moments as examples of student voice.

However, these examples were largely moments when a student had a question or comment and the teacher allowed it. The class explored it further or the teacher discussed it with the student or expanded on it for the group. It is interesting to note that this was the benchmark for democratic practices held by the pre-service teachers. In many ways, it can still be interpreted as teacher-centered yet for these candidates it was the best example of democratic practices they could find in schools. Consider if this practice of responding to a student question became the benchmark for democratic practices. Is it even possible to achieve? In a 45 minute class with 25 students, each student would have less than 2 minutes to speak (1.7 minutes) if one allowed that the teacher was included and had speaking time equal to, but not exceeding that of a student. How then, can this be a benchmark to reach for? What about democratic discussion methods? Small group work where student talk time is expanded?

At the start of the semester this was not yet in the candidates' repertoire. One candidate honestly reported, *"I had never really thought about the structure of my course as a lesson in democracy itself, but it makes a lot of sense."* Clearly, the course was taking the candidates in to new territory, but there seemed a willingness to take the first step of contemplating the concepts.

While most candidates agreed that teaching middle and high school students

skills for participation in a democratic society should be a primary focus of their work, many found that the realities of school settings did not lend themselves toward achievement of this goal.

Many candidates lamented that the structures of their school placements did not readily translate in to democratic spaces. In fact, they found that many of the school practices created obstacles to democracy rather than supports for it. In the words of one candidate, *“In order to truly teach in a democratic way a teacher must think of the students like citizens of the classroom. In a true democracy the right to govern or in this case teach would come from the citizens or students. However in our schools today, students do not hold the power.”* Another student goes further in describing the power structure of schools today, *“students do not hold the power and instead we work to limit and remove power that students have now. The power is instead given to the parents, school committee, administration, and the teachers. It is this model that has students holding the least amount of power that only hurts their understanding of how they can contribute to a democracy after graduation.”*

School structures such as class size and systems enacted to maintain control of the student body were cited as obstacles to democratic practices in many of the teacher candidates’ school placements. An urban middle school teacher candidate who focused a large portion of her observation on how much student voice was exhibited in the classroom found that, *“the size of the classroom is probably the biggest factor in determining how democratic a classroom can be.”* As classroom size increased this candidate found, so, too did the teacher-talk.

Policies in schools about student movement, such as access to the bathroom,

were a recurring observation area where candidates felt schools restricted freedoms too much and created an undemocratic environment for students. Many felt that a positive democratic practice would be to allow students to control when they are allowed to use the restroom. One urban teacher candidate described observing the enforcement of a school rule to the detriment not only of learning democratic practices, but also of time in academic learning. In her observation she witnessed the implementation of the school requirement to have students line up silently outside a classroom before entering. In this case, the adherence to the school rule took up 15 minutes of learning time while students worked to be quiet in line. The teacher candidate was left questioning the wisdom of such rigid systems that seemed to have a negative impact on student learning.

Candidates did find hope for democratic practices within some individual classrooms even if the school structures outside the class inhibited them. One teacher candidate found *“the obstacles stemmed from the rules of the school rather than the rules of individual classrooms, showing that the teachers were willing to positively go against the culture of the school in favor of equity in the classroom.”* Throughout their internships, the new teacher candidates wrestled with the tension between teacher autonomy within the class and adhering to school policy within the building.

Classroom management and fears about not maintaining order in the classroom were common concerns shared by many of the pre-service teachers. A closer look at one candidate’s observation paper illustrates the thinking that many new teacher candidates had about democratic practices and classroom

management.

“Student empowerment should be one of the ultimate goals of the education system, and even small choices can help students feel powerful. Some students react very positively to such democratic processes, motivating themselves to achieve at a high level. Other students do not respond well to this method. They cannot, or will not, motivate themselves, so when given more freedom of choice they fail to capitalize on the opportunity to control their own learning.”

While seeing the benefits of and even identifying teaching democratic principles as a main purpose of schools, this teacher candidate also struggles with the concept in terms of controlling the classroom, pondering what to do with those students who will not make good decisions when given freedom to make their choices. The concept of natural consequences, even if they are negative, is not one that this pre-service teacher entertains.

There is also a belief that teachers are actually in control of the class. What does it mean to be in control, really? Is it possible? What are the forces and factors that keep a student engaged and should democratic practices be used as a means of control or the purpose of the class to begin with? This teacher candidate continues, *“Furthermore, if every student were allowed to have a say in the learning of the entire class, the multitude of opinions amongst a large class would paralyze learning of any sort.”* In this teacher candidate’s perception democracy means everyone gets his or her way—so the issue here is a problematic view of democracy that allows the candidate to say it is impossible and not try it.

A different understanding is offered by a fellow teacher candidate who writes about democratic teaching as a way to teach compromise by the class members, *“if I were to allow them a little more freedom to choose the means by which they learn those concepts, it is clear that they could understand how democratic practices and*

compromises can exist both in theory and in the real world.” Obviously democratic teaching practices, like democracy in the outside world cannot be a free for all.

Another tension teacher candidates observed was the pull between democratically involving students in curriculum choices versus covering district, state, and national standards in the social studies classroom. Candidates commented on the ways that coverage-oriented standards could remove teacher flexibility and therefore restrict democratic teaching practices. In the words of one urban high school candidate, the standards *“handcuff the teacher’s ability to allow time for discussion, teach about today’s issues, and involve the community in the classroom by restricting what must be taught to a list of historical people and events, many of which only teach one perspective of history.”*

While candidates observed student interest in some topics covered in secondary education social studies classes, they found the push to cover curriculum limited or prevented further exploration by individuals, groups, or the class. *“Teachers stop the discussion before it gets in to deeper real life connections, real world problems students could use as a jumping off point for research,* critiqued pre-service teacher. Candidates went further in their evaluation of the challenge of teaching content-laden frameworks noting that the standards themselves can limit democracy by the stories they tell about the past. One pre-service teacher observed, *“students are assessed through standardized testing methods that do not cater to social class or ethnic background, but rather support the ideology of the dominant ruling culture.”*

D. Introducing Student Feedback as a Democratic Teaching Practice

Student feedback as a democratic teaching practice was a primary focus of Education 743, an advanced teaching methods course taken by all immersion program candidates during the second half of their teaching year. In the course, participants read about and discussed the concept of democratic teaching in middle and high schools, focusing specifically on a group of democratic practices called the “The Seven C's of Democratic Teaching in History/Social Studies Classrooms” (Maloy & LaRoche, 2010; 2015). See Appendix B for the text of that paper written by Robert Maloy and the researcher that outlines each of the 7 Cs of democratic practice discussed with candidates.

The 7Cs of Democratic Practice are as follows:

- 1. *CONVERSING: Conversations and Discussions in Classrooms***
- 2. *COLLABORATING: Decision-Making and Power Sharing***
- 3. *CONTRASTING: Coverage and Uncoverage of History Curriculum***
- 4. *CONDUCTING: Student Engagement and Flipped Teaching***
- 5. *CONFERRING: Student Feedback to Guide Teaching Practice***
- 6. *CO-CONSTRUCTING: Digital Technologies in History Classrooms***
- 7. *CONNECTING: Students, Teachers and Communities***

E. Conferring as a Democratic Teaching Strategy

Once the concepts of democracy and democratic teaching were defined, the candidates and course instructors spent at least one week in the course, and in some cases more than one week, exploring each of the seven C's of democratic teaching in

more depth.

Readings from the field, class discussions, and online journal postings further defined each of the C's as a democratic classroom teaching practice. Candidates were asked to consider each democratic practice theoretically, but more importantly, they were asked to search for evidence of these practices in schools as well as attempt them with their own students.

Conferring with students was put forth as one of the seven C's of democratic practice. Conferring focuses on how teachers get feedback from middle and high school students about what students are learning, what educators call "assessment" or "evaluation." In theory, "formative" (evaluating performance throughout a lesson or unit) and "summative" (evaluating performance at the end of a lesson or unit) assessments come together to produce a full portrait of what a student knows and is able to do with the ideas and information that teachers have taught. But missing from these teacher-driven evaluations are ways for students to more actively and democratically participate in the assessment process; what we call conferring. When teachers and students confer together, students are in a position to become more active partners in assessing their own learning. Note that the focus here is not on assessing for a grade, rather it is about assessing for learning. This process then can include not only student feedback on the assessment process, but also involves conferring with students about effective (and ineffective) classroom practices.

Getting clear information about student learning is really the only way that teachers can gauge the effectiveness of the work. Leaving a classroom at the end of a class period, a teacher knows that she or he has taught, but not whether (or to

what extent) students have learned. Without feedback from the students, the act of teaching is incomplete—words have been spoken, but what did students actually hear? Ideas have been presented, but what did students actually understand? Instructional methods have been used, but what did students actually learn from those methods?

An additional benefit of conferring is the inherent need for metacognition on the part of the student when they provide feedback. Metacognition is the awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes. When teachers confer with students, they ask them what worked and did not work for them as learners. In order to answer this question, the student must think about their own thinking, they must engage in metacognition. Building the habit and skill of metacognition provides students with an important tool for future success in learning.

F. Resistance and Reaction by Teacher Candidates

"I can do what I can in my classroom, but what signal does it send to students when the moment they leave my classroom, they see that other teachers, administrators and the general school culture are anything but democratic?"--an urban middle school teacher candidate

Teacher candidates were asked to share their thoughts and concerns, negative and positive, regarding the assignment with classmates and the researcher. They did not immediately embrace the idea of asking their students for feedback. There were few who were excited about the idea of asking students for feedback about their teaching practice. Only one candidate expressed no reservations. Even

those who thought it was a good idea or had sought verbal feedback in the past had some concerns. Overall, the group seemed to feel that the feedback might be helpful if the students gave it honestly and concretely, but most were highly skeptical that the feedback would be of use to them as teachers. It seemed that many would have elected to avoid it had it not been a part of their required coursework.

Initially, lack of time and the need to “cover the curriculum” were cited as concerns that candidates had in taking time from the teaching of content to ask a question about pedagogy. Several of the pre-service teachers felt so pressured to teach course content, that taking time for any activity other than curriculum was unappealing, even if it was deemed worthwhile.

One candidate worried that his mentor teacher would inhibit the process of seeking student feedback. This candidate had previously attempted another democratic teaching method from the university course, democratic discussions, and received negative feedback from his mentor teacher. The candidate felt that the cooperating teacher would not support the concept of asking students for feedback because this democratic practice would not be valued.

A number of candidates expressed a concern that students would not provide them with honest feedback. There was a concern that the power differential of teacher versus student would inhibit the process because students were not used to giving feedback to those in power, might fear possible consequences resulting from negative feedback, or would not want to hurt the feelings of the candidate. *“The biggest concern I have about seeking feedback from my students is that they will be afraid to say anything. I'm hoping that I will be able to coach them to give me the kind*

of feedback that I'm looking for, and also to make them understand that it is alright for them to criticize me." shared one teacher candidate.

In the university class, the pre-service teachers considered ways to help secondary education students feel comfortable providing honest feedback, including talking to students about their interest in personal and professional growth during their practice teaching year, telling students how they might use the feedback to create a better learning environment, and encouraging students to turn in feedback anonymously to prevent any negative retribution. One candidate suggested how candidates might encourage students to provide meaningful and substantive feedback, *"I might say, 'picture me in 10 years teaching the same thing the same way, will students then hate the lesson or like it?'"* Another solution was for teacher candidates to model for students what a useful completed feedback sheet might look like, discuss with the students the ways that the feedback could have positive outcomes for future lessons, and to make the feedback into a credited assignment or an opportunity to gain extra credit in a class. The process of trouble shooting in advance of introducing their secondary education students to feedback sheets allowed teacher candidates to become more comfortable with the concept.

Teacher candidates also planned to tell students that the feedback was connected to a university teacher education class where they and other pre-service teachers along with college faculty were exploring ideas that would help to improve the teacher preparation program and its cooperating middle and high schools. The thought that the ideas of public school middle and high school students were important to the university proved to be exciting and inspiring to many middle and

high school students.

Prior to asking secondary education students for feedback, many of the teacher candidates doubted the usefulness of the feedback they would receive. Candidates felt students would provide limited detail and that lack of information would prevent them from taking informed next steps. A common concern among the candidates was that students would make only general comments about a lesson such as "*I liked it*" or "*I did not like it*" without providing specific details about what worked and what did not work for them. The candidates would then have to guess what specifically worked and did not work for the students. This lack of information would make future planning for work with the method more challenging. Some candidates felt that the students were "*too immature*" to provide feedback while others felt that feedback would be lacking due to "*student laziness*". Candidates worried that their adolescent students would simply provide feedback in an effort to have fewer work requirements.

At least one candidate expressed a concern that students would be upset if they did not see changes based on their feedback. This pre-service teacher worried that the students would expect to get what they want when they are asked for feedback, which would take the control away from him, the teacher. Issues of power and control were a continual theme expressed by several candidates who admitted they were also struggling with classroom management. They desired to have students see them as the authority in charge of the classroom; something they felt was essential for discipline. "*I worry that asking for feedback on my teaching instruction will be interpreted as a weakness and I will lose some of my power in the*

classroom,” admitted one candidate. Others echoed this concern. It became a central issue that needed to be discussed prior to obtaining feedback from students. A certain level of vulnerability was required in order to ask for feedback and there was an implied power differential that was upset by the request. Teacher candidates were not fully able to reconcile this issue until they began to receive the feedback and determined that no new classroom management issues arose from the request and in fact, the process solved some.

Surprising to the researcher was the fact that few teacher candidates expressed a different vulnerability, a concern about receiving negative feedback from students. Only one candidate worried that students might be negative in their feedback as an opportunity to be hurtful to him by *"speaking negatively regardless of what I do."*

G. Collecting Feedback on Comfort and Reach Methods

The fall semester Education 514 methods course is designed to introduce history and political science candidates to a range of best practice teaching methods for history and social studies classrooms. The term “best practice” refers to interactive instructional approaches that engage students in thoughtful historical inquiry, critical thinking, and reflective writing (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2012)

Candidates were required to write lesson plans highlighting best practice teaching using several methods. While they were encouraged to try all of the methods, they were required only to write teaching and reflection papers on five methods of their choice. The hope was that candidates would not be put off by

being forced to use all of the methods, but would attempt a few that they felt inspired to use which would lead to a greater willingness to try others. In the second semester course, we asked candidates to define their comfort zone in terms of teaching methods and identify areas where growth could occur. Candidates were asked in an on-line class session to respond to the following prompts:

1. Which methods have you been using often? Why have you chosen to use those methods?
2. What methods have you rarely or never used, and why?
3. What concerns, if any, do you have about seeking feedback on your teaching instruction from students?
4. What approaches will you take when asking for student feedback?

As part of the assignment, students were asked to choose a “comfort method”. A comfort method was defined as a teaching method that candidates felt confident using. Candidates were also asked to select a “reach method”. A reach method was one that they felt less confident, or less comfortable using. Candidates were asked to seek feedback from students for both the comfort and the reach methods they chose.

1. Comfort Methods

For the comfort method, many teacher candidates chose teaching methods that they had liked and/or had success with as a student in school. One teacher candidate commented, *“At the beginning of this semester I had carried on with me the old teaching methodologies of my previous social studies teachers from middle and high school.”* This, of course, narrowed the pool of potential methods to those that the

teacher candidate had experienced as a student. *"I had not seen a great amount of originality in my educational experience and because of this, in many ways I hadn't pushed too far out of my own comfort zone,"* noted a pre-service high school teacher.

Despite being introduced to numerous new teaching strategies in the fall course, it was easier instead for teacher candidates to envision using methods in the classroom if they had used them themselves as students. In part, the choice depended on past experience; a candidate who had negative experiences with group work in high school and college will consider group work a reach method rather than a comfort method. A candidate teaching at an area rural high school noted, *"I choose to teach my comfort method using primary sources. I have been taught through and had so much experience with primary sources over the last 4 years of my education that I have no problem understanding them."* Debate, groupwork and lecture were discussed as methods teacher candidates frequently enjoyed as students in social studies and history classrooms. It is interesting to note that although lecture was not highlighted as an active learning method in the fall course, nor was it on the list of possible methods for the feedback assignment, some teacher candidates still chose it as a comfort method indicating a strong pull toward lecture as a teaching strategy, a phenomenon supported by the research of teaching practices in social studies classrooms. One high school teacher candidate explained, *"the reason I chose to utilize a lecture based teaching method was that I drew on my classroom experience from high school and college where the vast majority of the history classes I took were teacher driven note- taking lessons."* In addition to choosing methods they had experienced as students, teacher candidates also

indicated that they felt more comfortable with methods they had observed their mentor teachers using. It was clear that having methods modeled for them by veteran teachers increased the comfort level of the candidates in teaching with those methods themselves.

Second to personal experience and observation of the teaching method, teacher candidates cited early and frequent use of a method as a reason for naming it a comfort method. Many candidates chose as their comfort method one that they had used a number of times in their classrooms. *"The fact that I have now been teaching and using primary sources in the classroom for the whole year helps me to feel very comfortable teaching using this method"*, stated one pre-service teacher. Prior teaching experience with a method provided comfort for these new teacher candidates whose list of skills needing to be mastered was sometimes overwhelming.

Candidates found themselves falling back on methods that proved to be successful early on as a way of managing their challenging position as a novice teacher. Repetition of the method allowed for control and a feeling of mastery absent in other aspects of the teaching internship experience. A middle school teacher candidate shared she had chosen her comfort method *"because I was confident in my classes' ability to engage with one another, while still allowing me to expand upon some of the themes or answers students were confused about."* This candidate was considering the variables that she needed to control for and selected a method that provided her space to be able to engage in formative assessment and focused instruction when needed. Continuous use of the same teaching method also

allowed for candidates to identify potential pitfalls we call “issues” in the fall course and work through to solutions and greater insights about how to teach with the method. Teacher candidates felt more prepared to troubleshoot in advance of the lesson having had experience in making modifications to the implementation of the method in past lessons. The teacher candidates in this study nominated primary source analysis as a comfort method most often.

A primary goal of the fall methods course was to introduce the teacher candidates to an array of best practice active learning methods for engaging secondary education students. Candidates were required to experiment with various methods and reflect on their use. Additionally, candidates were required to build lesson plans with these methods as a central feature in the plans for teaching in their school placements in history and social studies classrooms. Over the years, we have noted that there can be some discomfort and some resistance to using some of the best practice methods from the field. Even students who attempted on their own to push beyond their comfort zone and set goals *“to include as many methods as possible”* found that they would fall back on certain methods time and again, as one high school teacher candidate indicated. For this reason, the assignment we created for student feedback was to choose not only a comfort method, but a reach method, as well.

2. Reach Methods

We defined “reach methods” as those that the teacher candidate felt less confident or comfortable using. It seemed an essential part of this assignment to require teacher candidates to continue to push into less explored areas of best

practice teaching methods. A goal for graduates of our program is to be able to differentiate instruction and reach all learners in whatever school setting they find themselves when they are employed as full time classroom teachers. We seek to break the cycle of replication of traditional practices such as teacher-centered lecture documented by researchers who find that many teachers are not using best practices with their secondary education social studies students. A hypothesis we wanted to test was that if teacher candidates received positive feedback for using these reach methods with secondary education students, they would be more confident in using them again.

Just as teacher candidates chose those methods with which they had the most experience either as a student or as a teacher, they often indicated the reach method was one they had not experienced or often seen in use in secondary education classrooms. When asked to describe why they selected their reach method, many teacher candidates echoed the following, *“during my educational career incorporating this method in to student learning was hardly ever introduced in the classroom. Because of this I chose to utilize it as my “reach” teaching method.”* The selection of certain reach methods again reflected the flipside of the selection of the comfort method. Whereas the comfort method was one that teacher candidates felt experienced with, they often chose as a reach method one that they had never used before. Teacher candidates nominated more methods in the category of reach than in comfort. Methods such as art, role-play, music, literature and community service learning appeared on the list. One candidate commented, *“my level of discomfort is completely understandable because I have not really ever taught most of these*

methods to students before.” For some, the reach was a method that they had never before implemented. For others the reach was one that they may have done only once or twice and not felt very successful with its implementation.

An interesting reason some teacher candidates cited for nominating a method a “reach” was the amount of student responsibility and action required to make the method work. Teacher candidates worried that some methods *“felt less controlled”* and *“more complicated”* than others. One high school teacher candidate *“chose role play lesson because of the complexity of the directions and the reliance on student participation that is greater than in any other lessons that I have taught.”* This same teacher candidate had selected primary source analysis as his comfort method. The routine and structure used in teaching with primary sources felt comfortable to this and other candidates with degrees in history, but typically only those with some background or interest in theater were able to extend the exploration of history to performing as some of its real life actors. Interestingly, we encouraged teacher candidates in the fall course to pair primary source methodology with role play so students were able to more accurately portray people from the past, yet this had not provided enough incentive to make role play a comfort method for the teacher candidates.

One urban middle school teacher candidate was concerned that her students would not understand the cooperative learning protocols and shared responsibilities to make her reach method successful. She noted that because other teachers on her middle school team did not use this method, she would have to teach the method to her middle school students prior to or as part of having them

use it in class. The time and skill needed to teach secondary education students how to take ownership over their learning in this way was a deterrent for many of the teacher candidates. The idea of giving up control to students required in many of the student-centered methods made these novice teachers nervous. A high school teacher candidate expressed this concern, *"I had not used this format before, nor had given up such control in the classroom"*. This candidate's preferred, or comfort method, was lecture. For some teacher candidates, the uncertainty about how secondary education students would react to the unfamiliar method caused them to have concern, *"I was not sure what to expect from an eleventh grade class that is reticent to do anything at times, let alone be creative and have their art on display!"* Would the students like the method, reject the method, would chaos ensue? All of these comments became a part of our discussion about reach methods prior to seeking student feedback.

H. Analyzing and Responding to Student Feedback

Teacher candidates were instructed to teach at least two lessons using the comfort method and at least two lessons using the reach method they had identified. After each lesson, candidates were to provide their secondary education students with feedback sheets that they would use to respond to the lesson. Teacher candidates were asked to carefully introduce the concept of feedback noting that it might be better given anonymously and once secondary education students understood that the teacher candidate would use it to improve instruction. Each candidate was asked to complete their own feedback form as a way to engage in

self-reflection prior to reading the comments of his or her secondary education students. The teacher candidates were then asked to write a paper sharing themes that emerged from the student feedback and responding to those themes. The conclusions of the teacher candidates that also address Research Question 3 in more detail are a part of Chapter Five.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation study began as an effort to find ways to help new history teacher candidates reflect on their practice and encourage their use of multiple best practice teaching methods for history and social studies education. Following an initial study during the spring semester of the 2008-2009 school year, a new research direction became clear. Results from the 2009 study revealed a climate shift occurring between teacher and student as part of the feedback process. Teacher candidates said they were experiencing a new and different set of relationships with students after asking those students for feedback about their teaching. When asked, many students took the time to compose thoughtful comments about the ways the pre-service teachers could make teaching and learning more interesting and relevant for them.

Reading the results of the 2009 study, I became interested in how the use of student feedback might create a more democratic classroom while also supporting new history and social studies teachers in using student-centered teaching methods. My research interest shifted to exploring ways to help pre-service teachers to discover the potentials and possibilities of student-centered teaching and democratic practices in middle and high school classrooms. The use of student feedback as a democratic teaching practice was chosen as a focal point for how new teacher candidates could learn about ways to change and expand the classroom experience for students and teachers.

An additional series of pilot studies were conducted from 2009 to 2013 to refine the research questions and to identify different ways that student feedback could be gathered. This dissertation study explores the use of student feedback by 14 history and social studies teacher candidates during the 2013-2014 school year. It builds on the work of previous classes and earlier pilot initiatives. In total, nearly 100 history teacher candidates have participated in one of the pilot student feedback initiatives.

A. Summary of Overall Findings

The new teacher candidates in this study saw clear benefits of student feedback to them as novice teachers learning the profession. Furthermore, they were able to identify mutual benefits of feedback as an instructional and democratic teaching practice. While teachers received important information from students about their learning that enabled them to create improved lessons for the future, students benefitted from the improved instruction. With improved instruction came improved learning outcomes and therefore, teachers were seen as being more effective, and the cycle of mutual benefits continued. *“Conferring is a beneficial element of democratic teaching because both students and teachers can evaluate their learning and the efficacy of the work,”* noted a middle school teacher candidate.

Additionally, the middle and high school students were enfranchised in new ways through the process of providing feedback. One teacher candidate commented that feedback *“allowed me to adjust my practice when necessary, and it made the students feel like they were influencing the pace and construction of the course. We*

both benefited from the process”.

Many middle and high school students responded positively to the idea that their teacher cared to ask them their opinions and that they would be shared as part of a university course with the intended outcome of improving both teacher education and the instructional practices being used by their teachers in schools. Teacher candidates reported that the ideas of secondary education students were validated by the university’s interest in them. And the university teaching methods course was improved by the data provided in the student feedback.

B. Findings from the Research Questions

Based on these pilot studies, three research questions were chosen to guide this study.

Research Question 1 asked whether “history teachers candidates would perceive student feedback about teaching methods to be a useful instructional practice for them as teachers?”

At first, when teacher candidates were presented with the idea of asking their secondary education students to provide feedback, they displayed some hesitation. Some teacher candidates were concerned that they would appear too vulnerable if they asked their students to rate their performance. They were concerned that playing any role that was not that of an authority would somehow make their teaching job more difficult. The act of asking students for feedback, they feared, made it seem that they did not have all of the answers and did not know what they were doing. One result of this was that the teacher candidates would

sometimes choose their easiest, most cooperative class from which to seek feedback. The classes where classroom management was more of a challenge were generally not the ones where they first sought out feedback. After receiving feedback from students and discovering that it had not undermined their authority, new teacher candidates were more likely to seek feedback from more of their students, even those they struggled with.

Many of the teacher candidates admitted that they would not have asked their students for feedback had they not been assigned to do so as part of a university graduate class. Yet, when the study was over, many candidates continued seeking student feedback as part of their practice in the classroom. The combination of being required to seek feedback, being able to direct the feedback themselves, being able to analyze the feedback as part of reflective practice, and positive reactions to providing feedback on the part of the secondary education students, contributed to the success of this study.

Research question 2 asked whether “history teacher candidates would make changes in their instructional practices based on student feedback about their teaching methods?”

As shown in the study, student feedback is a powerful learning experience for new teacher candidates, challenging them to try new practices and opening up to them new possibilities for how to organize their classrooms for teaching and learning. In the fall methods course, new teacher candidates are introduced to a variety of active learning methods. The course showcases new methods each week with a combination of demonstration lessons, readings, and discussions. New

teacher candidates are then asked to consider their ideas, issues and insights about this method and to use their school placement as a laboratory for trying the method out in their own lessons. Reflection papers are required so students formally respond and reflect to the use of the methods. The desire is that new teacher candidates will continue to incorporate these methods throughout the year as they enter their student teaching practicum and clinical teaching experience.

The challenge has been that the brief introduction to the methods may not be enough to sustain the use of the active learning and therefore new teacher candidates often fall back on more traditional teaching methods. The reports of the teacher candidates who sought student feedback about teaching methods indicates this challenge, but offers encouraging results from the feedback. Overwhelmingly, with the exception of one individual, the teacher candidates found that obtaining student feedback had renewed their desire, or, caused them to begin to embrace the methods highlighted in the fall. A high school teacher candidate shared, *"My collection of student feedback has recently led me to incorporate more art and literature in class."* Candidate after candidate reported that they had integrated and planned to continue to include more active learning and varied methods for their students as a direct result of information gained from the feedback surveys.

Many of the teacher candidates found that their students provided helpful insights that allowed them to refine hands-on active learning when they tried a new instructional teaching method. One hesitant candidate had never used music as an instructional teaching method. When given the assignment to push her comfort zone and choose a method, which challenged her, she selected music as her reach

method. She was very nervous about using this method until she gathered feedback from her students about how the lesson went. The students reported that they felt better able to make connections and remember material when music was part of the lesson. The response from her students was so overwhelmingly positive that she vowed to include music in each unit thereafter and even used the method later in the week as part of a review for a quiz. This example of a success story was repeated with many of the participants in the study.

A part of the student feedback assignment required teacher candidates to consider feedback from individual students in their classes in order to determine if they could learn about specific student needs as well as for the aggregate. Understanding the value of this feedback was a first step to making changes to practice that would increase learning for all students in their classes. One rural high school teacher candidate concluded, *"Students may not always use the same academic language that teachers do when determining multiple intelligences and differentiated learning, but students have the ability to tell you what works best for them."*

Often new teacher candidates are focused on the bigger picture of establishing learning goals and lessons for the group. The particulars of creating accommodations and modifications for special needs students or responding to students with a variety of learning needs is often an afterthought or not a part of the planning in this initial phase of learning the profession. A novice teacher with limited experience understanding and responding to special education and individual student needs benefits from asking students for feedback because it will

focus their attention on this important feature of teaching.

While the desire in this study was to expand active learning and responsive teaching in all candidates, an unanticipated and welcome outcome was the heightened awareness and more advanced articulation of meeting the needs of special education students. Several candidates had dramatic insights from this component of the work. The high school teacher candidates were more likely to show marked growth than the middle school candidates who were already used to differentiating instruction for their heterogeneous classes.

Prior to the student feedback assignment, some of the high school teacher candidates were creating substantially different lessons for their honors and general track classes. One candidate had deep concerns about teaching her reach method lesson with her general track class, believing that the method called for critical thinking skills that the students would not be able to deliver. A major insight for this teacher candidate after conducting the reach method lesson with both her honors and general classes was that they were both capable of this higher order thinking and she committed to trying to bring more of her methods formerly reserved for the honors class to the general education class for the remainder of the year.

Another high school teacher candidate had found success in meeting the needs of his upper level students, but was unclear about why he was struggling with his non-honors class. The feedback he received gave him the insight he needed to meet the student needs in his class. In the feedback, students reported that his directions were unclear and confusing. As a result of receiving this feedback, the

teacher candidate was able to reevaluate his directions to simplify them and to put them in writing as well as provide them orally to his students. In this case, again, it was not that the non-honors students were incapable of the work, but that the teacher needed to consider the delivery of instruction through a different lens to provide differentiation and scaffolding for those students and then they were able to engage in the same types of lessons as their peers in honors classes.

Research question 3 asked whether “history teacher candidates plan to use student feedback in their future once they enter the teaching profession as full-time teachers?”

As part of their course work, teacher candidates were asked to write a final paper about the democratic practices highlighted in the spring course. This paper asked the candidates to critique the democratic practices, the seven Cs from the course, and identify the ideas they had about using them, issues they had when they implemented them, and insights they came away with regarding each of the Cs.

While each C was grounded in best practice research, there was not a requirement for the teaching candidates to adopt the strategy after completion of the program. In their papers, candidates were free to accept or reject each of the Cs as they wrote a plan for their future history classrooms. This comment from an urban middle school teacher candidate is typical of many from the study,

“Conferring with students, or seeking student opinions and feedback on my practice, has been the most difficult to implement yet most rewarding aspect of the Advanced Methods course.”

The success of the Conferring “C” was widely promoted by the teacher

candidates, with all but one describing plans to make soliciting student feedback a regular part of their practice in their first year as a licensed teacher. Candidates shared that they were grateful to have learned about student feedback, and had extended their use of feedback beyond the required assignment for their coursework. Candidates made plans to continue the process in a more formal way, *“In the future, I would like to establish a more standardized schedule or routine for students to have the opportunity to confer with me.”*

Many candidates described ways they planned to create formal feedback sheets that could be used in an ongoing basis throughout the year. This teacher candidate considered how her class would be different when conferring with students was a norm from the beginning of the school year, *“I want to establish at the start of the school year a classroom culture that values feedback and reflective dialogue.”* The words of support for conferring were made more genuine by the concrete examples of why and how teacher candidates planned to integrate student feedback in future practice.

C. Additional Findings

Exploring the three research questions about using student feedback to support the theories and strategies taught in the university setting was an important outcome of this study, but there were many additional outcomes worth noting, including the following:

1. Candidates Found Secondary Education Students Did Provide Meaningful and Useful Feedback.

The new teacher candidates were initially apprehensive about asking their secondary education students for feedback because they did not think the middle and high school students would have anything useful to say. One teacher candidate who had previously doubted her students' abilities remarked, *"I was surprised with how well my students responded to the series of questions and how meticulous and thoughtful some were in answering the questions."* Doubts about the ability of their students dissipated soon after the first round of feedback. In some cases, the teacher candidates realized they needed to revisit how to give feedback with secondary education students who were not used to being asked their opinions. Once the middle and high school students were provided with adequate time and models for effective feedback, they had no trouble providing meaningful commentary to the new teacher candidates.

At the end of the study, only one of the new teacher candidates reported that he was not seeing the usefulness of feedback as a democratic practice in his classroom. In closer examination of this teacher candidate's work, it is clear that while he had asked his students for feedback, he had not spent the necessary time to discuss the importance of the feedback, model effective feedback, or modify the questions he was asking so that they would provide more meaningful responses. As a result, this candidate received responses that were too short or lacking in specificity to provide ideas for him to change his practice. This teacher candidate admitted that teaching his students how to provide feedback would have helped him obtain higher quality feedback, but commented that he did not want to take the time

to do this and it was not *“on the top of (his) priority list”* therefore he concluded he would not likely engage in asking students for feedback in his future practice. In this study of 14 new teacher candidates, this was the sole voice in opposition to conferring with students; the remaining 13 shared their unequivocal support.

2. Candidates Found Student Feedback was Specific and Helpful in Providing Ideas for Curriculum and Instruction.

The teacher candidates were asked to review the feedback from their secondary education students and discuss areas of agreement as well as disagreement with their own thinking and reflection on the lessons. The teacher candidates were able to outline very specific critique and advice from their students that they considered in the reflection of their practice.

One candidate created a role play lesson about 19th century factory working conditions for her 10th grade U.S. History students that relied on the “worker” students staging a rebellion against the “boss” student. When the “worker” students failed to revolt, the intended outcome of the role-play threw this novice teacher off kilter. Her high school students provided her with feedback and ideas of how to ensure the role-play would have its desired effect, which she was able to successfully implement with her subsequent U.S. History classes. The specific insights and ideas from the high school students might easily have come from this teacher candidate’s mentor teacher or university supervisor had they been observing that day, but such expert advice was not needed as the students had the necessary creative thought and problem solving to improve the lesson and the resulting learning experience. As experts of their own learning, students had critical advice to give to their teacher. Had the teacher candidate not asked for feedback

that day, it is possible she would have chalked it up to a failed experiment and avoided using role-play as a future teaching methodology, this reaction is one I have noted with other teacher candidates who did not ask for feedback. Instead, she counted the event as a success not only for role-play, but also for seeking student feedback in future lessons.

3. Candidates Found Middle and High School Students can be a Constantly Available Resource to Guide Reflective Practice.

An unanticipated outcome for the teacher candidates who asked their students for feedback was that not only did the secondary education students demonstrate that they could capably provide meaningful feedback, but that the new teacher candidates realized they could have tapped in to this resource all along. A rural high school teacher candidate shared the value of this feedback, *“On many occasions, I have had an idea for a lesson that I thought would be effective, but falls flat. Conversely, I have had ideas that I thought would not be successful, which turned out to be great. Early on, I wasn’t sure how to gain some insight into why some lessons succeeded and some failed.”* This candidate discovered that his students were a great resource to him and had he asked his high school students for feedback from the onset, he would not have unnecessarily struggled to make changes to his practice.

The early stages of learning the teaching profession can be overwhelming for many new teachers. The traditional model for supporting a new teacher candidate is to link him or her with a veteran teacher as a supervising practitioner at the secondary school site and a university program supervisor from the degree granting college or university. The university program supervisor often makes a limited

number of visits to conduct observations and meetings with the teacher candidate, usually no more than five and sometimes as few as three visits might be made over a four-month practicum. The veteran teacher mentor can be very helpful, but is not often trained in any formal way to guide the reflective practice of the teacher candidates. Additionally, these two individuals will not follow the new teacher in to the early years of professional practice, critical years that can make or break the new teacher's decisions to stay in the field. Developing an understanding about the value of student feedback provides new teachers with a constant source of information and insight to foster deeper reflection and modification of practice to increase student learning. Long after university or teacher mentor oversight has ended, a teacher can rely on his or her students to be a resource for improving teaching and learning in his or her classroom.

4. Candidates Found Student Feedback Made Their Reach Methods More Achievable

In their papers, candidates outlined numerous reasons they were resistant to certain teaching methods. They relayed that they would likely avoid teaching with these methods all together if left to their own devices. The requirement to try an uncomfortable, or reach method and receive feedback from secondary students about its use had a positive effect on moving the reach method to a more obtainable place. One teacher candidate who had voiced serious concerns about cooperative learning became a solid convert by the end of his experience gathering student feedback. Many new teacher candidates believe that cooperative learning activities that ask students to teach each other can be problematic because they do not believe the students will have the ability to analyze and capture the essential elements of

the content without the teacher telling them what they are. In this case, the candidate paired analyzing primary sources with cooperative learning by having each group be responsible for analyzing and teaching to the class one section of the primary source. To his surprise, the students were able to accurately break down the document after participating in the jigsaw activity. He reported that they demonstrated their understanding not only that day in class, but also in a summative assessment test later in the unit. He concluded about cooperative learning, *“I am absolutely going to use this method in the future; it is much more conducive to student learning than standard group work where students form groups and answer all questions assigned within their separate groups.”* In many cases the specific feedback that students provided allowed the teacher candidate to resolve the issues that they previously had with making the reach teaching method work.

5. Candidates Found Secondary Education Students get Practice and Experience with Democratic Practices

Teacher candidates described student feedback as creating an honest, trust-building classroom environment. They noted that students responded positively to being asked their opinions, especially when they saw that the candidates used their feedback to change teaching practices. As one candidate put it, students *“were fascinated by the idea of a teacher asking for their input, of the promise that they could change things about a lesson that they did not like.”* Many candidates described student feedback as expanding student voice in the classroom: *“when students feel they have a voice in the classroom, they are more likely to engage with the material.”* A clear connection was being made between seeking student feedback and helping students to feel invested in their education. Beyond engagement, however,

increasing student voice had increased the democratic climate of the classroom.

As one middle school candidate put it, *“feedback from students empowers the student voice, which helps ensure a power balance within the classroom.”*

Providing feedback to teachers showed students they have agency and their voices mattered. It reinforced and taught democratic principles. While they may have provided feedback, not all student suggestions were taken, as they need to be considered in light of the group needs. Voicing one’s opinion does not necessarily translate in to getting one’s way. This teaches a more mature understanding that the group needs are important to meeting the goals of the entire group. One candidate summed up: *“In the long run, structured student feedback models to students how to be reflective and how to criticize constructively; these skills in particular are necessary for a thriving democracy because citizens can only achieve positive change by acting maturely, thinking logically, and knowing how much push back is appropriate.”*

D. Recommendations for Future Research

There are many possible directions for future research into the impact of student feedback as a democratic teaching practice. First, the idea of feedback can be explored more fully throughout the school year. In this study, candidates only had to collect feedback on four occasions related to their perceived “reach” and “comfort” methods. A promising direction for research could look at the impact of a regular pattern of student feedback throughout the school year.

Second, students in middle and high schools could be asked about the impact

of being asked for feedback on their perception of teachers and history as an academic subject. In theory, students who are invited to give regular feedback to teachers would express a greater commitment to learning in school. Students could be asked how they perceive the opportunities for feedback and whether it builds greater commitment to school learning and an increased understanding of democracy. The length and quality of student feedback could also be analyzed to see if student comments change over time when they have regular opportunities to express their ideas about class activities, curriculum topics and instructional methods.

Third, student feedback is one of a series of democratic teaching methods that teachers can implement in their classrooms, what have been called the Seven C's of Democratic Practice in the book *We, The Students and Teachers: Teaching Democratically in the History and Social Studies Classroom* (Maloy & LaRoche, 2015). Researchers might explore additional dimensions of democratic practices, including more ways to solicit student feedback within a larger democratic classroom context, assessing how feedback is influenced by the presence or absence of other democratic teaching methods.

Fourth, this study was limited to the practicum year for new teacher candidates in a university graduate program. Follow up studies could be done about whether or not the candidates continued to seek student feedback after they gained full time paid employment as teachers. Research in to the factors leading teachers to use, or not to use feedback could be explored. Additionally, a study might

examine the impact teachers who sustained use of feedback perceive the practice has on their teaching once professional licensure is attained.

Fifth, a national movement toward teacher accountability spurred by the MET Project suggests one model for use of student surveys in teacher improvement while democratic practices offer a very different approach. The feedback gathered in this dissertation study was teacher-driven and teachers and students were critical components to the teacher improvement. In contrast, the aim of the MET project is for districts to provide professional development based on identified areas of need from the student surveys. Research might be conducted to compare the two approaches to determine if one is more likely than the other to result in sustained teacher improvement.

There are undoubtedly more directions for future study as well. As for this study, the following statements by some of the 14 teacher candidates in this study summarize the compelling impact and continuing value of student feedback:

- *“We need to have a strong understanding of what our students need to be successful. Our students are the only ones who can tell us what works best for them and what makes learning more difficult.”* —a rural middle school teacher candidate
- *“The students are with us every day and see our problems. Students are the greatest source of instant feedback”* —a rural high school teacher candidate
- *“I believe that the most important take away from student feedback is that it creates an atmosphere of trust and investment from the students.”* —an urban high school teacher candidate

- *“It provides the students with an opportunity to have a voice and express their beliefs.”* —an urban middle school teacher candidate

Based on this study, student feedback has proven to be a transformative experience for many candidates, shifting how they think of themselves and their students. Feedback has pushed candidates to try new instructional methods, improve existing instructional methods, and give students more autonomy in the classroom. It has expanded the definition of teaching and learning to include everyone’s voice in how education happens.

APPENDIX A
EDUCATION 743 SYLLABUS

Education 743

Spring 2014

History, Culture, and the Social Studies

Irene S. LaRoche

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Amherst Regional Middle School (Larochel@ARPS.ORG)

Mondays 4:00 - 6:30 PM, Furcolo Rm. 175

Course Description and Objectives

History, Culture, and Social Science Methods (Education 743) is a required course for History and Political Science/Political Philosophy teacher license candidates who are pursuing their master of education (M.Ed.) degrees through the 180 Days in Springfield and Bridges to the Future immersion teacher preparation programs. The course is designed to explore student-centered and democratic teaching methods for history and social studies education using strategies presented in Education 514, including interactive discussions, group work, cooperative learning, primary source materials, writing, literature, controversial issues, role-plays and simulations, authentic assessments, and technology.

Objectives for the course include:

- Exploring ideas, issues and insights related to the use of student-centered and democratic teaching practices in the fields of history and political science education in middle and high schools.
- Engaging in ongoing reflection on one's growth and development as history and social studies teacher through the use of demonstration teaching lessons, online and in-person discussions, and written papers.

Class Schedule and Topics

1) January 27, in person meeting	Perspectives on History and Social Studies Teaching
2) February 3, in person meeting	Democracy as a Theme in History and Social Studies Education
3) February 10, online class	Democratic Practices in Education Assignment due: Democratic Observations Report
No Class on Tuesday, February 18, UMASS is following a Monday schedule that day.	February 17-21 is public school vacation week
4) February 24, in person	Collaborative Rule-Making
5) March 3, online class	Conducting Classes Democratically
6) March 10, in person	Conferring Assignment due: Student Feedback Paper: Ideas, Issues and Insights about Teaching Methods based on Student Voices
7) March 17, online	Contrasting Content
8) March 24, in person	Co-constructing Knowledge Teaching Research and Researching Teaching
9) March 31, in person	Connecting with Communities
10) April 7, online	Connecting with Communities

11) April 14, in person	Co-constructing Knowledge Assignment due: Assessment 5: Analysis of Effect on Student Learning (Teaching Research Skills to Students in a History/Social Studies Classroom)
No Class on Wednesday, April 23, UMASS is following a Monday schedule that day.	April 21-25 is public school vacation week
12) April 28, online	Conversing
13) May 5, in person or online	Connections and Future Plans Assignment due--Final Paper: From Day 1 to 180

Course Requirements

- Conduct a Democratic Practices Observation at your school and write a report on it
- Student Feedback Paper: Ideas, Issues and Insights about Teaching Methods based on Student Voices
- Complete NCATE Assessment 5: Analysis of Effect on Student Learning (Teaching Research Skills to Students in a History/Social Studies Classroom)
- Final Paper: From Day 1 to 180
- Present a 20 minute in-class peer teaching activity using interactive and/or democratic teaching methods, or share a video from your classroom (be sure to get consent if students will be seen), or share teacher work. Bring copies (15) of request for feedback from the group identifying specific areas you wish to reflect upon.

- Complete and respond to readings, in class and on-line, on the use of interactive and democratic teaching practices in middle and high school classrooms
- Attend and participate in all classes, in person and online

Selected Readings

- Apple, M. W., & Beane, J. A. (eds.). (2007). *Democratic schools: Lessons in powerful education*. Second edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cuban, L. (2009). *Hugging the middle: How teachers teach in an era of testing and accountability*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kohn, A. (1999). *The schools our children deserve: Moving beyond traditional classrooms and "tougher standards."* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Maloy, R. W. & LaRoche, I. (2010). "Student-Centered Teaching Methods in the History Classroom: Ideas, Issues and Insights for New Teachers." *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 5(3): 46-61. Retrieved from <http://www.socstrp.org/issues/PDF/5.3.5.pdf>.
- Maloy, R. W., Smith, H. K, Poirier, M., & Edwards, S A. (2010, November). "The Making of a History Standards Wiki: *Covering, Uncovering, and Discovering* Curriculum Frameworks Using a Highly Interactive Technology. *The History Teacher*, 44(1): 67-82.
- Meier, D. (2000). *Will standards save public education?* Boston: Beacon Press.
- McCann, T. M., Johannessen, L. R., Kahn, E., & Flanagan, J. M. (2006). *Talking in class. Using discussion to enhance teaching and learning*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Pearl, A., & Pryor, C. R. (eds.). (2005). *Democratic practices in education: Implications for teacher education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Schimmel, D. (2003, Summer). Collaborative rule-making and citizenship education: An antidote to the undemocratic hidden curriculum. *American Secondary Education*, 31(3), 16-35.
- Westheimer, J. (2006, April). Politics and patriotism in education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 608-620.
- Windle, J. (2009, Fall). Strike while the iron's hot: Using the Internet and current events for political engagement. *Radical Teacher*, 85, 48-59.

Course Wikispace

Robert Maloy's *resourcesforhistoryteachers* is available online at <http://resourcesforhistoryteachers.wikispaces.com/>

School of Education's Conceptual Framework

Education 743 incorporates the five elements of the School of Education's Conceptual Framework as follows:

- *Collaboration* through our work together in the course and your work with teachers and students in schools.
- *Reflective Practice* through discussions in class and through written assignments.
- *Multiple Ways of Knowing* through the use of many different teaching methods.
- *Access, Equity, and Fairness* through a focus on the histories of all peoples and cultures.
- *Evidence-Based Practice* through ongoing assessments of student performance throughout the course.

Disability Accommodations

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify Irene LaRoche within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Academic dishonesty statement

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student

who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent. For more information log on to:

http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/code_conduct/acad_honest.htm

APPENDIX B
THE SEVEN C'S OF DEMOCRATIC TEACHING CONCEPT PAPER

The Seven C's of Democratic Teaching in History/Social Studies Classrooms

Robert W. Maloy

Irene LaRoche

The schoolroom is the first opportunity most citizens have to experience the power of government. Through it passes every citizen and public official, from schoolteachers to policemen and prison guards. The values they learn there, they take with them in life.

Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, *New Jersey v. T.L.O* (1985)

Introduction

What does it mean to teach democratically?

History/social studies teachers—those who are new to field and those who have spent many years in the profession—face this question every time they enter the classroom. In their elementary, middle, and high school history, geography, government, and economics classes, they are expected to teach their students about structures, practices, histories, and challenges of democracy, freedom, and American society. To do so, they are further expected to weave together the academic information found in textbooks, state curriculum frameworks, and local school district lesson plans with their own ideas and perspectives about what students need to know to create meaningful and memorable learning experiences about the past, present and future.

Seen in these terms, history/social studies teaching is an immense responsibility with different time horizons that teachers must balance as they create curriculum and instruct students. First, there are the short-term outcomes of daily lesson plans, week-to-week curriculum units, and half or full year courses and subjects. Young students, after all, will never again take 7th grade world geography

or 9th grade U. S. history. But those students are supposed to know the material and score well on standardized educational tests. Second, resting over these short-term results like a massive canopy, are the long-term goals of preparing young students for a lifetime of roles as members of a democratic society. As a society, we expect that students will graduate from high school, whereupon they will seamlessly begin functioning as caring individuals, informed voters, rational choice-makers, and engaged members of local, state and national communities.

The Seven C's of Teaching Democratically

Starting from a foundation of voice and participation by all members of a classroom community, we propose the following “Seven C's of Teaching Democratically.”

- 1 ***Conversing:*** *Talking with Students—Inside and Outside the Classroom*
- 2 ***Collaborating:*** *Making Rules and Managing Classrooms*
- 3 ***Contrasting:*** *Covering, Uncovering and Discovering Curriculum Content*
- 4 ***Conducting:*** *Teaching Students Interactively*
- 5 ***Conferring:*** *Getting Feedback from Students about Teaching and Learning*
- 6 ***Co-Constructing:*** *Learning Together in Groups and with Technologies*
- 7 ***Connecting:*** *Engaging with People and Communities*

Conversing

Conversing, the first of our seven Cs of democratic teaching, is grounded in the idea that voice and participation is established and sustained in the ways that teachers and students talk with one another in schools. Indeed, language and communication represent the cornerstones of the school experience for students. In classrooms, everything that teachers do—verbally, nonverbally, and situationally—create learning experiences for students. It matters what is said, how it is said, and what is not said by teachers during lectures and discussions just as it matters where one stands, how one uses body language, and how the furniture is arranged.

“Recitation, rather than authentic discussion, is the common mode of discourse in most classrooms,” argued Thomas M. McCann in Talking in Class: Using Discussion to Enhance Teaching and Learning (2006, p. 2). Many teachers tightly control discussion time in classrooms, when they allow discussion to happen at all. Some studies have found that there is a little as a minute of actual discussion (meaning an in-depth exchange of ideas and information) in a typical 45 or 50 minute middle or high school class. What happens instead is a form of communication where teachers ask mostly fact-based questions and expect students to recite correct answers. Far less often do teachers offer open-ended questions where students have to consider alternative explanations or ideas and then respond thoughtfully using historical evidence to support their point of views.

Authentic discussion and meaningful conversation are vital forms of democratic teaching. Through talk, students get to explore ideas, engage in critical analysis, hear differing perspectives, and make personal judgments. Educator Deborah Meier contends that meaningful discussions not only promote learning academic material, but “fosters an environment of tolerance, critical thinking, and democratic spirit” (quoted in McCann, 2006, p. 5). If teachers pose authentic questions, invite multiple responses and encourage wide participation while challenging students to support their ideas, “then, over time, students internalize the process, imitate the behaviors of the teacher, and expect discussions to be a dynamic exchange and exploration of ideas” (McCann, 2006, p. 6). In short, students learn to act and think in more democratic ways.

Other researchers note the importance of students engaging in authentic conversation with other students. Nora Flynn (2009, p. 2023) has stated that “orally communicating one’s ideas in a coherent way and respectfully considering others’ ideas are skills that students must acquire for negotiating and enhancing a diverse and democratic society.” Still, student-led discussions can be challenging methods to make work, but over time produce great outcomes for students.

Collaborating

The second C of democratic teaching, *Collaborating*, is premised on the idea that students learn about democracy by the ways that teachers and students develop and enforce rules for school behavior and conduct. Every classroom is its own micro-society, where its members create norms, values, expectations and assumptions through daily interactions. It may be too ambitious to suggest that every classroom has its own “government,” but students experience every classroom as a unique place where they must adapt their behaviors to fit the prevailing culture.

In most schools, argues lawyer and educator David Schimmel (2003, p. 17), there is a fundamental conflict between the formal curriculum of lectures, texts, and tests and the informal curriculum of rules, punishments, and norms. Adults, without the input or participation of adolescents, typically write the rules for schools and classrooms. Those rules then are often enforced selectively, in largely authoritarian ways where certain groups receive harsher treatment than others. The effect is “to unintentionally teach many students to be nonquestioning, nonparticipating, cynical citizens in their classrooms, schools, and communities” (Schimmel, 2003, p. 18).

Schimmel, among others, advocates “collaborative rule making” by teachers and students as way to promote citizenship education for elementary and secondary students. Only when students are invited into the process of discussing and deciding what rules should be in place do students become invested in those codes of conduct. Rules must not be framed as just restrictions and limitations. Collaborative rule making means that students learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society. Students have the right to “present petitions, complaints and grievances to school authorities,” “exercise the rights of free speech, assembly, press, and association,” and the right to a safe school environment (Schimmel, 2003, p. 27). A person’s individual rights, of course, do not extend to the limiting of other people’s rights, and students learn the moral basis of rules and laws in a democratic society.

New teachers find that collaborative rule-making offers positive ways for them to respond to the demands of classroom management, an area of frustration

and tension when one first becomes the teacher-in-charge. When students have substantive roles and genuine decision-making in the classroom community, they feel ownership of what happens in that space, and are more willing to work with rather than against teachers.

Contrasting

Contrasting, the third of our seven Cs of teaching democratically, assumes that students learn about democracy from the academic content of history and social studies curriculum. Every textbook reading assignment or teacher-made lesson plan presents content, through what it includes and what it leaves out, and too often what gets left out creates an incomplete, and therefore an undemocratic portrait of the past. Students never develop a sound foundation for historical study or civic participation.

The academic content of K-12 history curriculum has been the subject of intense criticism from groups across the political spectrum. Reviewing United States history frameworks from around the country, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation gave grades on a state-by-state basis (2011). South Carolina earned an A and Alabama, California, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York and the District of Columbia received A-minuses. The other states got very low ratings, mainly “mediocre to awful,” leading two report authors to conclude that our schools are “creating a generation of students who don’t understand or value or own nation’s history” (Finn & Porter-Magee, 2011, p. 5). The Fordham Foundation study assumed the usefulness of state standards, but many educators and historians disagree, seeing most standards as reflecting mainly the values of the powerful and the privileged without focusing on those who have struggled to achieve a place in American society.

Historian Howard Zinn has strongly criticized the inadequacies of history education in his “people’s history” books, presenting voices that “have mostly been shut out of the orthodox histories, the major media, the standard textbooks, the controlled culture” (Zinn & Arnove, 2004, p. 24). Standard curriculum and traditional teaching generate what Zinn calls a “passive citizenry, not knowing its

powers” to enact change in society. Students need to learn about times in the past when people rose against oppression to remake society. To discover these hidden histories and untold stories, Zinn believes history must move beyond the perspectives of the elite and the powerful, for “history looked at under the surface, in the streets and on the farms, in GI barracks and trailer camps, in factories and offices, tells a different story” (Zinn & Arnove, 2004, p. 24).

Mass-market history textbooks are another source of the problems facing history education, notes James Loewen in *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. Using Helen Keller and Woodrow Wilson as illustrative case studies, he explains how textbooks teach about “heroes” in history in ways that “so distort the lives . . . that we cannot think straight about them” (2007, p. 12). From textbooks, we learn that Helen Keller was a blind and deaf girl who overcame her disabilities, but not that she was a radical socialist who worked tirelessly to improve the lives of poor and disenfranchised Americans. Similarly, textbooks discuss how Woodrow Wilson was President during World War I, but not that he sent troops into Latin America more often than any other time in our history or that he conducted a military intervention to help overturn the Russian Revolution. For Loewen, most history textbooks being used in K-12 schools are caught between “the conflicting desires to promote inquiry and to indoctrinate blind patriotism” (2010, p. 6).

For Loewen, the solution to these content shortcomings is not to expand textbooks to cover every time period, social group, or section of the country left out of traditional historical narratives. After all as James Baldwin once observed, “history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it.” Instead, Loewen wants “schools to help us learn how to ask questions about our society and its history and figure out answers for ourselves (2010, p. 356).

Conducting

Conducting, our fourth C of democratic teaching, refers to the methods that teachers use to deliver academic lessons to students. In every teaching situation,

the choices made by teachers about instructional methods convey messages about democracy. Students make assumptions their opportunities for voice and participation from how much class time is devoted to teacher-directed lectures and PowerPoint presentations. In many cases, strong teacher-direction leads to student silence. In contrast, when students asked to evaluate primary sources, work together in groups, express their own ideas in writing, discuss controversial topics, integrate art or music into their learning, or experience other interactive and inquiry-based learning strategies, they gradually take on more active roles as critical readers and thinkers.

Historian Larry Cuban (1993) has chronicled how teacher-centered instruction has dominated American classrooms for more than a century. In history/social studies classrooms, teacher-centered methods feature lectures by teachers, content drawn mainly from the majority White culture, and students memorizing names, dates, and places to be recalled on multiple choice tests and paper worksheets. John Goodlad (1984) characterized teacher-centered practices as a “frontal” style of teaching where ideas and information flow primarily from the teacher to the students. Critics of teacher-centered instruction contend that this type of information flow lacks democracy’s essence of engaged participation by individuals whose voices are heard and whose ideas matter.

A tradition of student-centered instruction stands in marked contrast to teacher-centered instructional methods. Student-centered classrooms emphasize interactive discussions, small group work, cooperative learning, primary source analysis, creative writing, dramatic read-alouds, children’s and adolescent literature, and a reliance on performance rather than test-based assessments. Student-centered methods promote democratic values of student engagement and participation, but they are not easy to implement or sustain in the face of shrinking budgets, rising class sizes, and the demands that everyone pass high-stakes achievement tests. Many teachers find themselves uncomfortably “hugging the middle” between teacher-centered and student-centered approaches (Cuban, 2009), a situation that can make teaching and learning lack certainty and coherence for adults and students alike.

Student-centered instruction is not easy to implement in middle and high school classrooms. As many new teachers have experienced, when adults try to build connections between school and community through interactive activities and inquiry-based discussions, many students respond with what John Kornfeld and Jesse Goodman call the “glaze” (1998, p. 308). The glaze includes students staring silently at the teacher, avoiding eye contact, and giving muffled monosyllabic responses to questions. Such student resistance creates additional dilemmas for a democratic classroom. Teachers might ask for student opinions about various instructional methods and be told that the students prefer teacher-centered rather than student-centered lessons. Teachers must then decide how to honor student viewpoints while also building classroom activities where active inquiry happens regularly.

Why do students resist instructional activities where they must offer opinions, draw informed conclusions, or conduct in-depth historical investigations, preferring instead more traditional classroom practices? Kornfeld and Goodman believe students fear the new, particularly if they might be evaluated as making mistakes or not giving the “right” answer. The result is that students who have been rewarded for the memorization and regurgitation of information are not “immediately ready to experience school as a democratic sphere.” Teachers must gradually shift students from “their dependence on teacher control over the curriculum and the question-answer mode of knowledge transfer to which they were accustomed” (1998, p. 309).

Conferring

Conferring, our fifth C of democratic teaching, focuses on how teachers get feedback from students about what students are learning, what educators called “assessment” or “evaluation.” In theory, “formative” (evaluating performance throughout a lesson or unit) and “summative” (evaluating performance at the end of a lesson or unit) assessments come together to produce a full portrait of what a student knows and is able to do with the ideas and information that teachers have taught. But missing from these teacher-driven evaluations are ways for students to

more actively and democratically participate in the assessment process; what we call conferring. When teachers and students confer together, students are in a position to become more active partners in assessing their own learning,

Getting clear information about student learning is really the only way that teachers can gauge the effectiveness of the work. Leaving a classroom at the end of a class period, a teacher knows that she or he has taught, but not whether (or to what extent) students have learned. Without feedback from the students, the act of teaching is incomplete—words have been spoken, but what did students actually hear? Ideas have been presented, but what did students actually understand? Instructional methods have been used, but what did students actually learn from those methods?

The only way to answer the “impact of teaching on student learning” question is to ask the students themselves using both formal and informal assessments. Mainly, teachers assess student learning through exams, quizzes, and writing assignments that are designed to produce performance-based grades from A to F. Tests also take the form of standardized achievement exams—particularly in subjects like English and mathematics where in some states like Massachusetts, student scores are a prerequisite for high school graduation.

Yet there are other, less formal ways that teachers can use to understand what students are thinking and learning in class—homework assignments, in-class participation, free writing, attendance, classroom behavior, question-asking, extra-credit work, and after-school all help to reveal the extent of student learning. Such informal assessments can be unreliable—an individual’s quiet manner might signify boredom, disengagement or intense concentration on learning. By conferring together, students and teachers might play least three new roles, each of which promotes a more democratic classroom environment:

- First, students can collaborate with teachers the design and implementation of teacher assessments.
- Second, students can engage in self-assessment of their own learning.
- Third, while teachers are evaluating students, students can enlarge the assessment process by giving teachers feedback about the effectiveness of teaching methods

and academic content. As one teacher told us, “I listen to what students have to say about my courses, and I make changes based on their suggestions.”

Co-Constructing

Co-Constructing, our sixth C of democratic teaching, assumes that the ways that teachers and students go about creating knowledge in the classroom either extends or diminishes democratic values and practices. Co-Constructing is derived from the educational learning theory known as “constructivism.” This approach emphasizes how students construct knowledge through active engagement with meaningful puzzles and problems. Co-Constructing means not only do teachers teach students, but students teach each other and even teach adults as well.

From a constructivist perspective, co-constructing can happen when teachers challenge students’ taken-for-granted assumptions by presenting them issues they must resolve through inquiry-based learning and problem solving activities. Constructivist approaches, however, are not the norm in history/social studies classrooms. Instead, teachers assemble knowledge (using textbooks, state curriculum frameworks, reading lists, and local lesson plan guides), and then present it to students. Such “school-sponsored knowledge” reflects what is “produced or endorsed by the dominant culture” while silencing the “voices of those outside the dominant culture, particularly people of color, women, and, of course, the young (Apple & Beane, 2007, pp. 14-15).

By contrast, when teachers and students co-create the curriculum together, young people learn to be “critical readers” of their society. When confronted with some knowledge or viewpoint, they are encouraged to ask questions like: Who said this? Why did they say it? Why should we believe this? And Who benefits if we believe this and act upon it? (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 15)

The result is that “young people shred the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of ‘meaning makers’ ” (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 17).

Co-Constructing knowledge in the history/social studies classroom takes time and requires in-depth study of topics, and many teachers, facing the pressure

of covering the material to get students ready for standardized tests, are reluctant to use such methods. Still, making history/social studies education a place for creating rather than just receiving knowledge may be particularly important in terms of school as a preparation for roles in a democratic society. As citizens, voters, members of voluntary organizations, and community members, today's students will be tomorrow's history-makers. When teachers only transmit the curriculum, students are not afforded opportunities to ask questions, collect and analyze evidence, and draw informed conclusions based on thoughtful analysis. Without learning experiences in school, how will they play those same roles in society?

Connecting

Connecting, our seventh and final C of democratic teaching, is centered around how what happens in history/social studies classes become linked to larger communities of school, neighborhood, town/city, nation and world. Such linkages, however, are not always apparent to young students.

Connecting curriculum content and classroom activities to situations beyond the schoolhouse walls can be a transformative experience for many students. These connections can be local—a neighboring elementary school, senior center, or homeless shelter—or much broader as in voter registration drives or international famine relief. Generally called “community service,” “service learning,” or “community engagement,” the goal is to generate school activities that will link “meaningful community service experiences with academic growth, personal growth and civic responsibility” (Shumer & Duckenfield, 2004).

Service learning advocates have noted that attempts to create equity in society ignore the fact that students live in an unequal society that schooling merely minors. One possible response is to expand the reach of the democratic classroom beyond the walls of the school and into the society it seeks to reform. By engaging students in service learning activities that are aimed at changing inequities in societal structures, students and teachers can work together in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their lives.

Indeed, service learning is particularly well suited to engaging students through projects using issues that are relevant to them. Providing service learning curriculum to all students is a good alternative to other problem-solving models like peer mediation which often selects only those who are already assumed to be “good citizens.” Rather, connecting to communities through service learning enables everyone in a class to learn and experience the commitments of citizenship in a democratic society.

APPENDIX C
DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT

In Search of Democratic Practices: An Observation Assignment
due Feb. 12

Our “text” for next week will be the classrooms of our schools.

Create a list of features you would expect to see in a democratic classroom.

Using this checklist, conduct an observation and take notes of a lesson taught by your cooperating teacher, a lesson taught by another social studies teacher in your department, and conduct a self-observation of one of your own lessons (don’t change the lesson in order to meet the items on the checklist).

You may choose to have someone else observe you and take notes as it can be hard to teach and observe yourself at the same time.

After you conduct these observations, write a response paper on the following questions:

- 1) What benefits do you see to using democratic teaching practices? For the student? For the teacher?
- 2) What obstacles do you see to democratic practices in schools?

Post your Democratic Practices Observation data collection tool (without the data on it) and response paper on Moodle by Wed., Feb 12.
and
bring a print copy along with your observation notes and to class on Feb.24

Please post your paper by 4 p.m. Wed., Feb. 12 so everyone will have a chance to read it and respond to it for the Feb. 10 week’s reading/assignment discussion.

APPENDIX D
FEEDBACK ON TEACHING METHODS ASSIGNMENT

EDUC 743
Ideas, Issues, Insights: Using Student Feedback to Guide Teaching Practice
Due March 10

As you enter the final third of your program and the “survival mode” days are moving behind you, you are becoming more purposeful in your reflection about the impact of your teaching on the learning of your students. As a classroom teacher you make hundreds of decisions every day in your interactions with students trying to create the best learning environment for them. These decisions are not only for your students, they are a part of your own learning as a teacher as you consider how different courses of action may impact each situation in your class. You may find that a strategy that works well for one student misses the mark when applied with another student. Each class, and each student brings its own complex dynamics to the situation and you, the teacher, are a part of these dynamics. Both you and the students are engaged in this process of learning together. This is one reason teaching can remain exciting throughout a thirty year career, the constantly shifting identity of the classroom requires the teacher to be a constant learner.

This assignment asks you to be reflective about the choices you make specific to instructional methods by seeking feedback from students about how different teaching methodologies are working for them. You will then consider their feedback and make decisions about how to proceed with that method in the future. Just as you began to form ideas, recognize and solve issues, and gain insights into the value of various teaching methods last semester, your students can benefit from this process as they determine what methods work for them. And your own thinking about ideas, issues and insights associated with various methods will shift and change with your students’ feedback.

The Process:

1. Choose two different teaching methods (at least one should be a method you feel confident in using—a “comfort method”, and one that you are less comfortable with—a “reach method”) from the following list taken from last semester’s Methods class:

- Multicultural Histories & Herstories
- Groupwork
- Cooperative Learning
- Primary Source
- Writing

- Literature
- Technology
- Research
- Civic Ideals
- Community Service Learning
- Role Play, simulation, drama
- Art
- Music

2. Talk with your students about the importance of getting their feedback and how you will use it. Let them know that you will ask for their participation and that it is valued. Inform them that their responses will be shared (without names) at the University to help teacher educators and teachers better meet student needs. If you wish to collect the feedback with names from your students, just black them out before turning in to me. Obtaining feedback, like many democratic teaching practices requires some teaching of the process as students are not generally familiar with how to do it. Feedback is most useful when you model for the students the level of specificity (e.g. you don't want comments of "it was good" without explanation), when you give them the proper amount of time to complete it, and when they understand the importance of the feedback.

3. Teach at least 4 lessons using each of the methods (2 "comfort" method, 2 "reach" method) you have chosen. You may choose from which teaching sections to collect feedback, it may be that you want feedback from all of your students or that you want to focus on one particular class.
4. After each lesson (4 times in total), request student feedback (create a feedback sheet to focus the students) and allow students enough time to respond with careful consideration. Please modify the sheet so it is more specific to you (i.e. add your name, the method you are using, etc.) and add additional questions if you like.
5. Before reading any student feedback, complete your own feedback sheet about how the lesson went. Use the same form that you give the students. Turn this form in with your students' feedback sheets when you turn in your paper.
6. Collect the student feedback and read it over to identify themes.
7. Write a 6-8 page paper (typed, double-spaced) reflecting on the methods as well as the process of seeking student feedback. Your paper should have an intro, a section on the comfort method, a section on the reach method, a section on using student feedback, and a conclusion. Use specifics from the feedback and your own personal experience to discuss how it informs your practice and your understanding of your classes.

A suggested outline for your paper...

Intro:

Discuss why you chose the two teaching methods. What made you confident about the comfort method and why was the other one more of a “reach” for you?

Comfort Method:

1. Lesson Description—
 - a. Describe how you made this teaching method central to your lesson.
 - b. Describe the **Ideas** you had for successfully using this teaching method.
2. Methods Reflection—Issues
 - a. Describe **Issues** that arose from your lesson, specific to using the method and how you addressed them or would address them in the future
 - b. Describe areas where you agree with the students’ feedback—where their sense of how the method was working was the same as yours.
 - c. Describe areas where you did not experience the same issues as your students.
3. Methods Reflection—Insights
 - a. Describe **Insights** you gained about the value of using this teaching method to promote student learning
 - b. Based on the student feedback, what would you change about how you teach with this method in the future?
 - c. Does this feedback make you more or less inclined to use this teaching method? Why?

Reach Method:

1. Lesson Description—
 - a. Describe how you made this teaching method central to your lesson.
 - b. Describe the **Ideas** you had for successfully using this teaching method.
2. Methods Reflection—Issues
 - a. Describe **Issues** that arose from your lesson, specific to using the method and how you addressed them or would address them in the future
 - b. Describe areas where you agree with the students’ feedback—where their sense of how the method was working was the same as yours.
 - c. Describe areas where you did not experience the same issues as your students.
3. Methods Reflection—Insights
 - a. Describe **Insights** you gained about the value of using this teaching method to promote student learning

- b. Based on the student feedback, what would you change about how you teach with this method in the future?
- c. Does this feedback make you more or less inclined to use this teaching method? Why?

Reflecting on Using Student Feedback:

- a. What was it like to seek and use student feedback as part of your instructional practice?
- b. Did you learn anything about individual students that will help you in meeting their needs? If so, provide examples.
- c. Would you use student feedback in the future, why or why not? If yes, in what instances?

Conclusion:

Summarize your current thinking as it relates to the variety of teaching methods we have discussed in class this semester and reflect on where you stand regarding these methods today.

Feedback on Teaching Methods

Grade:_____

Subject:_____

Feedback for _____ **(teacher name) on using**
_____ **as a teaching method for a lesson on**
_____ **(topic).**

1. Insights—How did _____(insert student friendly language for the teaching method) help you learn? What did you find useful in how your teacher used _____(insert student friendly language for the teaching method)?

2. Issues—What was difficult for you in using _____(insert student friendly language for the teaching method)? How would you suggest your teacher improve the way he/she teaches with _____(insert student friendly language for the teaching method)?

3. Ideas—What other ways would you like to see _____(insert student friendly language for the teaching method) used? What other topics would you like to see _____(insert student friendly language for the teaching method) used for?

APPENDIX E

FINAL PAPER FOR EDUC 743

From Day 1 to 180 **A Democratic Plan for Your Classroom Next Year**

There have been so many ways that you have evolved as a teacher this year and you will continue to learn and grow as a teacher throughout your career. This thoughtful growth comes from trying new practices, staying current with theory and pedagogy, and regularly revisiting your goals and intentions as an educator.

In the fall Methods course as well as this spring's Advanced Methods you have been introduced to many practices for your "teacher toolbox". Now we would like you to consider which of these tools you plan to take forth in to your first paid(!) teaching position.

For your final paper of Advanced Methods, we would like you to pull together evidence from this past year to demonstrate your current thinking about democratic practices and develop a plan for future implementation when you enter in to your own classroom.

We are calling the following democratic teaching methods "the seven Cs" of democratic practices. We would like to know how you plan to use (or why you plan not to use) these "seven Cs" to navigate your way to a successful first year teaching.

1. Conversing (democratic discussion methods)
2. Contrasting Content (hidden histories and untold stories)
3. Collaborative Classroom Management (students assist in establishing class rules and maintaining classroom management)
4. Conducting Classes Democratically (students have voice and choice in what is taught, students have input in how lessons are conducted and assessed)
5. Co-constructing knowledge (students take responsibility for teaching all or part of the content and skills of a lesson or unit)
6. Conferring with students (seek and use student feedback as part of reflective practice)

7. Connecting with communities (community service learning that links curriculum to people and issues beyond the classroom)

In your paper, please address:

- Insights about what this practice means and the value it brings (or does not bring) to a social studies classroom
- Issues (positive or negative) which you experienced around this practice
- Ideas about how this practice can be implemented (both ways you tried and ways you are thinking of trying it) and any other concluding thoughts about this practice or democratic practices in general.

Include evidence and describe defining moments from some of the following:

- Experiences in your classroom
- Conversations with students
- Academic papers you read
- Papers you wrote
- Class discussions
- Online discussions
- Informal conversations with classmates
- Conversations with colleagues
- Professional development experiences

These moments can be drawn from any part of the program.

Papers should be 10-15 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced.

Due date: May 5, 2014

Please post digital copy to Moodle and bring a hard copy to class to turn in.

***From Day 1 to 180:
A Democratic Plan for Your Classroom Next Year***

Rubric

Conversing

Directly describes your insights about why conversing can be a democratic practice.	Generally describes insights about why conversing can be a democratic practice.	Vaguely describes insights about why conversing can be a democratic practice.	Does not describe insights about why conversing can be a democratic practice.
Discusses in detail at least one defining moment related to this practice.	Generally discusses a defining moment related to this practice.	Vaguely discusses a defining moment related to this practice	Does not discuss a defining moment related to this practice.
Clearly presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Generally presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Vaguely presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Does not present at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.
10	8	6	4

Contrasting Content

Directly describes your insights about why contrasting content can be a democratic practice.	Generally describes insights about why contrasting content can be a democratic practice.	Vaguely describes insights about why contrasting content can be a democratic practice.	Does not describe insights about why contrasting content can be a democratic practice.
Discusses in detail at least one defining moment related to this practice.	Generally discusses a defining moment related to this practice.	Vaguely discusses a defining moment related to this practice	Does not discuss a defining moment related to this practice.
Clearly presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Generally presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Vaguely presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Does not present at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.
10	8	6	4

Collaborative Classroom Management

Directly describes your insights about why collaborative classroom management can be a democratic practice.	Generally describes insights about why collaborative classroom management can be a democratic practice.	Vaguely describes insights about why collaborative classroom management can be a democratic practice.	Does not describe insights about why collaborative classroom management can be a democratic practice.
Discusses in detail at least one defining moment	Generally discusses a defining moment	Vaguely discusses a defining moment	Does not discuss a defining moment

moment related to this practice. Clearly presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 10	related to this practice. Generally presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 8	related to this practice Vaguely presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 6	related to this practice. Does not present at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 4
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Conducting Classes Democratically

Directly describes your insights about why conducting can be a democratic practice. Discusses in detail at least one defining moment related to this practice. Clearly presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 10	Generally describes insights about why conducting can be a democratic practice. Generally discusses a defining moment related to this practice. Generally presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 8	Vaguely describes insights about why conducting can be a democratic practice. Vaguely discusses a defining moment related to this practice Vaguely presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 6	Does not describe insights about why conducting can be a democratic practice. Does not discuss a defining moment related to this practice. Does not present at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 4
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Co-constructing Knowledge

Directly describes your insights about why co-constructing can be a democratic practice. Discusses in detail at least one defining moment related to this practice. Clearly presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 10	Generally describes insights about why co-constructing can be a democratic practice. Generally discusses a defining moment related to this practice. Generally presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 8	Vaguely describes insights about why co-constructing can be a democratic practice. Vaguely discusses a defining moment related to this practice Vaguely presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 6	Does not describe insights about why co-constructing can be a democratic practice. Does not discuss a defining moment related to this practice. Does not present at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice. 4
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Conferring with Students

Directly describes your insights about why conferring can be a democratic practice.	Generally describes insights about why conferring can be a democratic practice.	Vaguely describes insights about why conferring can be a democratic practice.	Does not describe insights about why conferring can be a democratic practice.
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Discusses in detail at least one defining moment related to this practice.	Generally discusses a defining moment related to this practice.	Vaguely discusses a defining moment related to this practice	Does not discuss a defining moment related to this practice.
Clearly presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Generally presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Vaguely presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Does not present at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.
10	8	6	4

Connecting with Communities

Directly describes your insights about why connecting can be a democratic practice.	Generally describes insights about why connecting can be a democratic practice.	Vaguely describes insights about why connecting can be a democratic practice.	Does not describe insights about why connecting can be a democratic practice.
Discusses in detail at least one defining moment related to this practice.	Generally discusses a defining moment related to this practice.	Vaguely discusses a defining moment related to this practice	Does not discuss a defining moment related to this practice.
Clearly presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Generally presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Vaguely presents at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.	Does not present at least one idea for implementation (or reasons for non-implementation) of this practice.
10	8	6	4

Use of Evidence and Reflective Practice

Draws extensively on experiences and readings from the year.	Draws generally on experiences and readings from the year.	Draws limitedly on experiences and readings from the year.	Does not include experiences and readings from the year.
20	16	12	10

Presentation of the Paper

Submits a professionally prepared, double-spaced typed, 10-15 page paper with correct grammar, spelling, and language style and including proper citations when necessary.	Submits an inconsistently typed, 10-15-page paper with some correct and some incorrect grammar, spelling, and language style and including some citations.	Submits a poorly typed paper of less than 10-15 pages with numerous errors in grammar, spelling, and language style and including few citations.	Does not submit a paper.
10	8	6	4

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