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"This is Our Time to Find Our Voice": Doing Discussion in the Elementary Social Studies Classroom

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Abstract

In this article, a teacher educator and a teacher candidate collectively address discussion in the elementary social studies classroom. In the first portion of the article, the teacher educator describes how they teach their future elementary social studies teachers to have their students engage in discussion by introducing a discussion model around children's literature. The teacher candidate then describes how they took what they learned from their elementary social studies methods course and implemented it in a fourth-grade classroom. The authors then conclude by discussing key learnings and conclusions that are applicable to the social studies classroom.

Keywords: Discussion; elementary social studies; theory to practice; children's literature

Discussion is arguably a core practice of the social studies classroom (Fogo, 2014) and yet it is a rarity (Hess, 2004). Many teachers avoid discussion, especially in regard to political issues, because it is easy for the conversation to be diverted and many teachers may fear losing control (Hess, 2004). While those fears are valid, there is too much value in discussion to avoid it, especially in the social studies classroom. So, then many teachers are left in an either-or scenario of whether discussion is worth it or if it causes more trouble than it is worth. Discussion is definitely worth it because within a discussion, students are able to gain valuable skills that will enable them to be better citizens within a democracy (Mullins, 2019). Discussion skills are not innate, however, but have to be taught explicitly and specifically to ensure that students have the skills necessary to engage in a productive discussion.

One way to approach teaching such skills is by starting with non-controversial topics and focus on building certain dispositions prior to asking students to engage in complex political discussions. As such, in this article we (a teacher educator and a teacher candidate) are going to address discussion in the elementary social studies classroom. In the first portion of the article, the teacher educator is going to present how they teach their future elementary social studies teachers to have their students engage in discussion by introducing a discussion model around Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*. Following that, the teacher candidate will discuss how they took what they learned from their elementary social studies methods course and implemented it in a fourth-grade classroom. We will then discuss key "take-aways" that have been learned through this process that we hope will be of use to future teachers.

From Methods Class to the Classroom

Context of the Methods Classroom

The elementary methods classroom on which this article is focused, takes place the semester before the students go into student teaching. All students enrolled in this methods course are working towards an undergraduate degree in order to be able to teach at the elementary level. During the methods semester, students are required to achieve at least 80 hours of classroom teaching time. Because of this, the course only meets for 10 sessions, so the students have time to complete their field experience hours. The students in this course also take several other methods courses, including science methods, English Language Arts methods, as well as math methods. This article is focused specifically on the teaching that occurred in the social studies portion of the methods experience.

Elementary Social Studies Methods: Teaching Discussion

Most days in the undergraduate social studies methods course I teach, I model a core social studies practice (Fogo, 2014), and then have my teacher candidates deconstruct my lesson to identify different ways in which the practice could be applied in the grade-level in which they are placed that semester. Since we usually have 10 or less methods course meetings, I have to be deliberate in decision making in terms of what content I offer the teacher candidates. Due to the importance of discussion, we dedicate a whole class on how to facilitate discussion in the social studies classroom. I do this through examining Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*. There is no shortage of activities surrounding *The Lorax*, as lessons have been developed around this book in a variety of ways, ranging from environmental issues (American Forest Foundation, 2012) to critical thinking issues around childrens' philosophy (University of Washington Center for Philosophy for Children, 2020) and more. However, I use the book as a focal point around which I model how to teach discussion skills in social studies.

On the day we do discussion, I start the class, by posing the question, "Have you made a choice today?" After a few teacher candidates volunteer, I then pose the following question, "To what extent do you agree with the following statement, "The choices I make influence others."

- If you agree, stand in the front left corner of the room.
- If you mostly agree, stand in the middle of the room.
- If you disagree, stand in the right corner of the room.

At this point, I ask the teacher candidates reasons for their choices, and give them an opportunity to shift their viewpoint based on the responses of others. This discussion usually takes around five minutes, at which point I have the teacher candidates go and sit down as I introduce Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax*.

I then provide teacher candidates with a handout of *The Lorax*, available online in a variety of places (see https://www.chrisrossarthur.com/uploads/3/8/5/9/38596187/dr._seuss_the_loraxbokos-z1.pdf). Then I show a YouTube reading of *The Lorax* (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdWesdMfyd4). Within their document, they are to note specific instances when the Lorax made a choice, and then note when they see problems such as pollution. After the reading is completed, I number the teacher candidates into groups of ones and twos, with the ones being the Onclers and the twos being the Lorax. If they are in the Oncler group, their task is to prepare evidence from the reading that cutting down the trees was not wrong. If they are in the Lorax group, they have to prepare evidence from the text that cutting down the trees was wrong. At this point, each group has around 15 minutes to prepare their arguments. Directly before we discuss, I have the teacher candidates decide on a list of rules for discussion before we begin. The discussion that ensues is usually quite dramatic and intense, even though we are discussing a fictional book in a college classroom. I usually stop the discussion after about five minutes and have the teacher candidates prepare a personal reflection based on a prompt which allows them to decompress; the prompt is: "Notice in the last part of the story there is one seed left, so write a short story about what should be done with this last seed." I usually have a few teacher candidates share before stopping and having them deconstruct the lesson. The teacher candidates are typically surprised that the class has been so tense, given that they had a discussion centered on a children's book. They are also usually shocked that even a low-risk discussion has to have so much structure and preparation.

Following one of these classes, one of the teacher candidates approached me and told me they were going to teach this in their fourth-grade placement. As a teacher educator, it is always intriguing to see one of the practices you recommended actually be used in the classroom. Therefore, I asked the teacher candidate to collaborate with me as they taught it so we could fine-tune this approach and provide recommendations for other educators by providing a visible connection between theory and practice (Garrison, 2012). Therefore, in this next section we focus on this connection by providing a narrative from the perspective of the teacher candidate.

Context of My Fourth Grade Classroom

The fourth-grade classroom in which this lesson took place was a very diverse group of students. The class was comprised of students of different races and ethnicities, students with varying socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with mixed ability levels. The school that this occurred in was located in a rural community. In the past, the classroom dynamic was teacher led/teacher focused prior to the lesson I taught on *The Lorax*. Students were typically asked questions and were not allowed to answer until the teacher acknowledged them. There was not much room for student collaboration and therefore, the students were not accustomed to open discussion. This was apparent towards the start of the lesson; however, as the lesson went on the students became more comfortable with the dynamic of open discussion. I will discuss the specifics of this in the next section.

My Fourth Grade Classroom: Connecting Theory to Practice

When I taught discussion in the elementary classroom, I focused on the fourth grade Kentucky Social Studies Standard 4.I.UE.3, *"*Develop claims with evidence to answer compelling and supporting questions*"* (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019, p. 78). I chose to introduce *The Lorax* on two different days. The day prior to the discussion, I read *The Lorax* to the students. Students discussed how they felt about the book and we identified "real world" issues discussed in the book such as, but not limited to, pollution, gentrification, and industrialism.

On the day of the discussion, I reviewed the key points in the book. I then had the students develop some rules of discussion to ensure the discussion had structure and that all the students felt safe. I felt like it was important for students to realize in order for a discussion to run smoothly, everyone needs to respect each other's stance. I chose to assign the topics around which the discussion would focus. For example, I had the Oncler group focus on how their position related to building and creating communities and I had the Lorax group focus on a stance of anti-pollution. I informed each group they were tasked with developing three evidence-based arguments based on their group's position. Each group elected a discussion leader to ensure that the discussion stayed focused and that everyone's opinions were being heard. Other group roles included: scribe, spokesperson and timekeeper. These roles ensured that the group was being efficient and staying organized. Once students were finished, we came back to a whole group and started the discussion. I taught this lesson to three different fourth-grade classes. Although I had originally told students that they only had to create three evidence-based arguments, each class exceeded that. One class even developed 10 arguments. I realized that my classes could do more than I anticipated, so I challenged two of the classes to create counter arguments, which they did well. At the end of the discussion, I asked students a series of questions such as:

1. What would you do with the last seed?
2. Do you agree with the stance of the Lorax? Why or why not?
3. How did it feel being a member of a group you did not necessarily decide to be in? Did you change your mind as a result?

I asked these different types of questions to further perturb their thinking as well as to self-assess how the lesson went by asking for student perceptions of the lesson, as well as questions that allowed me to examine if what I taught was what they actually learned.

Reflections from the Lesson

After teaching this lesson, I wrote reflections to capture how each lesson went and how it could be changed in future iterations. I also reflected on what I personally could have done better. One of the struggles I had was with prepping for the lesson because I wanted it to go as

smoothly as it went when I was the student in my methods class. This was my first lesson teaching in an upper elementary social studies class, and I was anxious. I was so anxious that I even practiced the lesson repeatedly a couple days before, making my roommates act like students so I could practice the lesson with them.

I also found it difficult to go into someone else's classroom and teach a lesson completely different from what the students receive on a regular basis. The fourth-grade students were not accustomed to open discussion. Additionally, in the lessons I observed, the host teacher did not give them adequate time to collaborate their thoughts. I was unsure of how the students would react to the change; I also was not prepared for how the host teacher would react either. Being a teacher candidate creates avenues of stress in many different capacities. For example, I wanted to teach a good lesson for the students, but I also felt like I had to perform a certain way to impress the host teacher. Additionally, in this lesson, I felt like I was not always in control, since I was a guest in the classroom. It was apparent the host teacher was not accustomed to leading this type of discussion. For example, she tried to intervene and guide the students into thinking a certain way about their given argument. However, I tried to guide the students to create their own thinking and collaborate with each other to build onto their thinking. Overall, I was happy about how the lesson went, but in the back of my mind, I would also resort back to feeling frustrated I did not have complete control.

I have learned that as a teacher candidate, you have to take initiative in the classroom while respecting the host teacher. One of the biggest "take-aways" I learned is that everyone has a different style and approach to teaching. Being a teacher candidate does not mean you have to follow in the exact footsteps of your host teacher. This is our time to find our voice and find the type of teacher we want to be. During this struggle, I was worried about how the changes would affect the students. However, I came to realize, in the classroom there are going to be multiple things with which you will struggle. For example, I struggle with confidence and constantly seeking approval. However, if your students are the focus and everything you do is to better yourself for your students, you will be successful.

Conclusions

Taking a strategy from a methods class and applying it directly to the classroom allowed us to develop several key learnings that we believe is of value to future teacher educators and teacher candidates. First and foremost, strategies in methods courses look very different in the context of a clinical placement or student teaching. In many instances as teacher educators, it is easy to forget that the strategy being taught is not just going to be directly applied to the teacher candidates' own classroom, but the strategy is going to be applied to a classroom in which they are a guest. While the strategies learned in a methods course are applicable and practical, there are complexities associated with student teaching, which we must take into account. For example, since teacher candidates are guests in a classroom, they are trying to teach in an

environment they did not create, and in many instances, the pedagogy of the host teacher may stand in direct contrast to what is being taught at the university (Garrison, 2012).

Additionally, it is valuable for host teachers to know that many candidates feel as if they have to perform to the expectation of the teacher. Therefore, it would valuable for the host teacher to have honest conversations about expectations and be transparent in that they do not expect a certain performance from the teacher candidate. Such open communication is key in ensuring a successful student teaching/clinical experience in the classroom.

Lastly, we hold that even amidst the struggles, there is still value in discussion and because of that, it should not be avoided (Hess, 2004). Teaching students how to discuss is a core practice in the social studies (Fogo, 2014) that needs emphasized, because "talk is not cheap" (Kettering, 1993, p. 2, as cited in Hess, 2002). However, such talk (i.e. discussion) within the social studies needs taught specifically and explicitly, and we see children's literature, specifically *The Lorax*, as a good place to start the process.

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At the time of writing this article, **Molly Erwin** was an elementary teacher candidate at Eastern Kentucky University. She is now a teacher at Kenton Elementary School in Kentucky.

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Picture Books, Posters, and Post-Its: Summarizing Text to Stage the Compelling Question

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Abstract

The authors describe how to plan and implement an IDM Staging Activity using picture books. This cross-discipline activity is designed to motivate, foster curiosity, and activate background knowledge among students grades 3-12. Further, the authors discuss the importance of staging the compelling question and the significance of summarizing skills to social studies.

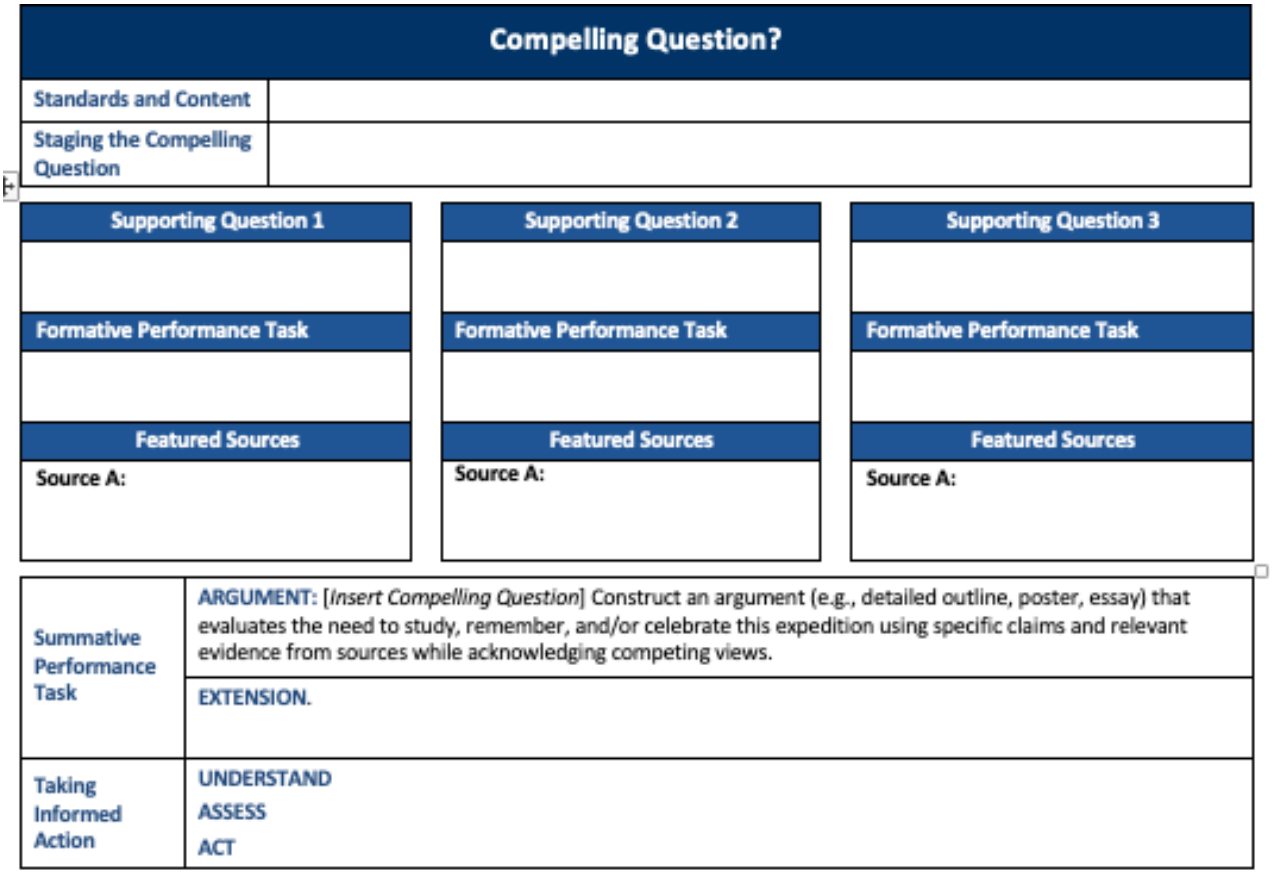
Keywords: Inquiry Design Model, staging activity, picture books, summarizing

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM), inspired by the C3 Framework, leads students through an inquiry process to answer a compelling question. IDMs have four major components completed in the following order: staging the compelling question, formative tasks, summative tasks, and taking informed action. The staging activity captures student interest and introduces the compelling question. Next, applying disciplinary tools to dig deep into authentic sources, students complete formative tasks which are designed to support the overarching compelling question. Once the formative tasks are completed, students construct an argument "that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from the sources [from the formative tasks]" (Grant, Lee, and Swan, 2017). Finally, student may take informed action through connecting the compelling question to civic engagement. All components are intentionally and cohesively aligned to the overarching compelling question.

It must be noted that IDM is not a prescriptive program that dictates to the teacher questions and tasks for instruction. Instead, the model serves as a structure upon which teachers can apply their creativity and expertise in designing effective curricular inquiries. Teachers craft their own compelling questions, design the supporting questions and tasks, and research and select sources that hold student interests and provide information to fuel the inquiry (C3 Teachers, 2021). Below (see Figure 1) is a template that outlines the components of the IDM.

This article focusses on one IDM component, staging the compelling question, using a collaborative picture book summarizing activity. It describes the importance of staging the compelling questions, the literary skill of summarization, and the rational for using picture books in social studies instruction. Finally, the article provides step-by-step instructions for planning and implementing the activity.

Figure 1. IDM Three Supporting Question Template



Compelling Question?	
Standards and Content	
Staging the Compelling Question	

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
Formative Performance Task	**Formative Performance Task**	**Formative Performance Task**
Featured Sources	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Sources**
Source A:	Source A:	Source A:

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT: [*Insert Compelling Question*] Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that evaluates the need to study, remember, and/or celebrate this expedition using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.
	EXTENSION.
Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND ASSESS ACT

Adapted from Grant, Lee, and Swan as cited in "The Inquiry Design Model" by C3 Teachers (2021). https://c3teachers.org/inquiry-design-model/

Staging the Compelling Question

One of the first activities students complete in the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) is staging the compelling question. According to the IDM model, "staging the question activities introduces students to the ideas behind the compelling question in order to generate curiosity in the topic" (Grant, Lee, Swan, 2107). Given the limited time in a hectic school year, teachers may feel reluctant to spend planning time developing or finding staging activities. Instead, they may be tempted to begin with the supporting questions and formative tasks, mistakenly assuming staging less worthy of precious class time. Regardless of time constraints, teachers should retain this valuable activity in the IDM because staging is integral to IDM. In fact, staging the compelling question is so integral to IDM, when Swan and Lee (2018) introduced their more condensed Focused Inquiry Model with fewer supporting questions, they retained staging the compelling question "as is" (p. 134) because staging is a precise activity that serves multiple purposes. Staging the compelling question is "the establishing shot" (Lee, 2017) in an inquiry

and can pique student curiosity and motivate them to learn more. Moreover, staging helps students tap into their background knowledge, knowledge that will serve as foundational schema to build on throughout the inquiry (Swan & Lee, 2017). In short, staging should get students thinking about what they already know as well as inspire them to think about what they want to know.

Most staging activities are designed to last fewer than 15 minutes; however, this staging activity is comparatively longer than most. Implementation should be estimated at approximately 30 to 40 minutes and may last an entire period. Once students are familiar with the steps of the activity, it can be repeated in a different inquiry using different picture books. However, because it is a longer activity, it is not recommended for Focused Inquiries which are shorter in duration. Instead, it will be more effective in inquiries with four formative tasks. Although the staging activity described in this article serves the purposes outlined above, it meets another objective. This activity will help students practice a crucial literacy skill they can apply to multiple social studies texts.

Summarizing

Teachers often observe students locking in on one or two interesting details they have read in an article or book without being able to summarize the entire reading. Although they may be pleased by the enthusiasm students show for these facts, the main idea that binds together the text must not be lost in instruction. When students read text and are able to register the main idea-what the text is mostly about- they build and strengthen schema. Think of schema as file folders in their minds where related facts can be connected and organized. Summarizing, connecting the main idea to supporting details in a concise statement, helps create and maintain those folders, all relevant to the inquiry process (Serravallo, 2015). Goudvis, Harvey, and Buhrow (2019) sum up the importance of summarizing text to the inquiry process:

> Kids process and distill information to understand it and make it their own. They add to their store of knowledge, merging new information with what they already know. We may come to understand a new perspective, a new line of thinking, and come up with original ideas based on what we read, listen to, and view. (p. 19)

Summarizing text can be a difficult task, especially for struggling readers, because it calls on students to sift through all they have read, identify not only what is most important in a text, but to also leave out what is not important. Moreover, students must then provide that information in their own words (Johnson & Keier, 2010). In short, when teachers ask students to summarize, they ask them to do several tasks at once.

Teachers who only teach social studies content may not know if their students have mastered the skill of summarizing. If students struggle to recount what a text is mostly about, identify the main idea, or list random facts that seem disconnected, they may need a summarizing strategy to complete the activity. If this is the case, the social studies teacher might collaborate with a reading teacher to identify strategies to apply to instruction or adopt strategies

from The Reading Strategies Book (Serravallo, 2015). Although written for students K-8, many of the strategies described are appropriate for high school students. This will be a valuable use of instructional time because, as mentioned above, summarizing is a vital skill used when processing historical sources and evidence. Students will be able to reuse the strategy many times throughout the year.

Picture Books

Thanks to the internet, there exists a plethora of text to communicate multiple social studies topics at every reading level. Why then select picture books, which may be less accessible, for staging the compelling question? Picture books pack a whole lot of information in less time. They are usually composed of less text than chapter books or textbooks so they can be read quickly. This is significant to staging because these activities should be precise and relatively fast (Swan and Lee, 2017). Picture books also provide a vast amount of information in less space than other media. They tell a story through both words and images, reinforcing the old adage *a picture paints a thousand words*. Whether through illustrations or photographs, picture books can establish historical context through images of clothing, technology, or architecture. Picture books can poignantly express character expression and emotions. They may also provide rich symbolism that speaks to the reader's emotions, sometimes inspiring or disturbing. This is especially important to the staging activity which may be designed to "get kids off-balance a little bit...and not comfortable" (Lee, 2017). Moreover, picture books provide vivid visual images that today's students have become accustomed to thanks to media literacy. For this reason, students, even adolescents, may find picture books more attractive than stand-alone text (Costello & Kolodziej, 2006), even though these older readers may not realize many picture books are written solely for adolescent readers. Finally, picture books can assist struggling readers because clues in the illustrations provide support for comprehension.

Selecting Appropriate Picture Books

Using picture books to stage will mean assembling a text set, a collection of 5-6 books that share a theme or topic, each with a different perspective or experience related to the compelling question. These multiple perspectives provide students an opportunity to compare or contrast views (Bersh, 2013). Books should be selected to encompass the spirit and meaning of the compelling questions. These books can peak student interest, activate background knowledge, and create buy-in for the compelling question.

Critically consider the authenticity of perspectives presented in each book. It is crucial to provide students books that are void of stereotypes or tokens characters. An effective guide to selecting books that provide authentically lived views can be recommended by trusted organizations who bestow awards on quality children's and youth adults' literature (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015; Sharma & Christ, 2017).

Keep in mind picture books are valuable but expensive. As all seasoned teachers know, materials chosen for an activity may not always work as planned. It would be wise to borrow books from the school or public library the first time they are used in this staging activity. If found effective, they can be purchased to repeat the staging activity again in future classes.

Prior to instruction, read every book carefully and write a summary for each. Consider how the book summary relates and connects to the compelling question. If after reading the book and summarizing, the purpose and connection are not clear, search for a different text. Not every book on the same topic will effectively stage the compelling question. See Table 1 below for a sample list of texts appropriate for a staging activity for an IDM related to the American Civil Rights Movement.

Table 1

Book Sample

Title	Author	Publisher, Year	Awards
The Other Side	Jacqueline Woodson	G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2001	*International Literacy Association Teacher's Choice Award*
Freedom School, Yes!	Amy Littlesugar	Philomel Books, 2001	*Coretta Scott King Award, Caldecott Medal*
Freedom Summer	Deborah Wiles	Aladdin; Reprint edition, 2005	*Coretta Scott King-Joe Steptoe Award*
Ruth and the Green Book	Calvin Alexander Ramsey	Carolrhoda Books, 2010	*Skipping Stones Honor Award, 2011, Winner, Multicultural and International Society of School Librarians International Book Awards*
Martin's Big Words	Doreen Rappaport	Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2001	*Caldecott Medal*

Grouping Students and Assigning Roles

Cooperative learning is an effective classroom approach if effectively organized by clear roles and expectations (Kagan & Kagan, 2017). This cooperative activity assigns students

separate roles with specific instructions. In doing so, students clearly understand what they are expected to do, have a significant role to complete in the group, and have a high level of accountability for completion of tasks.

Divide the class into groups with no less than three but no more than five student members. Do not randomly assign students to a group. Instead, consider classroom social dynamics, interests, and abilities and consider the role each member will play so each group has a mix of abilities and skills to match the duties each will perform (see Table 2). Each additional group will consume more classroom time during the *Post It Walk* and *Wrap Up*. Also, groups with fewer members will force students to take on more than one role, creating more work for each group member. This may lead to longer *Summary* and *Debriefing* sessions. Conversely, fewer groups will require more members and may leave some members with nothing to do. Although this activity has four roles, two students may complete one role. For example, a group may have two readers, dividing the book into two parts for the reading.

Table 2

Group Roles

Role	Task/Responsibility	Look for a student who...
Reader	Reads the book aloud to the group, clearly and fluently, providing time to show the group illustrations. In larger groups, there may be more than one reader, dividing up the book into parts.	-is a fluent reader and -enjoys reading aloud. -is most likely to volunteer to read in class.
Poster Creator	Creates a poster to communicate the picture book's summary statement in bullets or paragraph form.	-has legible handwriting and enjoys writing for others.
Reporter	After the book is read aloud, leads the group through the discussion and takes notes on ideas that should be included in the summary.	-stays on task, detailed, and a fast writer. -is a natural leader and can keep the group on task.
Presenter	Reads aloud the post-it notes to the group left by other class members and facilitates the debriefing.	-is comfortable reading and speaking in front of the class. -is concise and specific when presenting.

Facilitating the Staging Activity

Step 1: Poster Summaries

Give each group one copy of a different picture book from the text set. The *Reader* reads the book aloud, displaying the illustrations so that all the group members can see. After the reading, the group members will discuss what they thought the book was mostly about. The group discusses at least three supporting details they felt were most important and that connected to the main idea. The *Reporter* notes on the discussion, recording everyone's ideas. The group then agrees on the main idea and three supporting details, and the *Poster Creator* writes a concise summary on chart paper. The *Poster Creator* can bullet the summary or write in a full paragraph.

Provide no more than 15 minutes for the groups to complete the summarizing tasks. Prior to the activity, determine where each group will work and where they will display their poster when finished. To help groups stay on task and aware of time constraints, keep a timer and let the groups know when 10 minutes have elapsed then 14 minutes. Groups should complete and display their posters within the 15 minutes time limit. Walk around the room and provide support and feedback for the task as necessary.

Step Two: Post-It Walks

When all the summaries are completed and displayed, students ten minutes to walk around the room individually and read all the summary posters from other groups, recording their responses on post-it notes. They must respond to every summary, attaching post-it notes to the corresponding summary poster. They may respond with an observation about the summary, a question they may have about the book or the topic, or a suggestion to strengthen the summary. In order to encourage individual and original responses from every student, notes should be written on the "sticky" wrong side of the post-it so that when they are attached to each poster responses cannot be seen by others. Students must sign their names to the notes to foster accountability. As with the poster summary step, keep an eye on the timer and remind students when the time is almost up.

Table 3

Materials

Material	Role and Purpose	Number per group
Chart paper	*Poster Creator*: displays picture book summary	1

	statement. If chart paper is not adhesive, provide tape for hanging the poster.	
Markers	*Poster Creator*: Displays the picture book summary statement	1-3
Pencil or pen	All group members (one per student): comment on book summaries	1-5
Paper	*Recorder* takes notes on summary discussion	1-2 sheets
Post-Its	All group members: comment on other book summaries	1-2 packs
Thematic Picture Books	*Reader* reads the book aloud to the group	1

Step Three: Group Discussion on Feedback

When the *Post-It Walk* is completed, group members return to their group's posters to view the responses left by their classmates. The *Presenter* collects the post-it notes and reads aloud the contents of each to the group. The group then discusses the feedback they have received from class members and decide how to address questions. Based on feedback, they may decide to revise their summaries before presenting to the whole class. Groups have only five minutes to complete this task. If groups are struggling with the task, prompt with, "What would you like to add to your summary or include about your book that you think the class should know that you did not already have in your poster?"

Step Four: Debriefing

During the debriefing, the *Presenter* from each group briefly discusses if and how they would alter their summaries based on the observations and suggestions left by classmates. The *Presenter* also answers the questions posed by their peers if the information was provided in the group's picture book. Unanswered questions on the topic are recorded on the board or chart paper by the teacher.

Teacher involvement in the *Debriefing* is critical because this discussion transitions to revealing the compelling question. If needed, refer back to the book summaries written during planning to help direct the discussion. Capitalize on the curiosity created by the questions the groups cannot answer at the end of the *Debriefing*.

Step Five: Wrap-up

This is the moment to reveal the compelling question. Give students a minute of quiet time to think about the compelling question and silently make connections to their summaries. Encourage students to reflect on how they are related. Draw the students' attention back to the list of questions they have not answered. Based on what they have already learned from summaries, challenge students to discuss additional questions they would like to answer during the inquiry.

Virtual Modifications

This activity is easily modified for virtual instruction in Zoom. During group work in *Poster Summaries* and *Group Discussions on Feedback*, place students in Zoom Breakout Rooms. Obtain digital books for students to read online and assign a book to each *Reader*. The *Reader* can screen share in breakout rooms during the read aloud. *Post-It Walks* can be modified for Jamboard or Flipgrid. Create a Jamboard and assign each group a slide. Each *Poster Creator* can use the text tool to record the summaries on their assigned Jamboard slides, and classmates can use the sticky note tool to attach responses to each summary.

Students may prefer to create video responses to summaries. *Poster Creators* can post summaries in Flipgrid and classmates can record video responses to each summary. *Debriefing* and *Wrap Up* can take place back in the Zoom Main Room.

Overall, using a collaborative picture book summarizing activity captures student interest, makes direct connections to compelling question, and provides practice in summarizing text, all characteristics of effective staging activities. Although summarizing text is integral to the analysis of written sources, it is a skill students struggle with at every grade level. However, with practice through the described activity, students can develop this crucial skill.

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Inquiry and the Olympics: A Catalyst for Social Change

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Abstract

This article aims to give social studies teachers an inquiry-based framework while investigating the social impact of the Olympic games. While evaluating the impact of Margaret Abbott, Jesse Owens, Tommie Smith, and John Carlos and their Olympic successes, students can also examine the experiences and protests that can lead to social change. Using the Inquiry Design Model, social studies teachers can have students research, explore, and construct their own arguments regarding how the Olympic games provided a global platform that lead to equality, fairness, and justice.

Keywords*:* Social Studies, Inquiry, Olympics, Inquiry Design Model

Every four years, the Olympic games provide an international venue to display and compete with the best athletes in the entire world. Since the modern Olympic games, held in Athens in 1896, that included forty-two events in ten sports, athletes from around the world competed at the highest level of international competition (Finley & Pleket, 2005). Yet, the Olympics has also become a venue that changes our society on an international scale. Global sports, such as the Olympic games, have had a tremendous impact on promoting democracy and human rights (Black & Bezanson, 2004). The Olympics promotes not only the competitive spirit and nature of sports but also creates an international platform for social change and protest. Sports in the Olympics birthed the liberation of female athletes, and sparked the discussion of equality, fairness, and justice for all, especially within the United States. "Because it dramatizes victory, defeat, struggle against nature and other competitors, sport is a potent symbol constantly under pressure to lend its emotional power to other causes" (Marvin, 1982, p.81). For social studies, the Olympics should be celebrated not just as an international competition but as an experience that invokes the reflective conversations of equality and social justice. The purpose of this article is to give social studies teachers the instructional tools needed in their classrooms so that students can historically investigate, through the Inquiry Design Model, the social impact of the Olympic games concerning gender and racial equality.

Relevance for Teachers/ Practitioners

Women in 1900 Olympic Games

As women continued to fight for suffrage in the early part of the 20th century, the 1900 Olympics in Paris were the first games that allowed women to enter in two sports: tennis and golf (Semyonov, 1981). Margaret Abbott, unknowing that she was even participating in the Olympics, won a gold medal in the 1900 games. Margaret Abbott was known as a fierce competitor during her time at the Chicago Golf Club (Welch, 2016). In the 1900 Olympics, Abbott competed against 22 other ladies, including her mother, and shot a 47 in the nine-hole event (Lieberman, 2016). She received a porcelain bowl for her victory, but was unaware of her amazing accomplishment (Fuller, 2016). The 1900 Paris Olympics provided women the first opportunity to compete in international sports with other women. Thus, allowing for women to compete at the highest international competition in the world merged with the growing social activism of suffragists fighting for women's voting rights during the early 1900s. "In the suffrage campaign's last stages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, women's demand for the vote had been intertwined with the ferment for social justice" (Dumenil, 2007, p.22). Therefore, the Olympic games broke the barrier of including female competition before women's suffrage was achieved. After the 1900 Paris Olympic games, groups such as the Congressional Union, which was formed in 1913, and the National American Women Suffrage Association continued the movement to amend the U.S. Constitution and secure voting rights for women (Cott, 1984). Although this was some 20 years before the passing of the 19th Amendment, the 1900 Paris Olympics served as a prominent catalyst on the equality of women not just at the Olympics, but in society.

Jesse Owens in Berlin

In 1936, the Olympics were hosted in Berlin, Germany, with over 3600 athletes representing nearly 49 countries (Edmondson, 2007). Hitler's rise to power in Germany, through the concept of Aryan superiority permeated the Berlin games. Hitler's idea of hosting the games was to give the world an example of German achievement and set the example of global domination through the games. "In Olympia, Hitler makes little more than a cameo appearance, and if there is a single individual who draws the most attention, it is a black American, Jesse Owens--the symbol, the personification of all that contradicted Hitler and his theories of a master race" (Deford, 1986, p.62). However, Jesse Owens challenged the Aryan ideology by winning four gold medals across various events in track and field, including a new world record of 10.2 seconds in the 100-meter race (Milford, 2018). Owens also led a men's group that won the 4x100 meter relay with a world record, a standard that would last nearly 20 years (International Olympic Committee, 2018). With wins in multiple events, despite the Nazi intent to display racial superiority, Jesse Owens emerged as an iconic hero in track and field (Blackman, 2016; Mandell, 1987).

Even with global notoriety, and being heralded as a national hero, Owens recognized the boundaries that remained constant at home. Owens stated:

> "When I came back to my native country, after all the stories about Hitler, I couldn't ride in the front of the bus," Owens said. "I had to go to the back door. I couldn't live where I wanted. I wasn't invited to shake hands with Hitler, but I wasn't invited to the White House to shake hands with the President, either." (Schwartz, 2017, p. 1).

Owens' dominance at the Olympic games shattered the Aryan ideology, but even with victory, Owens accomplishments gave rise to other societal concerns, specifically, the issue of equality at home for African Americans. African Americans were still fighting the challenge of segregation in the Jim Crow era. Even in the nation's capital, Washington D.C., segregation was an invisible line in American society. "A color line - at once inflexible and defied - had long run through the city, demarcating where white and black residents were expected to live, work, study, shop, dine, and relax" (Verbrugge & Yingling, 2015, p.57). Since *Plessy v. Ferguson*, segregation was the doctrine of society, especially in the south, where separate but equal was legally supported discrimination (Riegal, 1984). The 1936 Olympics gave a reflective opportunity to examine citizenship, equality, and justice for all Americans as Owens scattered the ideas of racial superiority within track and field sports.

Tommie Smith and John Carlos Stand in 1968

Throughout the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, the Black Power movement was a collective group that embraced a radicalized means to fight for social equality. This would include people like Stokely Carmichael, Malcom X, and groups such as the Black Panther Party (Joseph, 2008). Disillusioned with the progress of sit-ins, protests, and civic demonstrations, collegiate and professional athletes dealt with substantial social inequalities, including racial slurs, biased coaching, modest housing, and prevention of eating at the same restaurants as their white peers (Bass, 2002). At the 1968 Olympics games in Mexico, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, two African American track and field athletes decided to protest during the platform ceremony if they placed in their respective events. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, (JBHE Foundation, 2008) states:

> "After making the U.S. Olympic team, Smith sought to organize a demonstration at the games to protest race relations in the United States. When he failed to garner support among his fellow athletes, Smith came with the idea of a silent protest if he won an Olympic medal" (p.43).

During the events in Mexico, Tommie Smith set a world record in the 200-meter dash and won the gold medal (JBHE Foundation, 2008). John Carlos placed third in the same event and won the bronze medal. Smith and Carlos stood with fists held high in silent protest during the national anthem after winning first and third in the 200-meter event (Ratchford, 2012). "The movement permanently inscribed itself in popular culture through the iconic images of athletes Tommy Smith and Juan Carlos raising their fists in the Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City" (Joseph, 2008, p.13). This action on the podium was non-violent and threatening, yet, powerfully displayed Black Nationalism (Henderson, 2010). Even with the

immediate suspension by the United States Olympic Committee, they had mixed support from the other American athletes; some supported the cause, and some were embarrassed by the gesture (Sheehan, 1968). Although Carlos was more aligned with the philosophy of Malcom X and Smith identified with Dr. King, both men protested as a unified front against the injustices still occurring for African Americans in the U.S. (Smith & Steele, 2007). This was a clear determining factor that even with the progress of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 there were ongoing racial issues that still plagued the United States in the late 1960s. Since the Olympics is an international event with representation from various nations, people worldwide, including members of the international press, illuminated this protest to a global platform highlighting the social justice movement in America.

Context for Teaching and Learning Inquiry-Based Instruction

To profoundly examine the social impact of these historic Olympic games, while offering a critical lens to teach empathy that sparked social change, we recommend using a model of inquiry-based instruction. According to Ednacott and Brooks (2018), historical empathy is a perspective recognition to a greater understanding, based on the use of evidence in making an argument and being able to disagree with others. Inquiry encourages academic investigation and data collection for students to develop evidence-based arguments (Levy et al., 2013). Inquiry-based instruction builds upon disciplinary questioning and investigative exploration to foster and support ideas and concepts (NCSS, 2013). This type of instruction also provides an opportunity for students to collaboratively discuss issues from several perspectives while using multiple forms of knowledge; thus, allowing for a metacognitive and constructivist approach to historical critical thinking (Harste, 2001). Generating questions and inquiries, like that of historical inquiry-based learning, benefits the cognitive and motivational capacities, critical thinking, and comprehension skills of students (Ness, 2016). This type of historical inquiry involves the exploration of evidence from various sources, including documents, photographs, film, and art (Vansledright, 2009). These classroom opportunities enable students to answer provoking questions by interpreting evidence, reflecting on the sources before constructing a narrative; thus, fostering a deep historical learning approach to knowledge (Barton & Avery, 2016; Hess, 2009; Journell, 2016).

Implementation and Impact of the IDM

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) provides a classroom framework method of inquiry for social studies classrooms (C3Teachers.org, 2021). The IDM model provides social studies teachers with a multi-day inquiry-based approach to historical investigations. The purpose of the IDM Model is to have students, either independently or collaboratively, answer the compelling question after a thorough exploration and examination of documents and evidence by constructing their arguments. First, the IDM stages the question with a brief introduction. Then,

students move to examine several supporting questions. These supporting questions give students a specific perspective, asking them to complete a performance task, while conducting research and analysis through featured sources. After all of the supporting questions have been completed, students should have the knowledge and understanding to answer the overarching compelling question. Thus, students display their understanding through the summative performance task, which is divided into an argument and an extension. "Each inquiry ends with students constructing an argument (e.g., detailed outline, drawing, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views" (C3 Teachers.org, 2021). While the extension offers an additional task as an option for the summative argument.

One of the most significant components of the IDM, towards the end of the inquiry, is the taking informed action section. Social studies, through its organized structure, allows the knowledge gained through the discipline to be explored and examined in a variety of manners. Not only does the social studies "provide students with opportunities to apply disciplinary knowledge and skills as they examine enduring questions related to human experiences"…but students may also develop the habits of mind that will allow them to develop "the interdisciplinary thinking to apply to real-world problems in college, career, and citizenship" (Swan & Griffin, 2013, p. 319). This portion of the inquiry takes the knowledge and understanding of the inquiry and propels the historical understanding to relevant civic issues, such as social equality in this inquiry. This relevancy could be applied towards local, state, or national concerns and emphasizes the students becoming civically engaged. For example, in our IDM Model provided below on the Olympics, students are asked to work with their physical education department and develop a PeacePlayers organization within their community. This organization promotes community unity, equity, and peace through the game of basketball (PeacePlayersIntl, 2021). Taking informed action, moving from understanding, to assessing, to action in the IDM, is designed so that students can civically connect with the content that is being learned in the classroom (Grant et al., 2017). Thus, students simply do not stop at historical understanding alone, but are given relevant, real-world activities that help develop students into active citizens within their communities.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The Olympics created a global setting for athletes to compete in sports; yet, it also allows athletes an opportunity to raise greater societal issues and concerns. Thus, the Olympics has the potential to be a catalyst that continues to spark social change and offer a sense of self-reflection among global citizens. Due to the nature of inquiry-based instruction, this type of method allows for students to research primary documents, ask and reflect on questions, and have an opportunity to hear rich perspectives from their fellow peers in class. "Genuine historical inquiry demands that students learn to ask authentic questions, to select and examine historical evidence, to appreciate historical context, to evaluate divergent perspectives, and to reach, albeit tentatively, logical conclusions" (Foster and Padgett, 1999, p. 358). This type of social learning

promotes not only student engagement, but is a direct reflective nature of our democratic environment and principles we strive to emulate in our classrooms. Inquiry based learning allows for a deep sense of metacognitive reflection and constructionist view of education where student understanding takes place (Vygotsky, 1978).

Our aim for sharing both the Olympics as a catalyst for social change and inquiry-based instruction is to present social studies teachers a group of classroom topics and resources that can be used throughout the social studies curriculum. By engaging students into inquiry-based instruction, students will be able to explore, engage, create, and develop relevancy to current topics, social studies curriculum, and citizenship.

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™	
Compelling Question	How is the Olympics an example of the struggle for social equality and created that sparked social change?
Standards and Practices	<u>NCSS National Standards:</u> I. Culture and Cultural Diversity II. Time, Continuity, and Change III. People, Places, and Environments V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions VI. Power, Authority, and Governance VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption X. Civic Ideals and Practices <u>College, Career and Civic Life (C3 Framework) Standards</u> **D2.His.1.9-12.** Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts. **D2.His.2.9-12.** Analyze change and continuity in historical eras. **D2.His.3.9-12.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context. **D2.His.4.9-12.** Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras. **D2.His.5.9-12.** Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives. **D2.His.6.9-12.** Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced. **D2.His.7.9-12.** Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past. **D2.His.8.9-12.** Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time. **D2.His.9.9-12.** Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them. **D2.His.10.9-12.** Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

	D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose. **D2.His.12.9-12.** Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources. **D2.His.13.9-12.** Critique the appropriateness of the historical sources used in a secondary interpretation.
Staging the Question	Using a video clip from the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, how did Jessie Owens' performance in the Olympic games provide evidence against the concept of racial superiority? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf6ryOWfYN4

Supporting Question 1	**Supporting Question 2**	**Supporting Question 3**
What issues of equality are evident in the 1900 Olympic games?	How does the Olympic games represent society; specifically, equality since 1896?	What responsibility does the IOC have regarding equality within the Olympic games?
Formative Performance Task	**Formative Performance Task**	**Formative Performance Task**
Students will be researching the 1900 Olympic games and gather primary sources from the Women's golf and tennis games. Students will be asked to print and display all of their primary sources, leading to a gallery walk (students leading and discussing the primary sources collected) from both Olympic events.	Students will research and compare the 1936 Olympics and the 1968 Olympic games and discuss how these events impacted racial equality in the U.S. Students will be asked to imagine themselves as a news reporter and write a news article comparing the social impact of both Olympic games.	Students will be asked to research topics involving equality now within the IOC (International Olympic Committee), focusing on the issues that need to be addressed and potential solutions. Students will be asked to write a letter to the IOC addressing any current issues concerning equality.
Featured Sources	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Sources**
https://blog.genealogybank.com/5-facts-about-the-summer-olympics.html https://usopm.org/an-unknowing-historymaker-margaret-abbott-was-the-first-american-female-to-be-an-olympic-champion/ https://alchetron.com/Margaret-Abbott	http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/packages/html/sports/year_in_sports/08.04.html?pagewanted=print https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/1936-newspaper-jesse-owens-sets-1822618210 https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/1936-newspaper-jesse-owens-wins-track-1801549637	https://olympics.com/ioc/overview https://olympics.com/ioc/beyond-the-games

	http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/packages/html/sports/year_in_sports/10.16a.html http://100photos.time.com/photos/john-dominis-black-power-salute https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-1968-timeline/	
Summative Performance Task	**Argument**	Students will develop an interactive website, detailing the trials, struggles, successes, and triumphs relating to social equality during the Olympic games. The purpose of this assignment is for students to detail how empathy through the games, and specific athletes might have sparked social change. This activity creates a deeper understanding of transferability by students constructing their websites, becoming content experts, and presenting those concepts to their peers.
	Extension	Students will be asked to develop or plan a PeacePlayers organization in their community. PeacePlayers is an organization that promotes equality and understanding through organized athletics; specifically, basketball. By allowing children to participate in these organizations, the goal is to build equality from within the community.
Taking Informed Action	Cross Curricular Activity- In conjunction with the extension, students can work with a local school physical education department or community center to research and plan for their PeacePlayers organization within their community.	

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Teaching Second-Grade Students to Curate and Interpret the Egyptian Museum

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Abstract

Second-grade students learned about ancient Egypt and turned the products of their learning into a museum. The students practiced interpretation of their artifacts to help others understand what they had learned. The four parts of the interpretation of the museum focused on visitor understanding, construction of artifacts, preparation for generativity, and both skills and communication for the purpose of skills transferal. Second-grade students helped younger students and parent visitors explore the museum by serving as docents. The visitors received information through hands-on experiences, and verbal and visual interaction with the site.

Key Words: elementary, inquiry, interpretation, museum, social studies

In a major midwestern urban charter school Mrs. Inkrott's diverse second-grade students engage in a two-month unit on Egypt. There are two major components of this unit: the Egypt daily lessons, and museum creation and tour by the second-grade student docents. The Egypt lessons are significant and necessary to understand the museum. The students read information books, create artifacts, and learn to curate and interpret a museum they create in their classroom. The students curate the products of their study into an Egyptian museum where guests learn about culture, geography, and history. Their guests include relatives, kindergarten students, and first grade students in their school, and provide oral interpretation through tours of their products. Through reading this paper the audience can learn: How do second-grade students learn to be docents to curate and interpret their artifacts in their museum? Investing students with interpretive powers means that they are responsible for effective communication of knowledge to visitors an area referred to as taking action/communicating information in C3 Framework (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013). Student docents contribute to visitor understanding, construct artifacts to interpret with guests, engage in generativity, and they help transfer skills to their museum attendees.

Relevance for Teachers/ Practitioners

Teachers use the C3 Framework inquiry arc when planning inquiry experiences for their students and include standards such as:

D1.2.K-2. Identify disciplinary ideas associated with a compelling question.

D2.Geo.3.K-2. Use maps, globes, and other simple geographic models to identify cultural and environmental characteristics of places.
D3.1.K-2. Gather relevant information from one or two sources while using the origin and structure to guide the selection.
D4.2.K-2. Construct explanations using correct sequence and relevant information (NCSS, 2013).

Students ask questions about the interaction between people and the land. Students engage in multiple map building activities to explain climate, environment, physical features, and weather. Students use multiple information books to use as source materials as they build knowledge about a place. Students explain both sequence and contribute relevant information as they work to guide people through their culminating project. Students share this information with multiple real audiences as they describe what they have learned.

Context for Teaching and Learning

Teachers of elementary social studies have their students work with museums and collections in a variety of ways. Students use historical thinking and imagination supplemented with primary sources to engage in historical reconstruction. Some teachers begin their instruction with a museum visit and use both the experience and artifact kits with second graders to conduct inquiry (Coppersmith & Song, 2017; Dilek, 2009). Other teachers have prolonged or multiple museum interactions where students are frequently on the museum site. Students learn that school-based social studies include historical thinking. Yilmaz et al. (2013) found that students who visited museums as part of their school experience were captivated and motivated to learn, engaged with the exhibits, could recall historical knowledge, enjoyed social studies, and found social studies to be meaningful. These experiences helped the students to become informed citizens. Students who use images and objects learn to identify political changes. Rawlinson et al. (2007) suggest that social issues can be addressed in museum school partnerships. Students develop social studies skills from objects in museum collections that reflect social change. Students also develop inquiry skills from objects that reflect technological change, and they learn that objects represent social change.

Researchers have not recently discussed the power of student curating museum content (Strickland & Van Cleaf, 1985; Shamy, 1991). This is unfortunate because the content found in museums could enhance personal communication by talking about ideas found in cultural centers. The museum experience is less formal than what is described by the inquiry arc. However, the idea is a powerful addition to the inquiry arc suggested by the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013). Students arrange displays, write interpretive labels for artifacts, and provide docent services for real audiences that visit their museums. Students communicate the importance of collections and the excitement of learning when they talk to peers and family. Students discover collections, and at the same time they perform an important role in the introduction of museums to the community.

Teachers find many ways to assess students in elementary social studies. First there must be time allotted to social studies where knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions can be practiced. While mandated integration or scheduled English Language Arts and social studies integration does not always work adding instructional time for social studies does not hurt students (Heafner, 2018). The thinking and analysis done in historical tasks enhances the students experience with other subjects. The skills of reading informational text in secondary sources and examining primary sources augments their skill set. Students who learn skills in elementary social studies and history demonstrate their new proficiencies through assessment (Brugar, 2016). Assessments might be formal or more informal. The evaluation continuum extends between more abstract and authentic assessments that get students in front of real audiences. Students were evaluated on the physical maps of Egypt they constructed. Students were evaluated on their transcription of hieroglyphics. Furthermore, students wrote in their portfolio about what they learned each week. Some teachers use WebQuests to get their students to explore Washington, D. C. where they find the purpose of two major documents (the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution) and why the national anthem is a symbol of the nation (Bennett & Cunningham, 2011). Getting students in front of their peers or their parents is an example of an authentic assessment. Students display their knowledge and skills before the community. When students take on roles as arbiters of knowledge they are using the skills they have learned about in class.

Young people develop curatorial competencies as they engage and embrace digital culture. They develop narrative platforms that exhibit skills in analysis, balance, clarity, consistency, content type, and sources (Mihailidis, 2015). Their story telling skills operate person to person in collaborative spaces that are creation driven and illustrate core digital literacy. Relevant digital curation tools provide enhanced media analysis. Effective online content is curated by student driven pedagogies that engage the competencies of the user. Students create a social memory based on the heritage of place when they curate artifacts, photographs, and video clips (Cotterill et al., 2016). Students gathered information and built concepts from informal community sources as well as archives and museums as part of an inquiry project. Students presented their website content as an exhibition. Older students continue to use curation to learn social science content. More recent curation involves students using digital imaging to record information and then using the discernment of the user to prioritize content that is most important to share. Individuals curate lasting descriptions about physical locations when they combine their data with a documentary. The social act of documentary creates a curated narrative for a public audience, and the result is a commentary on the location. Public gallery that exhibits the combine data of a place may preserve aspects of place longer than the duration of the actual physical location (Erickson, 2010).

Students curate and interact between multiple digital resources. Digital learners find opportunities to link to peers in ways that they find amusing in addition to creating and sharing content. Learners construct several social media tools to interact between multiple felicitous settings (Hollett & Kalir, 2017). These types of experiences contribute to autodidactic situations.

However, students with peers and mentors also create knowledge from these experiences when they develop content. Students interpret information in multiple ways from graphs, maps, photographs, and political cartoons (Thacker et al., 2019). Data interpretation come from visual images when students analyze them. Students practice with content to make sense of graphics, information and text. Students need more practice with analyzing, creating, and reading graphics.

Topic Implementation and Impact

As part of the introduction to the topical study of Egypt the second-grade students do a small play, and they practice the play leading up to the first Saturday School Day. In the fall, parents accompany their students to Saturday School on two different weekends: one in September and one in October. The parents do activities with their children in the morning and are involved in station rotations. The morning activities also include mini plays that the children perform for their parents. In the afternoon, while their children are learning in their classrooms with their teachers, parents participate in special topical meetings.

At the beginning of each of these rotations parents read short narratives to their children about the Nile River, the Fertile Crescent, the Nile Delta, and what visitors see now in Egypt. In the four rotations students make the landforms of Egypt. The students paint a mural together with their parents about Egypt, and the students learn about the animals and plants in the area. Finally, the students make a salt dough map of Egypt. Mrs. Inkrott says, “It is amazing how well integrated the Egypt study is, so it makes sense that they are doing the study of the past. They very purposefully include art and reading.” Students use non-fiction text to develop their projects and to learn context about what they create. The students look at concepts such as culture, elevation, kingdom, landforms, river, resources, and ruler.

After Saturday School the students continue to use their reading time to learn about Egypt. Students read stories and study books in class about Egypt, and there is also a daily assessment when they are reading nonfiction books. Mrs. Inkrott asks them to, “Find three interesting things or three things they did not know from reading the book.” For four weeks the students do activities that support their readings. Four parent volunteers come in at these times to help. The first week the students paint their salt dough map, and the students make their own name in hieroglyphics. They also compare the seasons in Egypt to their Indiana climate, and there is also a note to parents with a story about hieroglyphics for families to read together.

The second week the students try foods of Egypt such as dates, pomegranate, and flat bread. These foods come from both cultivated groves of trees and planted and harvested field crops. Getting food from the field to the table is difficult, and the people work hard to make sure they have enough to eat. The students us a model that shows how the people of Egypt move water into their fields for irrigation. There is also a note to parents with a story about foods of the Middle East for families to read together.

The third week students learn about preservation of the body as a prerequisite for the possibility of immortality. As an iconic representation of this idea they create salt dough

mummies which they wrap in wet plaster strips that dry and harden. They insert sequins into the mummy to represent jewels and amulets, and they create a decorated cardboard case for their mummy. In this way the body is protected. In another illustration of preservation of the body the students place an apple in salt which draws the moisture from the fruit and the apple hardens as it dehydrates.

The fourth week the students continue reading about mummy burials. To create models of what they have read, the students create canopic jars from self-hardening clay. The students also create the four organs that go into the jars and create them from self-hardening clay before putting them in their proper jars. This is a good connection in helping the students to understand the organs within their body and what they do, and what they are reading about from informational text about Egypt. Each of the activity engages the student in forming concepts through iconic representation.

Fortunately, the teacher is also supported by her art teacher, and the art teachers provides the students with Egyptian art experiences. The students try their hand at drawing the Egyptian stylized birds and papyrus fronds. The students also make drawings of a pyramid, temple cat, and scarab in their art class, and all of these are projects are part of the body of work the students display at the end of their unit of study.

Students also engage in other experiences to learn about Egyptian culture. In the literacy block the students cut out and color representations of their representations of the Egyptian pantheon. As part of their reading activities they perform a readers theater version of a play about Sett and Horace before the students draw them. Another part of the classroom experience for the students is when the teacher reads a novel entitled *The Sword of Egypt* set in ancient Egypt to the students across multiple days. Finally, students also contribute to their yearlong portfolio when they write about pyramids and mummies.

Assessments

The students enjoy playing a game called “scoot” to review for assessment (https://www .superteacherworksheets.com/scoot.html). When the students come into the room there is a question on each desk. They answer the question and move to the next desk. The second-grade students have a test about Egypt read to them and there is word bank on their paper for hard to remember terms. It includes big ideas that they have been studying such as, “What are the three seasons of Egypt?” “How did the Nile River help Egypt?” “How did the people of Egypt use the Nile River?” There is also a docent test for the students that is set up the same way.

The Egyptian Museum

The culminating activity for this unit of study concludes when the students create a museum and set up their exhibits as curators. In their museum they become the interpreters

helping their visitors to understand the exhibits and create new knowledge for themselves. Mrs. Inkrott says,

> We talk a lot about what it takes to be a good docent in the museum. First, they need to talk; we need our students to be knowledgeable. You cannot leave your friend; you need to take them to the different exhibits. Get your friend to do things such as let them wrap the mummy and talk about how they did it. Be patient they are younger than you and remember when you did this when you were smaller kids. I always pair siblings together because that is fun to watch. The students are very excited about being tour guides.

The students learn to interpret their museum for their visitors. The students practice going to all the places they will show when they set up the Egyptian Museum. The goal is for each student to talk about each section, and students take a guest with them to share about each section of the museum. From nine to eleven the three sections of kindergarten and three sections of first grade tour the museum with their second-grade docents who lead them on tours. Parents are invited to tour the museum during the recess time for a private opening.

The teacher sets the date on the school calendar for parents, guests, and teachers of younger students to know when they can come and visit the museum. Invitations are sent and times for classes are staggered so everyone does not arrive at the same time. The students review how they built their exhibits and what they learned about Egypt so they can pass it on to others. Each project the students create is stored in the classroom until the museum which means that a three-dimensional portfolio of the work of each child needs to be stored safely until the event. Students talk with the teacher about how to make people feel welcome and how to explain the museum to younger visitors. Prior to visitors arriving students practice in class by giving partners a model tour and talking about what visitors can see and do.

The second-grade student docents give their tours in volunteer-made costumes. The second-grade docents show their parents a tent set up to represent a tomb. The docent shows their guest a stuffed person for the visitors to wrap. All the student projects made in preparation for the museum are on display, and guests are invited to write their name in hieroglyphics. The guests also take turns performing the traditional measure for eternal life when the Egyptian god weighs the merits of the heart of the departed against a feather.

The second-grade students learned about being a tour guide as they practiced interpretation. The interaction with their visitor was important in listening to what the visitor was interested in exploring.

Visitor Understanding

Madelyn observed, “You always need to listen and stay with your guest, tell interesting facts, and try to answer their questions. Practice and be ready.” The student docent needed to prepare for guiding the visitor through the exhibit. Furthermore, the second-grade docent realized they played a role in visitor education. Madison stated, “We can teach people new things. Listen

to your guy [student]. Make sure you learn it, make sure that you say everything right, ask them, 'What do you see in this picture?'" The student docent realized that they needed to help the visitor focus on elements of the exhibit by raising questions for discussion. As student served as a docent, they learned about being a tour guide which was another way for people to learn working with people. The tour guide worked with the visitor to help them understand what they were experiencing. The tour guide practiced interpretation with the visitor to the Egypt museum to develop understanding about what they learned.

Construction of Artifacts

The second-grade students thought the museum experience was important. For some people the focus of the museum was on the artifacts created by the second graders. Joseph explained, "Everyone is excited, and people are interested in things that are old and ancient. At our museum you can use your imagination and pretend they [the artifacts] are old. A lot of people are interested, and people enjoy seeing the creations." The second-grade students enjoyed the process of artifact creation.

Preparation for Generativity

However, other second-grade docents saw the importance of the museum as a function of generativity. Phillip articulated that, "The Kindergarteners and First Graders can learn about what they will be learning, so they can be prepared. We can learn more, to talk about the stuff on the tour. We can be a good example." In addition to the preparation of the next generation by modeling knowledge and skills, there was also a layer of the docents themselves learning from the experience. Students found the museum important because they learned knowledge and skills from the experience. Student also found the museum important because of the artifact construction and generativity.

Skill Transferal

The second-grade students also saw the role of docent as preparing them for the future. Some students saw the role of tour guide as preparation for an actual career in interpretation. Anna said, "It can help you if you want to be a tour guide when you are older, like at the Children's Museum." She was interested in monetizing her experience into a career at another museum she was familiar with. Other students found the skills of being a docent helpful in future situations. Joseph noticed that, "It can help about looking people in the eye [and] get me used to talking to people you don't know very well. Some people can be shy." He observed that the skills of being a docent helped people to become more extroverted. Skill transference whether for a career of for interpersonal communication were important results the students carried into the future. These students prepared for future interaction because of their experiences.

Recommendations

The Egypt museum is important because it shows how primary students learn elementary social studies that is meaningful to the students. The students actively engage with ideas in an interdisciplinary format with content from geography, history, and economics. It shows how students can mix social studies, language arts, and art; in addition, to the mixing of knowledge, skills, and values. Mrs. Inkrott says, "The students are capable of comparing past with the present. They also get excited about the history of another country." By working together, they are engaging in challenging work to bring knowledge to other people. That function of communication is important to the students.

Students are using important assessment ideas by demonstrating how second graders can teach siblings, peers, younger children, and members of the community. Second-grade students interpret their exhibit to people. Joseph explained, "To be a good guide, be kind and helpful. Always be with your kids and let them do the things." Students understood the importance of helping their visitor participate in exploring the exhibit. When the students curate their social understandings, they analyze their knowledge to put it on display in front of the community. This is authentic and a powerful measure of community affirmation of what they have accomplished. Madelyn said, "If you are really shy you can get used to talking to people at school." Students display and interpret the results of their learning under the evaluation of the community through public performance of their knowledge. Students construct powerful interpretation that they must share with their guests when they lead docent walks through the museum. Students knew they needed to tell an interesting story and engage their guest in the museum. Anna said, "To be a good tour guide you should add a lot of detail about Egypt. Let the kids do the stuff themselves, like wrap the mummy." The museum was exploratory, and the docents worked to interpret the exhibit to people.

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Roadmap to Improving Social Studies Instruction

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Abstract

Typically, primary school teachers meet as grade-level professional learing communities (PLCs) to improve classroom instruction. In 2020, a team of elementary school teachers started their first-ever social studies PLC consisting of educators from various grade levels and departments. The PLC supported and monitored instructional design and assessment practices to increase teacher efficacy and effectiveness toward social studies instruction. Teachers constructed the meaning of social studies standards and inquiry-based pedagogy through active and hands-on interactions with materials. Other elementary schools can adopt or modify the PLC's structures, processes, and resources to transform social studies instruction in the early grades.

Key Words: elementary, inquiry, professional learning communities

Social studies often takes a back seat at the elementary school level. Primary schools prioritize reading and mathematics over other content areas. Numerous factors affect social studies teaching in the early grades, such as limited instructional time and low teacher efficacy related to social studies pedagogical content knowledge. (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010) Many professional development programs offered to elementary school teachers neglect social studies standards, practices, and assessments. If students are to receive a well-rounded education, social studies must be emphasized in school goals, professional growth, and curriculum frameworks (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) can positively impact the teaching of specific subject areas. PLCs engage participants in a hands-on approach to problem-based learning to use critical thinking skills, enhancing communication skills, and applying concepts to practice (Smith et al., 2008). According to the Kentucky Department of Education (2020):

> A professional learning community, or PLC, is an organizational structure by design that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices are monitored through the PLC design to ensure teacher effectiveness and, most importantly, student learning. PLCs require the utilization of data from assessments and an examination of professional practice as teachers and administrators systematically monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure the goal of graduating all students are college and/or career ready.

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, a vertical team of teachers at my elementary school saw an opportunity to establish a PLC around social studies standards and inquiry practices. Our school is situated in a rural area and serves first, second, and third grades. Each grade level contains ten homeroom teachers. Science, Social Studies, and Writing are taught in self-contained classrooms. Students are grouped and regrouped in math and reading classes according to specific goals and individual learning needs.

It has been over a year since our social studies-specific PLC's first meeting, and social studies instruction continues to be a school-wide priority. Compelling and supporting questions are listed on lesson plan templates. Social studies standards are integrated into reading instruction and writing tasks. Teachers' instructional procedures include standards from each disciplinary strand to deepen students' understandings of social studies concepts.

Our elementary school has come far in improving social studies instruction, and the work persists. The pathway to creating a viable social studies curriculum is open to all schools at all levels. The following "road map" can help schools develop their own versions of a social studies-focused PLC with a vertical team of teachers (see Figure 1).

Form a social studies-focused PLC with teachers across grade levels

Our first iteration of a social studies PLC comprised eight volunteers: the curriculum coordinator, librarian, two first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, and two third grade teachers. We proudly called ourselves the Social Studies Council. Team members possessed strong teaching qualities and a commitment to professional growth. We started by expressing our philosophies toward social studies education. Responses led to a shared vision of a social studies curriculum that promotes student inquiry by exploring real-world issues and problems.

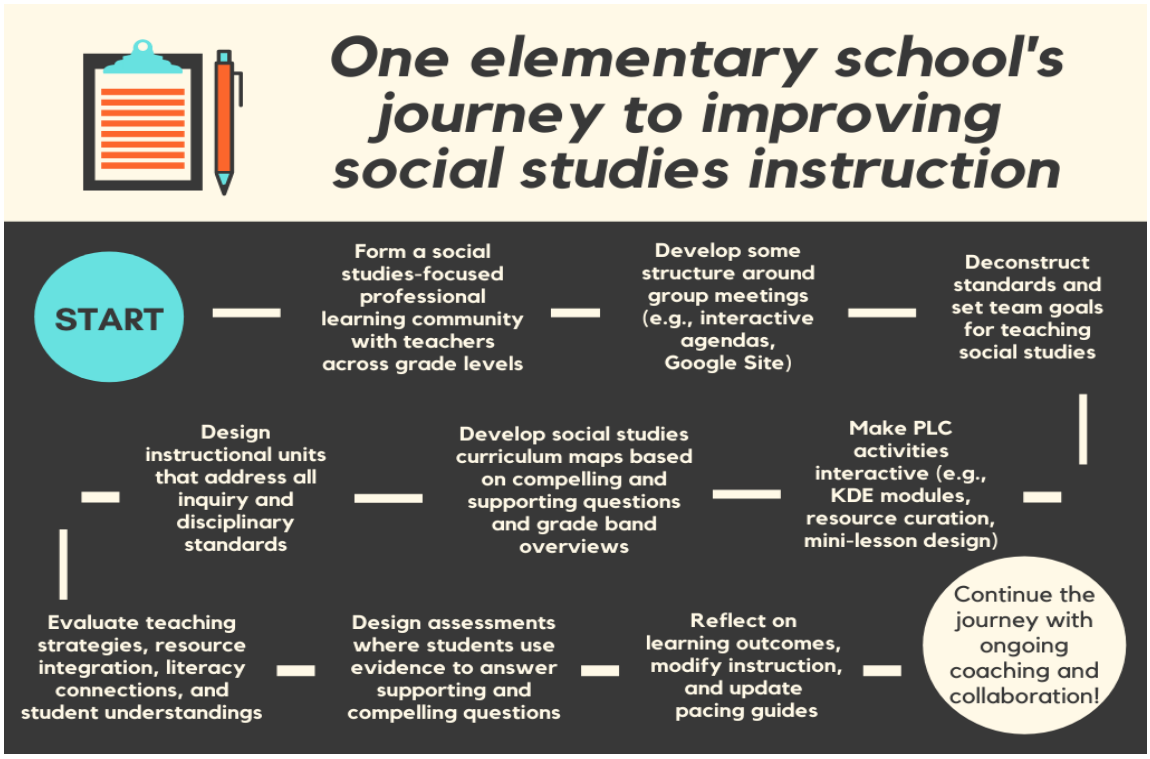
Develop some structure around group meetings

The Social Studies Council used different tools to keep work organized and accessible. Each PLC meeting worked off an interactive agenda in Google Docs. Meeting agendas contained headings, links, goals, and other pertinent information about the meeting's topic. See Figure 2 for a screenshot of a meeting agenda. Google Docs is great for collaboration as they let participants comment and make edits.

Google Sites was another platform the PLC used to curate materials. The Social Studies Council Google Site contains information on standards, a bibliography of resources, professional learning modules, and strategies for embedding the inquiry process. See Figure 3 for a screenshot of the PLC's website. Teachers contributed to the social studies website by posting links to resources and recommending tools to support student products. The PLC's Google Site is now a well-established resource utilized by all teachers in the building.

Figure 1

PLC process for improving social studies instruction



Deconstruct standards and set team goals for teaching social studies

Goals are essential to a PLC's sustainability. Goal-setting serves as a motivational tool and encourages shared ownership of learning among team members. The Social Studies Council prioritized goals after deconstructing social studies standards. We used Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) standards deconstruction tool to analyze standards for every grade level. JCPS's (n.d.) standards documents help teachers understand the Kentucky Academic Standards for Social Studies, so curriculum and instruction are suited to fulfill the intentions of the standards. PLC members' engagement in the process of deconstructing standards inspired collective action toward developing a cohesive curriculum.

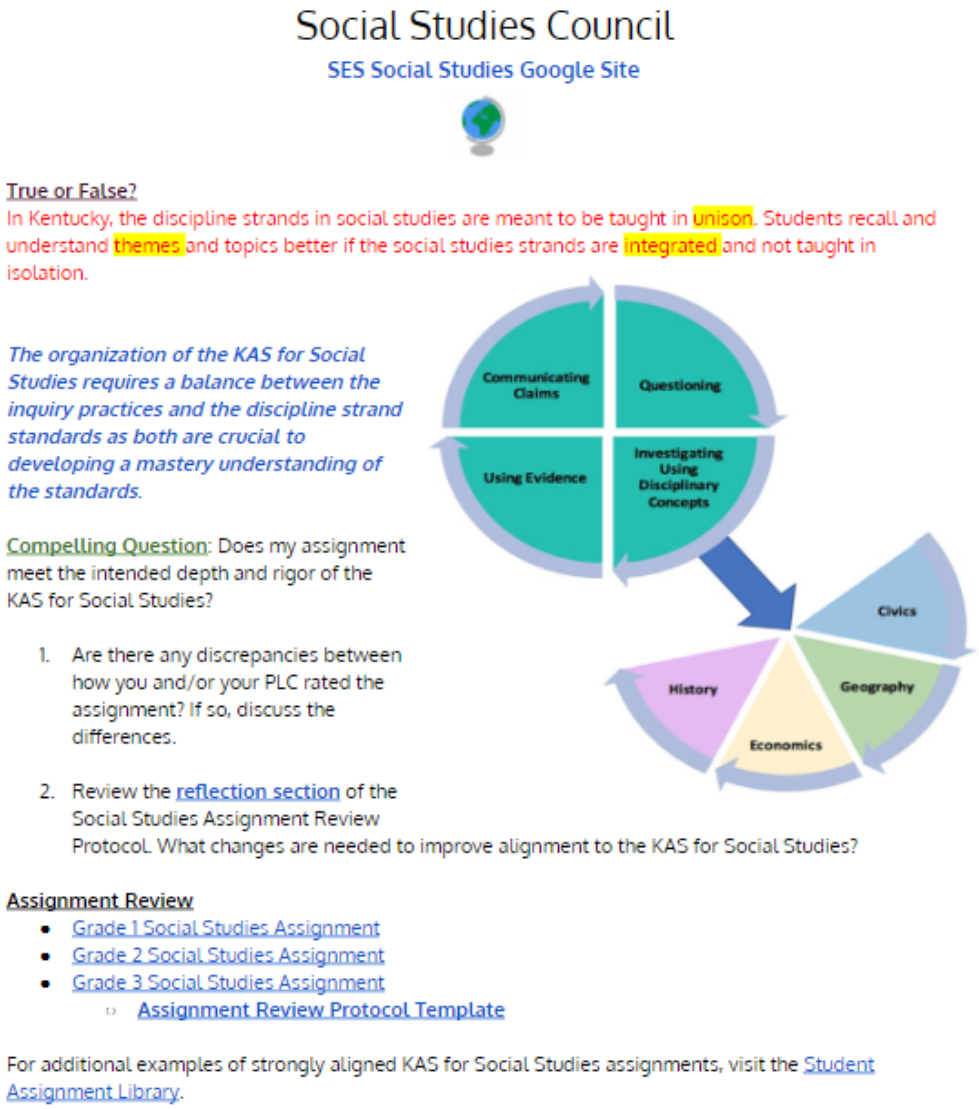
Make PLC activities interactive

A portion of our PLC meetings was spent exploring best teaching and assessment practices from the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) professional learning modules for teachers. KYstandards.org provides many professional learning modules that help build a better understanding of the Kentucky Academic Standards. Information in the modules helped the Social Studies Council transition to an instructional planning process most fitting to new state

social studies standards. KDE's professional learning modules cover a range of topics, including getting to know the standards and creating collaborative civic spaces.

Figure 2

Sample PLC meeting agenda



Social Studies Council

SES Social Studies Google Site

True or False?

In Kentucky, the discipline strands in social studies are meant to be taught in unison. Students recall and understand themes and topics better if the social studies strands are integrated and not taught in isolation.

The organization of the KAS for Social Studies requires a balance between the inquiry practices and the discipline strand standards as both are crucial to developing a mastery understanding of the standards.

Compelling Question: Does my assignment meet the intended depth and rigor of the KAS for Social Studies?

1. Are there any discrepancies between how you and/or your PLC rated the assignment? If so, discuss the differences.
2. Review the reflection section of the Social Studies Assignment Review Protocol. What changes are needed to improve alignment to the KAS for Social Studies?

Assignment Review

- Grade 1 Social Studies Assignment
- Grade 2 Social Studies Assignment
- Grade 3 Social Studies Assignment
  - Assignment Review Protocol Template

For additional examples of strongly aligned KAS for Social Studies assignments, visit the Student Assignment Library.

PLC members used information in the social studies modules to complete activities outside of scheduled gatherings. Teachers designed mini-lessons, created compelling questions, and curated instructional resources. For one PLC assignment, teachers selected *one* source that connected with a standard from *each* disciplinary strand (i.e., civics, economics, geography, and history). After considering what students will learn by engaging with the source, the teachers wrote a compelling question and four supporting questions (one for each disciplinary strand). A third-grade teacher mapped social studies standards for a short story about Kamishibai (a form of Japanese street theater and storytelling) (see Figure 4). The teacher's inquiries support students' critical thinking about social studies concepts in light of the text.

Figure 3

Social Studies Council Google Site

Teachers completed PLC assignments with the intention of one day using the material to support classroom instruction. Teachers displayed and discussed their work samples at PLC meetings. The process helped teachers see the full spectrum of standards and ideas to enrich the social studies curriculum.

Develop inquiry-focused social studies curriculum maps

The insights teachers gained from deconstructing standards, completing training modules, and presenting PLC assignments led to revamping social studies curriculum maps. Compelling questions have taken the place of unit titles. Instead of listing standards solely by discipline, redesigned curriculum documents group standards by each unit bundle's supporting questions. Revised social studies curriculum maps show an obvious correlation among standards, supporting questions, and learning targets. Our curriculum documents reflect the interconnectedness of disciplinary standards and signify the impact of the inquiry process.

Design instructional units that address all inquiry and disciplinary standards

Training modules, weekly assignments, goal monitoring, and reflective discourse spurred teachers' enthusiasm for designing standards-based social studies instruction. Teachers collaboratively designed a lesson planning template structured on key elements of the inquiry process: questioning, investigating, using evidence, and communicating conclusions (see Figure

4). The instructional document identifies the concepts and skills students are expected to master for each standard. A key step in the instructional design process was making connections to other subject areas, teaching resources, current events, and student interests. After identifying essential learning goals, curriculum connections, and appropriate sources of information, teachers were ready to outline instructional procedures.

Figure 4

Source aligned to social standards across disciplinary strands

Source	"Kamishibai Man" (Journeys Lesson 9)	
Compelling Question	How do traditions change over time?	
Disciplinary Strand	**Standard**	**Supporting Question**
Civics	**3.C.CV.1** Compare civic virtues and democratic principles within a variety of diverse world communities.	How was the Kamishibai man's storytelling an example of a civic duty? What were Kamishibai men's involvement in their communities? Did they benefit their communities?
Economics	**3.E.MI.2** Describe the relationship between supply and demand.	How had the demand for the Kamishibai man's storytelling changed when he returned to the city?
Geography	**3.G.MM.1** Analyze how human settlement and movement impact diverse groups of people. **3.G.HE.1** Explain how the culture of places and regions influences how people modify and adapt to their environments.	What had changed geographically that affected the Kamishibai man's journey into the city? How did the Kamishibai man adapt to the change he discovered? What were the influences that caused the tradition of storytelling to change?
History	**3.H.CE.1** Compare diverse world communities in terms of members, customs, and traditions, to the local community.	What events took place that led to the change in the way the Kamishibai man told his stories? Is there a tradition we have in our community or that you have in your family that has been passed down through the years? How has it changed?

Figure 5

Social Studies planning document

Social Studies Planning Document
Unit:
Grade:

Timeframe
•
Standards
•
Major Topics/Themes
•
Connections (Journeys, Current Events)
•
Compelling Question
•
Supporting Questions
•
Resources
•
Instructional Procedures (including Formative Assessments)
1.
Communicating Conclusions (Summative Assessment)
•

Evaluate teaching strategies, resource integration, literacy connections, and student understandings

Effective and inclusive instruction is responsive to students' misconceptions, queries, and unique learning needs. The Social Studies Council dedicated meeting time to reflect on instructional practices. We centered conversations on how pedagogy and resources impact

student learning. PLCs can be the perfect environment for sharing student work, referencing instructional alterations, and discussing inquiry-based strategies for subsequent activities.

Design assessments where students use evidence to answer questions

The Kentucky Academic Standards for Social Studies calls for a variety of assessment types, especially performance-based assessment. Performance assessments ask students to create products or perform tasks to demonstrate mastery of skills and standards. The Social Studies Council designed tasks that give students opportunities to investigate answers to compelling and supporting questions. Teachers have taken students on virtual tours of Kentucky farms to investigate ways human activities impact the physical environment. Students have used nonfiction texts, photographs, and pop culture to create collaborative e-books on what defines countries in North America. Compelling and supporting questions sustain students' investigation of multiple sources to support conclusions.

Reflect on learning outcomes, modify instruction, and update pacing guides

PLC meetings are a great time for discussing changes made during classroom instruction. The Social Studies Council used questioning techniques to clarify the context and intent of instructional plans. Teachers analyzed student work samples in light of scoring guides and state standards. Collective reflection on instruction and learning outcomes can help teachers identify growth areas and give meaningful feedback. Responsive and nonjudgmental feedback fosters a sense of trust and agency among PLC members.

Continue the journey with ongoing coaching and collaboration

The journey to improving social studies curriculum and instruction has no final destination. The improvement process is continuous and iterative. Through ongoing collaboration and coaching, teachers continue to curate resources and refine lesson plans. Our motivation lies in giving students engaging and hands-on experiences to learn social studies skills and concepts. Students need access to inquiry-based, standards-aligned social studies instruction early in their educational paths. Collaborative professional learning communities can jump-start students' journey to being thoughtful, productive, and responsive citizens.

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Learning Gardens and Social Education in Detroit

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Abstract

In this article, the authors examine how a learning garden at an alternative, public school in Detroit, Michigan fostered authentic, integrative learning in the social studies. In interviews, high school students described how a community-oriented, service-learning experience advanced their understanding of socioeconomics and sustainability. Through authentic assessments, such as grant writing, they honed real-world skills. This study suggests that learning gardens are promising pedagogical spaces in the social studies.

Keywords: Learning gardens, sustainability, civic education

Although learning gardens have been the subject of research in the field of science education, their potential to advance learning objectives in social studies education has not been fully explored. This article examines how an interdisciplinary learning garden at an alternative secondary school in Detroit increased students' understanding of sustainability, civic engagement, and economics. Based on interviews with a leading educator and her students, the study suggests that school gardens foster authentic learning in the social studies.

Literature review

Having waned after the end of World War II, the popularity of school gardens in the United States began increasing in the 1990s (Williams & Dixon, 2013). When Michelle Obama invited school children to contribute to the preparation of the White House Kitchen Garden in 2009, public interest in gardening and health grew. Edible gardens on school grounds became more common, particularly at the elementary level.

Learning gardens can be important components of "green pedagogies" (Green & Duhn, 2015, p. 60). Gardens serve as contexts for reflection on sustainability and land stewardship (Bucklin-Sporer & Pringle, 2010; Eugenio-Gozalbo et al., 2020; Ozer, 2007). Through gardening, people gain appreciation of social and ecological interdependence (Ozer, 2007; Shan & Walter, 2015). Gardens are "intercultural contact zones" that foster relationships and shared practices (Shan & Walter, 2015, p. 32). Green and Duhn (2015) wrote, "There is potential for extensive learning how to live together in more sustainable ways, including living together with more-than-human others. Growing food, sharing food, protecting food and enjoying food all become aspects of such learning which is essentially learning the ethics of sustainable living in shared spaces" (p. 70).

Gardening has been associated with positive self-perception by students (Holmes et al., 2021). In the Mississippi Delta, fifth-grade students, who had been engaged in gardening at school, reported being able to lead, to collaborate, and to solve problems (Holmes et al., 2021). Gardens foster deeper learning (Bellanca, 2015). Green schoolyards "…have the potential to teach ecological literacy, invigorate children's bodies, open and inspire young minds, and knit our communities more closely together in the process" (Danks, 2010, p. 247).

The cultivation of local food sources is a protective and transformative endeavor (Williams & Brown, 2012). In green schoolyards, edible crops improve the quality and supply of food (Bucher, 2017; Danks, 2010). In Detroit, urban farming is a well-established and thriving practice. Nevertheless, many of the city's residents, who live in low-income neighborhoods, still have inadequate access to healthy foods, and they do not live in the vicinity of supermarkets (Zenk et al., 2005). Poor diets are associated with morbidities (Williams & Brown, 2012). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people in the United States, who are affected by food and nutrition insecurity, has increased from 35 million to 42 million (Rosenbloom, 2021). Sustainably grown gardens help address hunger. They build capital, and they lead to empowerment (Cockrall-King, 2012; Hodgson et al., 2011; Ladner, 2011).

According to the United Nations, environmental degradation, food security, and poverty are critical global challenges (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Self-provisioning through urban gardens increases community capacity (Mougeot, 2006; Hodgson et al., 2011). In schools, garden-based, sustainability education requires an interdisciplinary approach. In *Ecological Literacy*, Orr (1992) wrote, "…environmental issues are complex and cannot be understood through a single discipline or department" (p. 90).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study lies in deeper learning and critically relevant civics (CRC). Influenced by constructivism, deeper learning stresses the application of knowledge and the development of relevant products (Bellanca, 2015). Learning in the agricultural program in Detroit was experiential. Direct instruction on sustainability, the environment, economics, and health was combined with fieldwork. Students planned and planted gardens; tended and harvested crops; and distributed fresh, organic food to the school's cafeteria, other students, and people in the community. They installed rain barrels, and they built and repaired hoop houses (see Figure 1). Involved in culinary competitions, they learned about diverse cuisines. Their literacy skills grew as they wrote grants to purchase equipment, such as a solar air heater and water pump. The students communicated their conclusions with other students and the public through student-led tours of the garden and hip-hop music videos (see Figure 2).

Figure 1

The garden was a productive and sustainable system.

Figure 2

The students led tours of the hoop house.

Critically relevant civics involves students in the analysis of structural inequalities as they explore civic life and renewal through extramural and community-oriented learning experiences (Clay & Rubin, 2019). Contemporary environmental, social, and economic issues are relevant to civic education (Eugenio-Gozalbo et al., 2020). The learning garden in this study was the context in which Detroit students examined socio-economic disparities in urban landscapes. They assessed how the well-being of the predominantly African American community could be advanced. The students examined the role of gardens in securing healthy and affordable food sources at the local level. As they managed the garden at their school, their sense of agency increased.

Critically relevant civics was embedded in the framework of another Detroit secondary school, the critically acclaimed Catherine Ferguson Academy, which provided pregnant and

parenting teens with urban farming skills, food, and financial security (Wilson et al., 2019). The Catherine Ferguson Academy was nationally renowned for its experiential learning practices that supported student agency and academic success. Educators made curricular connections to the students' planting, tending, and harvesting of crops for local markets and the community (Hanson & Marty, 2012; Wilson et al., 2019). The work at the academy was well documented in the *Grown in Detroit* documentary; the filmmakers captured footage of teachers, who cultivated independence and knowledge of nutritious foods (Poppenk, 2009).

Method

The school and participants

This study was conducted at a small, public high school for boys in Detroit, Michigan during a two-year period. The majority of school's students qualified for the National School Lunch Program (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], n.d.). Over 98% of the students were African American. Having received support in the form of public and private grants and two visits by a United States senator, who serves on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, the school's agricultural program was known statewide.

The teacher, Marquita Reese, who founded and directed the program, participated in this study by engaging in a semi-structured interview. Five students volunteered to be interviewed as well. All participants were African American. This IRB-approved research was conducted with the support of the school principal. Permissions were obtained to publish photographs and the first names of students.

Data Collection

To explore the value of the school's learning garden to social education, the educators decided to conduct semi-structured interviews. Interviews engage participants in a reflective process (Stringer, 2014). The semi-structured format allows researchers to explore unanticipated topics (Adams, 2010). For this study, the authors wrote two sets of open-ended questions: one for Reese and the other for the students. Of the use of interviews in research, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) wrote, "Interviews are a powerful data-collection strategy because they use one-to-one interaction between researchers and interviewees…Open-ended interviews generate considerable information which may lead to the reconceptualization of the issues under study" (p. 229).

In the spring of two consecutive academic years, student volunteers were interviewed during lunchtime. They were asked about their reasons for participating in the agricultural program and the program's impacts. Three students were interviewed as a group during the first year. They took turns answering each question. After the interview, the students gave one of the researchers a guided tour of the garden while explaining the program and its impact. Field notes and photographs were taken. The teacher, Reese, was interviewed separately after school about her background, educational objectives, and teaching methods.

During the second year of the study, two young men volunteered to participate, and they were interviewed together. Held in classrooms, the interviews were recorded with a handheld, digital voice recorder. The audio files were later transcribed by Rev.com. After being checked for accuracy, the transcripts of the interviews were read independently multiple times by the researchers. While examining the transcripts of the students' interviews, the authors identified commonalities, and they assigned descriptors in a heuristic process (Saldana, 2013). Emergent concepts were analyzed. Supported by the field notes, the findings are presented in this article.

Findings

The student interviews

Reasons for enrolling

During the interviews, the students offered different reasons for enrolling in the gardening program: an interest in health; a desire to know more about organic gardening methods; a recommendation from their mentor-teacher, Reese; an appreciation of hands-on learning and fresh food; and the potential to earn money through Michigan's work-based learning opportunities program. Each student earned minimum wage and elective credit hours through the program. Prior to their involvement, the students' experiences with gardening varied.

Benefits of the program

The students associated the learning garden with multiple positive outcomes. A form of service-learning, engagement in the garden led to the provision of healthy produce for the school. The students viewed the garden as a means to strengthen and to revitalize the local community. Because Reese's pedagogical approach was deliberate in its interdisciplinarity, the students' understanding of human-environment interaction and sustainability grew. Through economic education, they gained insight into production, consumption, and distribution as well as personal finance. As their knowledge of food, nutrition, and health deepened, they learned about diversity through the culinary arts. Reese's use of authentic assessments, such as grant writing, sharpened the students' transferrable skills. The students did not mention any negative consequences of their involvement in the program. The key concepts that emerged from the interviews with the students are described below.

Service to the school community

The participants viewed their cultivation of fresh, organic produce for the school's cafeteria as a form of service to the school. In the interviews, the young men explained how the students were regularly eating fresh salads because of the garden. They noted that, were they not to cultivate organic produce, the cafeteria would serve conventional vegetables grown in and shipped from other locations. "A lot of people don't know where they get their food from. Honestly, I didn't know before we started working in the garden," Gerald said.

In addition to providing produce to the cafeteria, the students often prepared their own dishes. They then shared samples with their classmates. Andre said that his classmates were appreciative. "From the salads, we make dishes and samples just to give (the students) things to taste…A lot of times you can't really tell them what's in it until after they eat it because…they are afraid to try new things. But after that, their response is actually wonderful."

Community ties and urban revitalization

The learning garden strengthened community ties. The school's campus is unfenced, and visitors regularly paused to talk with Reese and her students. During times of harvest, the visitors were offered bags of produce. The students explained that they would sometimes take the opportunity to talk with people about nutrition, pesticides, and genetically modified foods. In addition to offering sustenance, the students sought to improve community health. Making reference to the prevalence of cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure in the African American community, Deon said that he viewed the improvement of community health through diet as an important part of the revitalization of Detroit.

During the interview, the students spoke about the school's garden being a model for urban farming. They saw their work as part of the larger urban farming movement in Detroit. With the decline of manufacturing and the migration of residents to suburban communities, Detroit began losing population in the 1950s (Binelli, 2013). Michigan was the only state to have lost population between 2000 and 2010. With state and federal funding, thousands of houses have been razed by the Detroit Demolition Program to address urban blight. The cultivation of public and private land has grown throughout Detroit (Cockrall-King, 2012; Nordahl, 2009).

Having identified the city's vacant land as a community asset, the students engaged in civic problem-solving. The young men spoke about the potential for community gardens to address food scarcity among low-income residents and the homeless. They noted that some neighborhoods in Detroit were food deserts where access to fresh produce was limited. Participation in the agricultural program raised the students' awareness of how organic gardening could positively affect community well-being and health. In analyzing public problems and deliberating how to address them, the students were active, responsible citizens (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013). The garden functioned as a "gateway" to civic learning and engagement (Ray et al., 2016, p. 392).

Human-environment interaction and sustainability

"What we're doing with the garden definitely has a positive impact on the environment," affirmed Kyle. From Reese, they learned about sustainable agricultural practices. Although their focus was on cultivating edible plants, they grew flowers to attract pollinators (see Figure 3). To fertilize the soil, they spread used coffee grounds from the school's coffee pots. Recycled paper was shredded and reused as mulch. The students learned how to compost. They installed a solar pump to bring water from rain barrels to plants. To extend the growing season, particularly for

tomatoes, they acquired a solar air heater. Through their efforts, the garden became a regenerative ecosystem. "I think that everyone has an impact on the environment, whether it's an individual or individuals in the community. And I think that it's up to you whether you make that impact a good one or a negative one," Kyle said.

Figure 3

Flowers were planted to attract pollinators.

Economic education and empowerment

"Who am I relying on to get my food? Am I relying on the grocery story? Am I relying on a farmer's market? I can grow my food right here in my backyard…I am self-sustaining…I can provide for myself, my family, and my community," Kyle affirmed. The students considered the process of growing one's own food to be empowering. Gardeners are economic producers (Hake, 2017). The fruits of their labor impact personal finance. Gerald observed that having an independent source of produce offers households some protection from price fluctuations in grocery stores. Because the students had the option of taking food home, they had seen how the vegetables from the garden had reduced the cost of food for their families. Gerald explained that, as an adult, he would cultivate his own garden.

As work-study students, the young men expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to earn money for personal and familial expenses. Andre said, "(The program) has been beneficial to me because...it gives me a little extra money to get things together, and a little extra money to help my mom out if she needs any help with bills." The work-study aspect also increased the students' sense of responsibility. Kyle explained, "Having a job – you have to be on time. You have to be there to sign in every day, and you have to perform as well as learn while you're performing."

As part of their economic education, the students considered gardens within market systems (NCSS, 2013). In the program, they discussed how, theoretically, they might scale their production in order to sell produce at venues such as farmer's markets. They spoke about reinvesting the proceeds in their school garden and then establishing new gardens in other

locations. Interested in organic farming, the students learned that organic produce must be certified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, n.d.). They gained insight into government regulation of the market.

Food literacy and health

The students' food and agricultural literacy grew. The authors of other studies of school gardens have noted similar outcomes (Williams & Dixon, 2013; Green & Duhn, 2015). In Detroit, each young man mentioned one or more vegetables that he had never had prior to participating in the agricultural program. One student admitted that "just about everything" in the garden had been new to him. When interviewed, the students described the successful cultivation of tomatoes, cilantro, cabbage, spinach, parsley, dill, mushrooms, mustard, onions, butternut squash, corn, potatoes, kale, arugula/rocket, brussel sprouts, watermelon, and strawberries. In Michigan's climate, they had the greatest success growing greens, particularly Swiss chard, collard greens, and lettuce. When asked how the student body generally felt about the increase in the cafeteria's use of fresh produce, Deon affirmed, "They love it."

Reese sought to expose the students to the cuisines of diverse cultures. She arranged cooking lessons by the school's chefs. The students learned to make dishes from India, Mexico, and other countries. Independently, the young men began experimenting with ingredients from the garden to create meals. In 2017, they joined the Healthy Schools Campaign by participating in the local Cooking up Change competition. Students in the competition prepare healthy meals that meet the national nutritional requirements for school meals. After winning in the city of Detroit, the students competed in the Cooking up Change National Finals in Washington, D.C.

During the interviews, the young men talked about becoming more conscious of eating healthily. From Reese, they had learned to read labels and to look for high-quality ingredients. All students said that their eating habits had improved. They were eating more vegetables and organic foods, and they were consuming less junk food. As a result, they reported feeling better. Deon said, "You have control over what you eat and what you put into your body." Eating organic vegetables and healthy foods, he explained, is energizing. Brent agreed.
"I've been moving faster," he said.

Authentic assessments

The students spoke positively about authentic assessments that were designed to promote literacy. Reese had the students, as part of their management of the garden, prepare grant applications. On the applications, the students had to explain and persuade reviewers of their need for infrastructure, such as hoop houses and solar equipment. Multiple grants were funded. When a U.S. senator first visited the school for a student-led tour of the garden, the students said that they were both surprised and honored. Through this real-world civics lesson, the young men realized that their elected officials were interested in their well-being. "They actually care," said Andre.

To enable the students to communicate creatively, Reese partnered with the school's social studies teacher, Quan Neloms, who ran an after-school program called the Lyricist Society. Three students, who were interviewed for this study, wrote lyrics for a music video, *Let's start a revolution – a food revolution*. The hip-hop music video, *Nutrients*, was created by students, who were not interviewed for this study because they had graduated. In *Nutrients*, the young men integrated aspects of digital storytelling: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v =0TowfXhfdKg. They used original footage of the Black Panthers' breakfast program to contextualize their messages of self-sufficiency and health (Lyricist Society, 2017). For the video, they filmed scenes of students' enjoying the school's garden, preparing salads, visiting a farmer's market, eating healthily, and being active. Engagement in dimension four of the Inquiry Arc, the communication of conclusions and the taking of informed action, was part of Reese's garden-based pedagogy (NCSS, 2013).

The interview with Marquita Reese

In her interview, Reese described her experiences with gardening as lifelong. For generations, the members of her family have gardened, shared seeds, and enjoyed high-quality food. Wanting her students to have the knowledge and enrichment that come from gardening, she established the agricultural program at the Detroit secondary school. Informed by decades of teaching and experiences with learning gardens at other schools, Reese's approach to the agricultural program was holistic and integrative. She and her students considered health and self-care in light of the complex socio-economic issues, including food insecurity, that face many people in the African American community in Detroit. Reese established learning objectives that were not limited to the STEM fields in which she specialized. In her own words, she taught, "self-awareness, self-consciousness, and self-sustainability."

"Everything that we've been doing is geared to the community…it's all community based," Reese said. She spoke about sharing plants, produce, and recipes with people in the school and neighborhood. She shared how she and her students had surveyed members of the school community to learn about their hopes for the garden and the types of crops that they wanted to have. She expressed her desire that all people be well nourished and healthy. "No one can go hungry if you have a seed. Because one seed produces a hundred seeds, and a hundred seeds produce a thousand seeds," she said.

In her interview, Reese explained that the students' involvement in grant writing was part of their leadership development. She wanted the students to see possibilities and to be empowered. Recognizing the value of their work on the learning garden, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Lifetime Foundation, Bosch, and Huntington Bank awarded grants. Reese observed that engaging in the solving of real-world problems increased the students' sense of self-efficacy and confidence. "My long-term goal is to develop thinkers, leaders, and problem-solvers," she explained.

In their separate interviews, the students described Reese as an impactful educator who created unique opportunities for autonomous and experiential learning (see Figure 4). Andre stated, “She’s a great person as far as thinking outside the box and coming up with new and great ideas. She’s a very loving and caring person, and we appreciate her so much.” Kyle added, “Her teaching is unorthodox but brilliant…She has a way of teaching and allowing you to teach yourself at the same time.” “She wants you to live up to her standards,” said Brent.

Figure 4

Marquita Reese and a student discussed the garden’s yields.

Discussion

The agricultural program in Detroit involved students in service-learning, a form of civic education that is both reflective and applied (Carter, 1997). As students engage in service-learning, their feelings of efficacy and responsibility grow (Butin, 2010; Cipolle, 2010; Furco, 2002; Webster, 2007). Because of its emphasis on community engagement, service-learning is in alignment with critically relevant civics; the learning process is salient and dynamic (Clay & Rubin, 2019).

Learning gardens enhance social studies education, but limited funding, teacher experience, and instructional materials present challenges (Graham et al., 2005; Ozer, 2007). In some schools, administrators have prioritized classroom preparations for high-stakes tests (Bucher, 2017). Currently, Big Green offers material support to educators, who wish to establish learning gardens: https://biggreen.org/apply/. The organization encourages the formation of diverse teams of teacher-leaders to manage school gardening programs. On its website, educators will find activites, lessons, and a video archive. The Edible Schoolyard Project (2021) in Berkeley, California offers online and summer training to educators as well as a variety of resources on its website. USDA grants are available for the Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program. Interested educators may apply on the FoodCorps website: https://foodcorps .org/apply-for-a-grant-to-expand-nutrition-education/.

When large school gardens are not feasible, small-scale projects, such the cultivation of edibles in raised beds or vertical gardening systems, are practical alternatives for social studies

teachers. Windowsill gardens would ideally begin with seeds and peat pellets, though starter plants could be introduced to classrooms. Grow light bulbs are easily inserted in standard lamps to support indoor plants. On the website of National Geographic (2021), social studies educators will find guides, with graphics and checklists, to schoolyard gardens: https://www .nationalgeographic.org/media/schoolyard-garden-guides/.

Using visual art, social studies teachers may spark classroom discussions of gardening and sustainability. Etling's (2010) poster, *Sustain,* conveys a simple and effective message (see Figure 5). Grasping a carrot, Etling's Black Power fist is green (Taylor, 2020). The poster analysis worksheet of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) (n.d.) would be an effective tool to facilitate analysis; it requires students to identify symbols and colors, consider the audience, and explain the poster's purpose.

Figure 5

Sustain

Note. Etling, W. (2010)

Historic, political artwork on gardening lends itself to analysis in history classes. At the urging of the United States government, victory gardens, including gardens in schoolyards, were widely planted during World War I and World War II (Hayden-Smith, 2014; Sumner, 2019). During the Second World War, artists, who were employed by the Works Progress Administration, designed posters to persuade the public to establish gardens (see Figure 6). In victory gardens on private and public lots, an estimated 40% of the country's produce was grown (Cockrall-King, 2012). The victory gardens promoted preparedness and solidarity.

Figure 6

Grow It Yourself. Plan a Farm Garden Now

Note. Bayer, H. (1941-1943). Library of Congress

Conclusion

Interdisciplinary learning gardens are promising contexts for constructivist, social studies education. In Detroit, the school garden became a community asset. As students examined socioeconomic and environmental questions, they engaged in problem-solving and decision-making. While learning about the agri-food system, they considered their own ecological footprints. The findings of this study suggest that gardens as pedagogical spaces and topics of study are worthy of the attention of social studies educators.

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