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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Connecting Past to Present:

Empowering Students through Social Studies

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree Master of Arts

In

Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

by

Romero A. Maratea

Committee in charge:

Luz Chung, Chair
Claire Ramsey
Marcia Sewall

2008

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008

Dedication

This is dedicated to those who defy all obstacles and manage to teach with the purpose of giving all students an equal opportunity to lead a positive and fulfilling life. Thank you for what you do.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Connecting Past to Present:

Empowering Students through Social Studies

by

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Masters of Arts in Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Luz Chung, Chair

In the current environment of No Child Left Behind-driven school reform, most attempts to ratchet up academic standards have involved creating pacing calendars that steer teachers through the content, benchmark tests that measure students' degree of mastery of a multitude of standards, increased standardized testing, and rampant tracking of students. The result has been the creation of an increasingly scripted approach to teaching that does not take into account the needs of diverse learners. Due to this reality, it is up to teachers to take steps to empower all students, especially those of minority status who are stuck in "failing" schools, with the tools necessary to become lifelong learners. *Connecting Past to Present* is a social studies curriculum that seeks to do just that.

Implementation of *Connecting Past to Present* took place in a seventh grade classroom comprised mostly of Latino students of low socio-economic status. Data

collected consisted of the results of students' attempts to self-monitor their work habits; assessments of students' abilities to use Bloom's Taxonomy as a tool to reach higher levels of thinking; teacher observations of discussions and work samples to measure students' progression towards a critical perspective; and students' responses to reflective writing experiences throughout the process.

The data indicate that students can succeed in a challenging curriculum that provides them with the tools needed to do so. Students demonstrated the ability to monitor and improve their own work habits and to think critically about historical and contemporary issues of tolerance and equality.

I. The Importance of Empowerment

Introduction

Due to the failure of several schools to get test scores to rise as quickly as the state and federal governments would prefer, the district in which I teach has been designated a “program improvement district.” The result of this categorization is that we have gone through a number of district-wide structural changes to satisfy sanctions called for under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. At my particular site this has come in the form of restructuring the school day, creating professional learning communities, implementing staff development focused solely on reading comprehension in the areas of predicting and prior knowledge, increased tracking of students in all areas of instruction, and mainstreaming all but a handful of our special education students.

At no time during this process of improvement has the school or district administration even mentioned the need to engage the large numbers of disconnected and underachieving students who seem to sleepwalk through the school year. Nor has the need to empower students with the cultural capital of the schools necessary to be successful academically been broached. The end result is that teaching and learning experiences at Happy Valley Middle School (a pseudonym) have become limited in scope, and they do very little to address the various needs of a diverse population

Although there is no accurate means of calculating actual rates due to the way high schools track them, it has been estimated by administrators at Happy Valley Middle School that up to half of the students who finish eighth grade and move onto high school drop out before they graduate. These numbers demonstrate a need for change that includes consideration of current pedagogical practices, particularly those that may

discourage students of color from being fully engaged in the learning process.

Unfortunately, these numbers have been manipulated by district administration into “data” to be used to drive decision-making that emphasizes test scores and teachers’ deficiencies as perceived by those in charge.

Seventh-grade social studies curriculum, as required by the state of California, includes a very diverse mix of civilizations and historical topics that incorporate a challenging variety of complex concepts. Figure 1 lists the eleven topics of study as mandated by the California State Board of Education.

7.1 Students analyze the causes and effects of the vast expansion and ultimate disintegration of the Roman Empire.
7.2 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Islam in the Middle Ages.
7.3 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of China in the Middle Ages.
7.4 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the sub-Saharan civilizations of Ghana and Mali in Medieval Africa.
7.5 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Medieval Japan.
7.6 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Medieval Europe.
7.7 Students compare and contrast the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Meso-American and Andean civilizations.
7.8 Students analyze the origins, accomplishments, and geographic diffusion of the Renaissance.
7.9 Students analyze the historical developments of the Reformation.
7.10 Students analyze the historical developments of the Scientific Revolution and its lasting effect on religious, political, and cultural institutions.
7.11 Students analyze political and economic change in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries (the Age of Exploration, the Enlightenment, and the Age of Reason).

Figure 1: California State Board of Education History-Social Science Standards 7

Not only does this content encompass five different continents, it also addresses some rather complex ideas. Included in this wide array of historical content are the study of several civilizations that existed at different times and places, such as the Roman Empire, Medieval China and Japan, and early Meso-American and Andean worlds; exploration of various religious movements, such as the development and spread of Islam, Buddhism and Christianity; and analysis of abstract and complex ideas, such as diffusion of Renaissance ideas, the genesis of humanist beliefs during the Enlightenment, and the evolution of thought during the Age of Reason. The state standards are non-negotiable, so it is up to teachers to help students make sense of such an eclectic mix of heady content. Doing so requires students to think at higher levels than many are acquainted with. In order to think at higher levels, they need to be empowered with the tools to do so. Textbooks and worksheets often fail in this regard.

Based on the research I have conducted, it is my belief that all efforts at closing the achievement gap are futile unless we make a concerted effort to make learning more meaningful and democratic in our public schools. As Deci (1995) states, “Motivation requires that people see a relationship between their behavior and desired outcome” (p. 59). Bracey (2006) asks, “If you could answer any question about student achievement, what would it be?” (p. 1). I took this question to task and concluded that I would ask the following: If provided with choices, relevant learning experiences, self-monitoring techniques and a structure for thinking at higher levels, could students who are traditionally subjected to basic skills education improve their ability to think critically about the world around them?

The following is the story of one frustrated teacher's attempts to empower a historically disenfranchised group of students with several tools that will equip them to take charge of their own learning. It stems from the reality that decision makers have exerted undue power and influence to enact a uniform standard of teaching and learning that works to the detriment of an increasing number of diverse students. I do not have any false notions that this curriculum blueprint will solve all of the problems educators face when trying to do what is best for students. I would never aspire to such heights when those much more knowledgeable than I have fallen short of this goal. After all, as Wells and Haneda (1992) write,

For more than two thousand years, educators have argued the need for a form of instruction in which learners are treated as active agents who, along with their teachers, engage in a form of discourse that aims for the enhancement of understanding rather than one-way transmission of information" (p. 151).

But reform has to start somewhere, and what better place to begin than in a single classroom? Teachers have a responsibility to make a positive difference in the lives of students regardless of the constraints established by policy. As Ayers (2001) states, "Good teaching requires most of all a thoughtful, caring teacher committed to the lives of students" (p. 18). This curriculum is meant to be one tool that teachers can use as a blueprint to enhance current curriculum that has been thrust upon them. Is there a need for such a curriculum? The ensuing chapter will attempt to answer this question.

II. Focusing On Meaningful Reform

Introduction

“The world’s greatest problems do not result from people not being able to read and write. They result from people in the world...being unable to solve the world’s intractable problems such as...poverty, racism, sexism, and war” (Banks, 2004, p. 291). These words, spoken by James Banks at the American Educational Research Association’s annual conference in San Diego in April of 2004, succinctly illustrate the need for educators to pursue strategies that teach students to think critically in order to address issues of equity and tolerance within the classroom and within the curriculum itself. Specifically, we need to take action to empower students in low performing schools with tools that will help them succeed in an educational system that is not structured to build upon their many strengths.

Challenges for our Schools

The narrowing of curricular options that has resulted from the accountability requirements of NCLB has done a great deal to erode the sense of community at thousands of “failing” schools around the country. As McGinnis (2007) points out, “Within the current climate of mandatory standards, accountability, and testing, there is little room...to engage students in creativity or personal, meaningful curricula” (p. 32). Of the students in the district in which I teach, roughly 50% are designated as English Language Learners (ELLs), 58% are Latino, and 59% are designated economically disadvantaged (California Department of Education District Report, 2003-2004). In order to collect data, students are subjected to district benchmark tests several times each trimester, and teachers are required to adhere to pacing calendars that heavily emphasize

adopted textbook curricula, which take no account of students' diverse learning needs or teachers' professional judgments. As Wink and Putney (2007) lament, "Local teachers are controlled by mandated policymakers who not only reside in far-away places, but who are removed from the socio-cultural context of the classroom" (p. 36). The result is that educators, at the classroom and site level, have been forced to implement practices that do not fit the needs of their particular classroom populations.

According to Banks (2004), "The increasing ethnic, cultural, language, and religious diversity in nation-states throughout the world has raised new questions and possibilities about educating students for effective citizenship" (p. 289). One bit of evidence to support this claim is that Whites are no longer the majority of the population in California, and other states are on track to experience the same demographic change over the coming decades. Crawford (2007) observes that NCLB has had destructive effects on the education of minority students it is supposed to be helping. These include

excessive class time devoted to test preparation, a curriculum narrowed to the two tested subjects, neglect of critical thinking in favor of basic skills, pressure to reduce the native-language instruction, demoralization of teachers whose students fall short of unrealistic cut scores, demoralization of children who are forced to take tests they can't understand, and, perhaps worst of all, practices that encourage low-scoring students to drop out before test day" (p. 40).

In other words, minority students trapped at "failing" schools receive an entirely different public education (absent instruction in thinking critically and bereft of meaningful learning choices) than those fortunate enough to go to a school in better standing.

Combine the statements of Banks and Crawford and you have the makings of a system of apartheid rather than the beacon of democracy we hold up to guide the rest of the world.

We live in what 2004 presidential candidate John Edwards frequently referred to in his campaign speeches as “Two Americas.” One population has access to all of the key ingredients necessary to lead a rich and fulfilling life within a community that values them for who they are, and the majority of our public schools emphasize teaching and learning experiences that support their values. The other is made up of those who have repeatedly had their values, cultures, languages, and, in many instances, their very identities devalued and discouraged. As Deci (1995) writes,

In spite of the fact that the American system has served to productively motivate large numbers of people, there are some who have ‘fallen out of the system,’ who have not been productively motivated by it, because they have not had access to the contingencies that are central to the system” (p. 61).

In the reality illustrated above it becomes important that teachers take steps to create empowering learning experiences for all learners in their classrooms. In fact, there may be no better time than the present to begin a movement towards what some refer to as culturally responsive instruction with the goal of “creating safe and productive environments with a diverse student population” (Bondy et al, 2007, p. 327). If we are ever to fulfill a fraction of the “greatness” many Americans understand the United States to possess, it is necessary to incorporate pedagogical practices that recognize the validity of our many different cultures and beliefs, encourage all students to develop their own positive self identities as learners, and promote democratic practices from the first day of kindergarten to the last day of college.

Currently, administrators and decision makers appear to see students as data points to be manipulated across a line demarcated by adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals, a system set up to measure a school’s progress towards meeting benchmarks

established under NCLB legislation. Those not at appropriate proficiency levels, overwhelmingly students of color, are culled from the pack and marked for intervention. At my site this usually takes the form of an extra period of language arts in which students' academic weaknesses, as identified by their standardized test scores, can be addressed without regard to the skills and knowledge they already possess. Such practice reflects a

deficit view [that] sees the homes of people of color as providing limited language-learning environments, having faulty patterns of socialization, and placing little value on education. This view leads to educational practices that reduce knowledge to transmitting, memorizing, and repeating information. Schools, then, disempower students by failing to provide them with information that is relevant to the context of their lives (McCarthy, 1997, p. 146).

Such views focus on what students do not know and prohibit students' experience of the opportunities to show what they do know, as they devalue students' prior knowledge and skills. The effects are that they not only harm efforts to close the achievement gap, they also harm students' sense of well-being and decrease the likelihood that many minority students will develop a positive academic self-identity.

There are less punitive approaches to reforming pedagogical practices in our struggling schools that begin with the belief that "students who arrive from other cultures with other languages should be viewed as assets rather than liabilities" (Lewis-Moreno, 2007, p. 772). Sadly, this is not the case in my own district. It seems that our main goal has become advancing English language learners through the different ELL designations, 1-5, as quickly as possible so that they can finally be designated "fluent." Whether or not this is to reduce the number of students in that testing subgroup (for NCLB testing

purposes) can only be speculated; regardless, the result is the superficial addressing of these students' needs.

Most educators would likely agree that it is beneficial to get students to buy into what it is we want them to learn. To do so requires an approach that makes learning relevant to students' lives outside of school. This aspect of making content relevant is often overlooked in efforts to reform education. Currently in my district, middle school students reading more than three years below grade level are assigned to a *High Point* (Schifini, Deborah & Tinajero, 2000) class. This program is designed to help students close the gap between grade-level expectations and their actual reading level as assessed on the annual California Standards Test (CST). Conversations with several *High Point* teachers on my campus yielded a number of not-so-flattering quotes regarding the reading selections. Figure 2 highlights teacher's attitudes towards this program.

Teachers' comments regarding <i>High Point</i> reading selections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It offers nothing exciting." • "The kids are not interested." • "It's a struggle to keep students focused on the text." • "It makes feeble attempts to address other cultures, but it's not appropriate to our students' lives."

Figure 2: Teachers' comments regarding *High Point* reading selections

Although these comments were made in reference to a curriculum used for reading instruction, attempts at any type of pedagogy that does not take into account students' backgrounds tend to turn students off of learning because there is very little that they find enjoyable. Students who astutely read between the lines may also see themselves and their experiences disregarded in the content. What is needed is an approach that combines

student input with teachers' expertise in the realms of teaching and learning to improve achievement (Wink and Putney, 2007, p. 16).

In a recent article on motivation published in *NEA Today*, Jehlen (2007, p. 40) lists seven approaches to motivate students to learn, as shown in Figure 3.

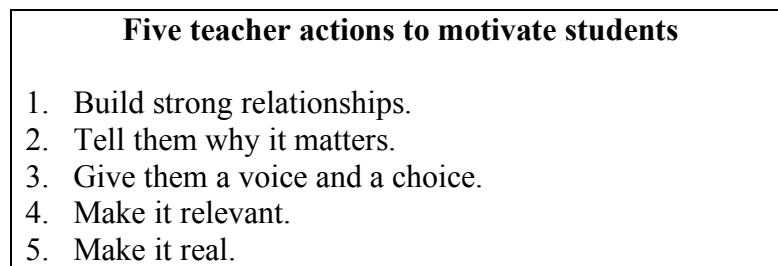


Figure 3: Five teacher actions to motivate students

These features relate very closely to what McGinnis points out when she writes that a “commitment to responsive teaching involves learning about the lives of our students, their passions, their cultures, their histories, and about the literacies that matter to them” (McGinnis, 2007, p. 33). If we are truly devoted to positive reform in our schools, we need to change the way we look at motivation and engagement when it comes to students who are currently underperforming.

In my thirteen years of classroom experiences, I have observed that students who are engaged and motivated are the same ones who tend to score higher on standardized tests than those who are not engaged and motivated. In addition, they are less likely to distract others. A study cited by Bracey (2006) found “that disruptions lowered test scores of all students a few percentile ranks” (p. 17). Assuming this is an accurate generalization, would it not be prudent for educators to consider the importance of

engaging all learners? McGinnis (2007) gets to the heart of this issue when she writes

Often, it is not necessarily ‘struggling’ readers and writers who are being left behind, but those who are experiencing narrow curriculum that does not engage them enough to want to attend school. Marginalized youth who would benefit the most from creative, artistic, and transformative practices that encourage them to consider who they are as poor, urban, or immigrant youth are receiving a curriculum that does not engage them in any meaningful way (p. 38).

When these youth are not engaged and involved in their learning they often resort to behavior that is destructive to the teaching and learning environment, as well as to their own futures. Such behaviors include skipping school, acting out in classrooms, and, unfortunately, dropping out.

In contrast, Bondy (2007) lists four attributes possessed by children who overcome adversity: social competence, problem solving abilities, autonomy, and a sense of purpose (p. 330). To help students gain these attributes, issues of higher-level thinking and academic competency have to be addressed. Simply relying on benchmark test scores and pacing guides in the quest for data does not instill any of these into our students. In fact, increasing student achievement and culturally relevant instruction are not mutually exclusive. As Ladson-Billings (1995) observes, “culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (p. 476).

Conclusion

In the push led by NCLB legislation and the current White House administration towards a system in which accountability is the key to change, our public schools have gotten off track from the route to true reform. Rather than focus on pedagogy that engages, empowers and motivates students, we have moved towards increased use of

high stakes tests, more pointed criticisms of teachers, and designation of schools as either passing or failing. As Crawford (2007) writes, “The effect has been to impoverish the educational experience of minority students—that is, to reinforce the two-tier system of public schools that civil rights advocates once challenged” (p. 31). To neutralize some of the more harmful effects of this trend, educators need to ask whether or not “we want renewal that reflects lifelong learning practices, or do we want renewal that results in short-term learning as seen in quantifiable test scores?” (Wink & Putney, 2007, p. 4).

In the ensuing pages, I will spell out the research behind culturally relevant pedagogy, address the sentiments of those opposed to such an approach to reform, and define aspects of a transformative approach in which students and teachers work together to construct a learning experience that is engaging, challenging, and empowering.

III. A Review of Relevant Research

Introduction

The push to reform our public schools has created a movement as diverse in its makeup as the people of this great blue planet we all inhabit. From “back to basics” to educating the “whole child,” there is no lack of experts. Even within camps of individuals with similar goals in mind there is disagreement on the best course of action to be taken to ensure all learners’ needs are addressed. Sleeter (1997) identified this lack of consensus when she presented a conceptual framework for California State-Monterey Bay’s teacher preparation program to a group of area school administrators. She recounts how they “turned pale” when she mentioned the program’s constructivist philosophy and emphasis on a culturally responsive curriculum. Several of them protested

this is not what the schools needed; instead they needed pedagogy that would close the achievement gap. They were looking for knowledge and insights to help them address an important equity issue – student learning in very diverse communities – yet, paradoxically, regarded equity frameworks and diverse funds of knowledge as irrelevant (p. 5).

The idea of solving an equity problem without addressing the central issue of diversity is one that prevails throughout the current one-size-fits-all movement to solve the achievement gap.

Challenges to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

One primary concern those opposed to culturally responsive teaching often express is that such pedagogical practices point out the differences in individuals, which they claim does more to divide society than to create a sense of cultural cohesion. As conservative British policy analyst Michael Irwin stated in an address to the New Zealand Business Roundtable, “Modern Western society is fractured in an unusual and often, in

my view, unhealthy way” (1996). He goes on to express his agreement with Dr. N. Tate, headmaster at a school in England, who states that the “best guarantee of strong minority cultures is the existence of a majority culture which is sure of itself, which signals that customs and traditions are things to be valued and which respects other cultures” (Irwin, 1996). This attitude is reminiscent of the “trickle down economics” of the Reagan eighties; however, this time it is cultural capital and not financial capital doing the trickling.

There are also those who believe that our public schools should play no role in altering the traditional social pyramid of our society. They view “with suspicion the siren calls of those who look to reforms in the education system as a means of restructuring societies” (Irwin, 1996). They write off social justice as “government interventions, particularly in the welfare area.” They go on to lament the loss of accountability and motivation for people to lift themselves up by the bootstraps. In doing so they assume that everyone has the means to acquire boots in the first place. Their ultimate fear is what they lament as the promotion of a “culture of dependency.” This last point was embodied in the efforts, led by conservatives during the 1980s, to eliminate what they viewed as the numerous “welfare moms” who were draining this nation of its resources.

Finally, there is the fundamental belief by those in opposition to culturally responsive teaching in public school curricula that such an approach puts too much focus on individual students and not enough focus on uniform standards that all students must meet. Irwin (1996) argues against the idea of teaching students as individuals when he states, “It is hard to see how we can prepare young people to take their place in... society if the central premise of their education is that each and every one of them is at the centre

of all teaching and learning” (p. 4) He believes that all students should be expected to achieve the same academic outcomes regardless of cultural or ethnic background, and, since “children from middle class backgrounds start school better prepared than those from working class” backgrounds, it is not possible to create a pedagogy “that allows the not-prepared to catch up without deliberately (and unjustifiably) holding back those who are prepared” (p. 8).

Although they reflect only the opinion of one individual, Irwin’s thoughts bear addressing because they help stir up much of the resistance of conservative elements within our society to multicultural education, leading to the desire to quash it as quickly and soundly as possible. And, like a number of his fellow conservatives, Irwin makes numerous allegations without any reference to research. The facts get lost in the discussion, and the argument becomes one of emotion rather than one based on logic and research.

A Transformative Approach

According to Banks (2004), nations today face the challenge of finding a balance between diversity and unity. He states that it is possible to “protect the rights of minorities and enable diverse groups to participate only when they are unified around a set of democratic values such as justice and equality” (p. 291). This requires citizens to be educated through what is often called a “transformative approach” to school reform. Wink and Putney (2002) define this as “one in which teaching and learning are in a dynamic and reciprocal relationship, and one in which learning and development are essential to both teacher and students” (p. 16). Covington adds that when students are held to one standard, regardless of learning needs, in which there is no reciprocal

relationship or educational “give and take,” the “will to learn is the first casualty” (1996). As Wink and Putney (2002) elaborate, in a transformative approach the teacher becomes “a more experienced leader, researcher, inquirer, interviewer, and investigative reporter” who creates a dynamic in which “theory and practice are joined to form praxis” (pp. 12, 14). Teachers no longer leave research to those in academia. Instead, they embrace and implement the practical advantages of proven theory to fit the learning needs of the students in the classroom.

Terminology

Navigating the language associated with issues of culture, ethnicity, and diversity in education is a tricky feat. This review of research moves between two of the most common, *culturally relevant pedagogy* and *multicultural education*. *Culturally relevant pedagogy* is defined by Gloria-Ladson Billings (1995) as “a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p. 469). Howard (2003) summarizes, “Culturally relevant pedagogy uses the knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective...It teaches to and through strengths of the students. It is culturally validating and affirming” (p. 195). He goes on to add that the “goal of culturally relevant pedagogy is to increase the academic achievement of culturally diverse students” (p. 195).

Often in the research literature the term *multicultural education* is used to describe curricula that address the needs of students of diverse ethnic, cultural and

linguistic backgrounds. In her examination of multicultural education's relationship to the movement towards standardized curriculum, Sleeter (1996) states that multicultural education includes "connections between students' interests and the curriculum, relationships between teaching strategies and the students' preferred ways of learning, and the representation of diverse groups in the curriculum" (p. 240). DomNwachukwu (2005, pp. 139-140) lists and gives characteristics of the four levels of multicultural education, Table 1, as defined by Banks.

Table 1: Four levels of multicultural education as defined by Banks

Level	Definition	Implementation
<i>Contributions Approach</i>	Teachers arrange for classroom "celebrations" of heroes, holidays, and cultures	Most commonly implemented
<i>Additive Approach</i>	Multicultural themes in the classroom; worksheets and readings related to the topic being taught	Works well in social studies and language arts; difficult in subjects such as math and science
<i>Transformational Approach</i>	Teachers use subject areas to teach students how our common culture has emerged from the combination of a diverse body of religious, ethnic, linguistic and racial groups	Students learn to take a stand against injustice and inequities in our society
<i>Social Action Approach</i>	Students make decisions on social issues and try to solve problems of inequity through action	Teachers follow pacing guides and other district requirements as closely as possible while teaching equity and social justice

The levels begin with adding elements of multiculturalism to existing curricula and graduate to a more complex approach of embedded multiculturalism in the form of addressing issues of inequity within the curriculum. It is levels three and four that present

the greatest challenge to teachers who face daily pressures to adhere to pacing calendars established by districts administrators.

Identity Development

There are several themes common to the philosophies of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education. These include helping students develop a positive self-identity, incorporating what Moll (1992) calls the *funds of knowledge* students bring into the classroom, motivating students to be active learners, and creating learning communities in our classrooms.

During the middle school years students begin the changes that will result in their adulthood. Arguably the most important process they undergo during this time, aside from the more obvious physical changes, is the search to find out who they are. As Gay (1994) states, during this time it is “imperative to help them develop a secure, clarified self-identity” (p. 149). Tatum (1997), citing Marcia (1980), defines four general “statuses” that adolescents go through in the search for identity. The first, *diffuse*, is when a child has no commitment to a particular domain of thinking. The second, *foreclosed*, is when beliefs are usually associated with parental beliefs. The third, *moratorium*, is a time of active exploration of roles, but no commitment to any particular belief. The final, *achieved*, includes a strong personal commitment to a set of beliefs (p. 53). This process can be summarized as one in which young children go from being extensions of their parents and their parents’ beliefs to having their own ideas and beliefs. A child’s educational experiences can play a profound role in this development.

The process for adolescents of color is a bit more complicated. In addition to the process illustrated in Table 1, minority students must navigate the treacherous waters that

lead to development of a healthy ethnic identity, which is defined by Gay (1994) as “the dimensions of a person’s social identity and self-concept that derives from knowledge, values, attitudes, the sense of belonging, and the emotional significance associated with membership in a particular ethnic group” (p. 151).

In her research on eight exceptional teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings (1995) recognized their abilities to put forth a practice that is culturally affirming and “not only addresses student achievement, but also helps students to accept and affirm cultural identity” (p. 496). This effort to help students develop a cultural identity was important for “its break with cultural deficit or cultural disadvantage explanations which led to compensatory educational interventions” (p. 469). It is this deficit model that invalidates students’ cultures and experiences, and it often alienates them from classroom activities.

Banks (2004) identified six levels of cultural identity development, illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Banks’ six stages of development of cultural identity

Stage	Characteristics
Cultural Psychological Captivity	Internalization of negative stereotypes associated with their social groups; self rejection and low self esteem
Cultural Encapsulation	Belief that their ethnic group is superior to others; limit interactions to their own cultural group
Cultural Identity Clarification	Clarified cultural identity; genuine cultural pride as opposed to contrived
Biculturalism	Healthy cultural identity; strong desire to function effectively in two different cultures
Multiculturalism and Reflective Nationalism	Clarified and reflective cultural identity; positive attitudes towards other racial, cultural and ethnic groups
Globalism and Global Competency	Commitment to all human beings in the world; cosmopolitanism; commitment to justice for all people

Added attention should be given to the stage of Biculturalism. Reaching this stage allows minority students to successfully function within their native culture as well as within the academic culture of the school. These are often two very different environments, as illustrated by Tatum's (1997) research of and interviews with African American students. She found, "Academic success is more often associated with being White" and "when the search for identity leads toward cultural stereotypes and away from anything that might be associated with Whiteness, academic performance often declines" (p. 63). This, in turn, can lead to what she deems an "oppositional identity" (p. 63) that precipitates this decline. She gives the example of a young African American woman who refused to include gifted and talented courses to her schedule because she worried that it would alienate her from her Black friends. To help students overcome such dilemmas, McCarthy (1997), in her ethnographic study of five students from diverse backgrounds, concluded that minority students often need to be explicitly instructed in ways that help build on the cultural capital necessary to be academically successful. This will make it more likely that these students "become bicultural, able to move comfortably between Black and White communities" (Tatum, 1997, p. 69).

Funds of Knowledge

In a qualitative ethnographic study of the dynamics of working class Mexican communities in Tucson, Arizona, Moll et al. (1992) sought to make connections between these students' lives at home and their experiences in the classrooms of the local public schools. Their research confirmed that employing the "funds of knowledge" (p. 133) of the students and their families created more meaningful classroom experiences. They defined funds of knowledge as the "historically accumulated and culturally developed

bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). They noted that observations of and interactions with the households and the community showed a flexible, dynamic environment that is centered on the community, while most classroom experiences seemed to be “encapsulated” (p. 135). They conclude, “It is specific funds of knowledge pertaining to social, economic, and productive activities of people in a local region...that we seek to incorporate strategically into classrooms” (p. 139).

Wink and Putney (2002) build on this idea of funds of knowledge, illustrated by an experience in which Wink discovered that adolescent performance before competence reveals a platform of knowledge and skills on which to build new knowledge and skills. To summarize her observations, she noticed that her children were advanced problem solvers due to the numerous instances on their family ranch in which they were forced to recognize and solve problems on the fly. Even novel situations could be negotiated because her children possessed this ability, which suggests, “spontaneous concepts from one’s community might be used to integrate the scientific concepts of the classroom” (p. 96). In other words, students bring talents, skills and knowledge into the classroom every day. This could be especially pertinent when using students’ prior knowledge to construct learning activities.

Motivation

As educators seek solutions to the growing number of students dropping out and accepting failure, the research literature argues that student motivation should be examined as an area of focus for potential reform. Deci’s (1995) use of puzzles to test the

motivation of graduate students found that

those subjects who had competed displayed less subsequent intrinsic motivation than those who had simply been asked to do their best...Apparently, they felt pressured and controlled by the competition (even though they won it), and that seemed to decrease their desire to solve these puzzles just for the fun of it” (p. 32).

These results suggest that when students are allowed to choose their learning options, their motivation to learn increases because they do not feel that they are being controlled. In Deci’s quest to discover “how to provide structures and set limits on behavior without killing a person’s spirit,” (p. 33) he realized that one has to “consider what factors might increase intrinsic motivation” (p. 33). He goes on to propose that “if controlling people – that is, pressuring them to behave in certain ways – diminishes their feelings of self-determination, then giving them choices about how to behave ought to enhance them” (p. 33). Wink and Putney (2002) add, “Not only must democracy be taught, it must be lived within the classroom, the school, and the community” (p. 14). However, to give choices to students who have no idea how to make sound decisions based on established learning goals is a sure way to frustrate all involved.

Covington (1996) observes that in our efforts to reform education, “Simply raising the standards” (p. 24) and punishing and rewarding students according to whether or not they meet those standards is not enough. Doing so creates an environment in which some students

study hard and fail anyway, the implied cause of failure goes to low ability...thus, by not trying or trying only half-heartedly with potential excuses available in the event of failure, students can discount the threatening implication that they are incompetent (p. 25).

He goes on to suggest that any effort to motivate students to pursue academic excellence must include aspects in which students and teachers work together to set learning goals. He believes that we must encourage “participation of the student as an active partner along with the teacher in identifying reasonable goals for him or her at any point in the learning process” (p. 24). The reasoning is that students

make the most of their ability (and incidentally are motivated fully to do so) when they strive for goals that are near the upper bounds of their current competencies – just enough challenge so that success is likely but not without hard work, and failure to reach these goals is remedied by renewed effort (p. 24).

Wink and Putney (2002) describe the area where students are challenged, but not overwhelmed, by learning experiences as Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development” in which students are guided towards what they “are coming to know” (p. 86). In Covington’s example, students are partners when it comes to determining where each student’s zone of proximal development lies.

Competence and Autonomy

Once students are working within their zones of proximal development, how do educators ensure that they remain motivated and have the resilience to overcome learning challenges? Deci (1995) points out that “people need to have both the strategies and the capacities for attaining desired outcomes” (p.64). He adds, “The ‘rewards’ linked to intrinsic motivation are feelings of enjoyment and accomplishment that accrue spontaneously as a person engages freely in the target activities. Thus, feeling competent at a task is an important aspect of one’s intrinsic motivation” (p. 64). Where there is motivation to overcome challenges, there is a sense of competence, and vice versa. This means that pedagogy in the classroom must be structured in a manner that permits

students to build on the competencies that allow them to be successful within their individual zones of proximal development. As Deci points out, “When people...did not perform well, they felt incompetent and controlled, and all their intrinsic motivation was drained away” (p. 71).

It is not enough to simply engage students in activities in which they feel they are capable of success. They also need to feel they are capable of learning on their own. Let us revisit Deci’s (1998) argument above, that a learner experiences feelings of success as she “engages freely in the target activities” (p. 64). This point suggests that the idea of autonomy is tied closely with competence and successful learning and suggests “perceived competence without perceived autonomy has been shown to have negative effects” (p. 70). He adds, “Providing others with challenges that will allow them to end up feeling both competent and autonomous, will promote in them a greater vitality, motivation, and well-being” (p. 70). These may seem like qualities that are outside of the realm of public education; however, as McInerney (2005) points out in his empirical study of elementary and secondary students, “it is clear that when students perceive that their life chances are not really enhanced through schooling, they may be at risk for poor achievement, irrespective of their internal motivations” (p. 1049).

Critical Practice

According to Wink and Putney (year), “The classroom is one of the complex pieces of the puzzle of learning; it is part of a much larger world, and it has many worlds within it” (p. 64). This being the case, it becomes necessary for educators to examine the classroom community in an objective manner to ensure that this piece of the “puzzle of learning” is set up to promote learning for all. This includes the manner in which teachers

view themselves, their relationships with students, classroom management strategies implemented, the degree to which interactions encourage collaboration as opposed to competition, and the protocols through which knowledge is shared.

A concept that appears throughout the research on culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education is *critical practice*. Howard (2003) includes five aspects of critical practice that teachers should employ, as listed in Figure 4.

- | Howard's five aspects of critical practice |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that teacher education faculty members are able to sufficiently address the complex nature of race, ethnicity, and culture. 2. Be aware that reflection is a never-ending process. 3. Be explicit about what to reflect about. 4. Recognize that teaching is not a neutral act. 5. Avoid reductive notions of culture. |

Figure 4: Howard's five aspects of critical practice

In addition to Howard's five aspects of critical practice, Ladson-Billings (1995) found that the eight exemplary teachers of African American students included in her study had five qualities in common, illustrated in Figure 5.

- | Five qualities of successful teachers of African-American students |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They believed that all students were capable of academic success. 2. They saw their pedagogy as art – unpredictable, always in the process of <i>becoming</i>. 3. They viewed themselves as members of the community in which they taught. 4. They believed teaching was a way to give back to the community. 5. They believed in a Freirean notion of “teaching as mining”, or pulling knowledge out. |

Figure 5: Five qualities of successful teachers of African-American students

It is only through critical reflection that teachers can locate their own prejudices, identify the shortcomings of their own pedagogical practices and work towards an approach that increases academic success for all students.

Classroom Community

The research on critical practice also illustrates the importance of building productive social relationships in classrooms with diverse populations. Ladson-Billings (1995) found that culturally relevant teachers tend to maintain fluid relationships with students, demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students, develop a community of learners, and encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for one another. Such practices require that teachers get to know much about the backgrounds of students in order to build these relationships. As McCarthy (1997) indicates from the results of her ethnographic study of students' lives in the community, in order to develop productive relationships with students, "it is imperative for teachers to understand the complexity of students' lives, especially of those students whose backgrounds and experiences are different from their own" (p. 176). She goes on to assert, "Developing 'culturally responsive instruction' depends on having information about students' cultures and backgrounds" (p. 177). Doing so increases the likelihood that a community of learners is fostered, but teachers must go further.

Overwhelmingly, the literature regarding culturally relevant teaching and multicultural education argues that creating a classroom learning community through the use of collaborative learning is of more value than the dominant use of competitive practices that set up some students to be winners while others are destined to be losers. As McCarthy (1997) reveals in her case studies, her "own theoretical orientation is closely aligned with social constructivism, in which students are viewed as actively constructing knowledge with the help of teachers and peers within a social context"

(p. 151). If students are working together to construct knowledge, this leaves less time for competition and more time for collaboration. Covington (1996) points out

The reasons for learning associated with a competitive mentality are largely foreign to the culture and social heritage of many students. Yet students of color are as highly motivated to learn as any youngsters, but often...for reasons that focus more on cooperative than on competitive strategies” (p. 25).

If given even a moment of consideration, it makes sense that collaboration is preferable to competition if the goal is for everyone in the classroom to learn.

To further support the validity of collaboration, Tatum (1997) cites a program described in *Affirming Identity* (Nieto, 1996) that was geared to aid at-risk Latino students in an unidentified large urban area. Findings from this successful program pointed to the importance of developing a sense of collective responsibility in the classroom. This model program included such practices as peer and mentor tutoring.

Tatum (1997) states

In contrast to high dropout rates common in many Latino communities, up to 65 percent of the high school graduates of this program have gone on to college. Said one student, ‘the best thing I like about this class is that we all work together and we all participate and try to help each other. We’re family!’” (p. 138).

Finally, on the topic of collaboration versus competition, Deci (1995) cites a study on competition he completed with his students that found, “When we oriented people toward the competition by really emphasizing the importance of beating the other, the competition was quite detrimental to their intrinsic motivation” (p. 41). Although there is a time and place for competition in the classroom, an overall collaborative atmosphere must be maintained in order to maximize students’ motivation to learn.

Conclusion

As stated in the assessment of needs, many students do not feel a connection between what they learn in social studies, or school in general, and their own lives. As a result, they tend to go through the motions when it comes to their schoolwork. Teachers and administrators often view these students as being deficient in the proper behaviors and habits necessary to succeed academically. They are seen as having deficits that must be corrected; however, there is a different philosophy that may be more effective due to the increasing diversity of our public school populations and the growing numbers of minority students who are dropping out. Although known by several monikers that vary in approach and goals (culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education are two of the most popular), the overall objectives are similar. See Figure 6.

Summary objectives for creating a culturally responsive classroom
<p>Teacher actions should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering a democratic classroom environment • Helping students develop positive self-identities as learners • Accounting for and drawing from the wealth of knowledge (academic and otherwise) that students bring into the classroom every day • Motivating students in ways that transcend the traditional use of rewards and punishments • Building students' academic competencies in order to promote autonomy • Examining classroom practices and learning environments • Creating a true community of learners in the classroom

Figure 6: Summary objectives for fostering a culturally responsive classroom

How well does the current curriculum mandated by my district stack up to these objectives? The following chapter will use these objectives to assess this curriculum.

IV. A Review of Current Social Studies Curricula

Introduction

“I don’t need to understand social studies. It’s a subject I have never liked and never will. History has nothing to do with my life or what I want to do after college. I don’t mean that in a mean way, Mr. Maratea. That’s just the way it is and probably always will be.” These words were part of a recent exchange I had with a Latina student who was getting A’s in all of her classes except for social studies. Her sentiments are not unique. Many students do not feel any connection between what they learn in social studies, or school in general, and their own lives because there is not enough effort put into creating curricula that engages them and allows them to connect content to their lives.

Social studies curriculum tends to run chronologically through numerous events in time, with a premium put on the memorization of facts and information associated with historical happenings. At least that is what our district’s pacing calendar and benchmark tests make it feel like to students and teachers. Administrators seem determined to use benchmark test scores to achieve “data-driven” decision-making, even though such a narrow approach to reform does not address issues associated with students’ diverse learning needs. Luckily, credible authorities have come to some surprising areas of consensus when it comes to effectively teaching social studies. I will begin with a portion of the curriculum recommendations from the *California History Social Science Frameworks and Best Practice*, compare these recommendations to the curriculum my district currently mandates, and end with calls for a transformative approach based on the

objectives listed at the end of the previous chapter (Figure 6) to make social studies instruction more relevant and meaningful to all students.

Effective Social Studies Instruction

The *California History-Social Science Framework* begins with an ideal:

We want them [students] to respect the right of others to differ with them. We want them to take an active role as citizens to know how to work for change in a democratic society...and we want them to care deeply about the quality of life in their community, their nation, and their world (p. 2).

This notion gets right at the heart of culturally relevant instruction and supports teaching in a manner that engages all students in meaningful learning in an effort to create citizens who think critically about important issues. To increase the likelihood that all adopted curricula in the state of California adhere to these principles, a set of guidelines has been established that must be satisfied by any curriculum prior to adoption. Potential curricula must include content aligned with the social studies standards; be organized and sequenced around content standards; incorporate assessment strategies to measure what students can do; provide universal access for special education (SPED) students, English language learners (ELLs), and those below and above grade level; possess instructional materials and support that aids teachers in implementation (p. 181).

In addition, the creators of the *Framework* have devised a list of characteristics of effective social studies instruction. Those related to culturally relevant instruction point toward practices that emphasize the importance of history as a story well told, enriching the study of history with the use of literature, studying major historical events and periods in depth as opposed to superficial skimming of enormous amounts of material, a multicultural perspective throughout the history-social studies curriculum, the honest and

accurate presentation of controversial issues within their historical or contemporary contexts, and the inclusion of higher-level thinking skills at every grade level (pp. 4-8). The recommendations of *The Framework* go hand in hand with similar suggestions of best practice in social studies as listed by Zemelman (2005, pp. 177-183). See Figure 7.

Zemelman's suggestions for best practice in social studies
<p>Students need opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read from real world documents and not just textbooks • Build on their prior knowledge • Make choices of topics for inquiry • Actively participate in the classroom • Investigate topics in depth • Complete independent inquiry • Work in cooperative partnerships and groups

Figure 7: Zemelman's suggestions for best practice in social studies

These suggestions are very compatible with some of the common traits of culturally responsive teachers, as defined in a majority of the research literature reviewed. See Figure 8.

Common traits of culturally responsive teachers
<p>Culturally responsive teachers have the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect learning activities and content to students' interests • Use a constructivist approach to build on students' prior knowledge and experiences • Provide choices • Work with students to establish learning goals • Assist students in efforts to gain the strategies and competencies for gaining desired outcomes • Promote autonomy • Create a classroom learning community in which students work collaboratively

Figure 8: Common traits of culturally responsive teachers

It is through the qualities spelled out in Figures 7 and 8 that I will review the current curriculum mandated for teaching seventh grade social studies in my district, evaluate constructs to incorporate in a transformative model of teaching social studies, and

conclude with elements of my proposal. The goal is to create a social studies curriculum that builds on mandatory standards and curricula to empower students with the tools necessary to monitor their own academic behavior and to think critically about historical concepts.

Current Curriculum

Two years ago I participated in the district-wide adoption of the current social studies curriculum used in my district. After a very discouraging process, during which participants on the panel (mostly teachers) expressed more concern for the district's GATE (gifted and talented) students than for those learning English as a second language, McDougal Littell's *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times* (2006) was chosen by a one vote margin over another social studies curriculum created by Holt. Whether or not this had anything to do with the fact that McDougal Littell owns Edusoft, the service our district uses to compile student benchmark test data, may never be known. Components of the adopted curriculum include a textbook, an extensive array of worksheets to address the needs of a variety of learners, a technology component that includes a power point selection for each lesson, and a test-generating mechanism that allows the teacher to make slick multiple choice, essay, and true/false assessments. There are handy interactive presentations on a supplemental technology component that brings to life some of the historical content quite effectively. In addition, they have made a conscious effort to address the needs of those of us who teach large numbers of ELLs through a booklet entitled *Universal Access*. The publisher has definitely covered all of the bases, the idea of *coverage* being key; however, they have done little to address the

recommendations listed above, as Table 3 illustrates through a comparison of the current curriculum and the attributes recommended previously.

Table 3: Comparison of current curriculum and recommendations

Culturally Responsive Practices	Zemelman's Best Practices	Current Curriculum Attributes
Connect to students' lives	Include real world documents	Textbook is not engaging and difficult to read for many students
Use a constructivist approach	Build on prior knowledge	Attempts to activate prior knowledge
Provide choices	Provide choice of inquiry topics	Choices for enrichment research
Incorporate learning goals	Students actively participate	Curriculum does not address learning goals
Teaches strategies and competencies	Investigate topics in depth	Primarily focuses on reading skills needed to read textbook
Promotes autonomy	Perform independent inquiry	Curriculum does not address student autonomy
Creates a classroom learning community	Work in cooperative pairs and groups	Highly structured worksheets to complete in groups

This figure can be used to help the reader remain focused during the comparison that follows.

Connects to Students' Lives

As previously stated, *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times* (McDougal Littell, 2006) is a curriculum with an enormous array of materials. The textbook, which contains over 400 pages of information, is the foundation of the curriculum. It contains all of the grade standards, an atlas, a glossary of primary sources, and a glossary of some of the key terms. Unfortunately, it presents the historical content information in an almost list-like fashion with very little elaboration or use of interesting tidbits of history. People and events are presented as detached from reality and remote

from the lives of students. I offer the following passage from *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times* (McDougal Littell, 2006) as evidence to the reader:

Clovis and the Franks In 486, a Frankish leader named Clovis invaded Roman Gaul (now France). He defeated the last great Roman army in Gaul. Clovis then went on to defeat other weaker Germanic groups. By 507, his kingdoms stretched west from the Rhine River to the Pyrenees Mountains. Around this time, Clovis converted to Christianity. In time, most of his subjects became Christians (p. 294).

This passage reads like a bulleted list of facts drafted in paragraph form, and makes numerous assumptions. First, it makes assumptions about students' prior knowledge, namely that the students know the locations of France, the Rhine River, and the Pyrenees Mountains. Incorporation of a simple map would alleviate this. Second, it assumes that students will be engaged by such bland presentation of material. In doing so, the textbook leaves out anything interesting the kids may use to help them understand who Clovis was and the implications of his actions. For example, he had a habit of chopping off the heads of those who did not agree to subject themselves to his rule and convert to Christianity. Students love this type of gory truth, and it draws them in so they want to read more. Third, the passage makes almost no connection to students' lives. This is the case throughout the textbook and its companion materials, which we have to use in my district.

Builds on Prior Knowledge and Experiences

The current mandated curriculum includes a teacher resource that offers a planning page for each lesson within each chapter. Each of these follows a consistent pattern that begins with activating prior knowledge. This relies heavily on activities in which students have to recall something they previously read in the book in order to

connect it to what they are about to learn from the text. For example, in Chapter Nine, Lesson 1, *The Development of Feudalism*, students are required to remember what happened in Europe in the year 450AD. If they do not recall this information, they are required to reread chapter two, a massive amount of content. This activity assumes that the specific event they are asking students to remember is something that was previously learned. In addition, it is not building on students' prior knowledge when the content to be recalled was never learned. In fact, it is asking students to learn new content in order to make it prior knowledge with the hopes of connecting this to even more new knowledge. This is typical of the prior knowledge activities of the curriculum. It has no method of truly assessing what students do know in order to construct new knowledge upon this.

Choices for Inquiry Topics

The McDougal Littell curriculum does provide students with a selection of topics for inquiry. For example, the unit that encompasses the European Middle Ages offers students the opportunity to research one of the following topics in order to build a diorama: manor house, peasant cottage, marketplace, church, mill, blacksmith, carpenter's workshop. The problem is that there is no guidance on how to complete the research, no sources of information are provided, and no explanation of what constitutes a diorama is given. Advanced students may be able to complete such inquiry, but those without such prior skills would find this task daunting. In addition, these choices are rather limited and may not prove to be interesting to many students.

Learning Goals, Competencies and Autonomy

Although it does nothing to help students establish and meet learning goals, the current curriculum does include components that are geared towards helping students build upon their academic competencies. These focus primarily on improving reading comprehension. The publisher has provided a plethora of reading strategies that are intended to help students become better readers of the textbook. Such strategies include reading the textbook in pairs and filling-in graphic organizers as they read each lesson of the book. These strategies might be helpful if they did not require students to read the entire book. Doing so is necessary because the strategies are specific to the textbook and build on each other. It is highly unlikely that students will successfully read an entire textbook of over 400 pages in the course of a year unless all class time is devoted to reading from the text.

Creates Classroom Community

The current curriculum superficially addresses classroom community through the use of partner reading and cooperative group activities. Knowing that there are students who struggle with reading textbooks, the publishers suggest that they read to each other in pairs. The problem with using this strategy with the text is that the content is not engaging. Requiring struggling readers to comprehend such a large amount of bland text that is filled with complex ideas is an exercise in frustration for all. The cooperative grouping activities consist of worksheets that students fill out together. For example, one such activity asks the students to read a lesson in small groups. As they read they are asked to answer five questions, all of which fall in the first two levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (see Appendix pp. 158-159). Simply requiring students to read in pairs and to

complete worksheets together is not a method of building a classroom community of learners. More often than not it leads to one or two students doing the work while others ask them for the answers.

Conclusion

The greatest problem with the existing curriculum is that it is not engaging for students, and while it expects them to perform higher level thinking about historical issues, it does little to teach them how to do so. All of the activities require the students to read extensively from a textbook that is well above the reading levels of many of them. According to an informal survey of students in my classes it is clear that they do not like to read from the textbook. In fact, they do not like to use the book at all, even to skim a few paragraphs for information. They complain that the book is “boring”. In addition, the supplemental materials are heavy on worksheets, Power Point presentations, and projects that are not scaffolded for students. Opportunities to work in cooperative groups are limited to those that require students to read the textbook or use it in some capacity to locate information. There are no activities that sufficiently challenge them to think critically or to question sources of information. I cannot say that I find any of this surprising. Curricula such as this are created to appeal to the widest audience possible in order to increase sales. The overall effect in the classroom is that the more we use the curriculum materials as designed, the less motivated to learn students become.

The next chapter will describe an approach that uses culturally responsive practices to empower students with a meaningful learning experience. This curriculum empowers students with strategies to monitor their own work habits. It also uses Bloom’s

Taxonomy as a scaffold to higher level thinking, and incorporates themes of tolerance and equality to help students think critically about historical and contemporary events.

V. *Connecting Past to Present*: Empowering Students through Social Studies

Introduction

Students in the middle grades often have a difficult time making meaning of the myriad activities and trivial facts they are exposed to in the traditional social studies classroom. Standards are frequently covered so quickly and superfluously that there is no time for study that promotes understanding, leads to higher level thinking, and makes meaningful connections between events of the past and today's societal issues. For an increasing number of students, especially those of minority status, the struggle to make meaning of such a wide range of material is compounded by the absence of a connection between their various learning needs and the instructional practices in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995). *Connecting Past to Present* is a seventh-grade history-social studies curriculum that empowers students with tools to self-monitor work habits and that uses Bloom's Taxonomy as a tool to help them build on their capacity to think critically. It also seeks to apply these newfound higher level-thinking skills so that students become more aware of the inequities in the world around them, with the hope that they will be able to act on this awareness.

Traditional social studies approaches rely heavily on publisher-created curricula that often appear to take into little account the needs of the individual students in the classroom. In my district, teachers are expected to use adopted curricula and pacing calendars to ensure that students are exposed to all of the standards for a particular content area, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Table 4 illustrates the difficulty of teaching social studies when so many topics of study have to be addressed in such a short period of time. For each standard listed, there is a brief description of the area of focus,

the number of sub-standards within that standard, and the number of weeks our district pacing guide provides for study of each unit.

Table 4: Comparison of social studies requirements and pacing calendar

Standard	Topic(s)	Sub-standards	Pacing Calendar Weeks
7.1	Roman Empire	Three	4
7.2	Islam in the Middle Ages	Six	4
7.3	China in the Middle Ages	Six	3
7.4	Medieval Africa	Five	3
7.5	Medieval Japan	Six	4
7.6	Medieval Europe	Nine	6
7.7	Meso-American and Andean civilizations	Five	4
7.8	Renaissance	Five	2
7.9	Reformation	Seven	2
7.10	Scientific Revolution	Three	2
7.11	Age of Exploration, Enlightenment, Age of Reason	Six	2

To further appreciate the difficulty of addressing this amount of content, consider the following sample of five sub-standards as worded in the *California History-Social Science Standards*:

1. Describe the establishment by Constantine of the new capital in Constantinople and the development of the Byzantine Empire, with an emphasis on the consequences of the development of two distinct European civilizations, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic, and their two distinct views on church-state relations. (7.1.3)
2. Understand the intellectual exchanges among Muslim scholars of Eurasia and Africa and the contributions Muslim scholars made to later civilizations in the areas of science, geography, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, art, and literature. (7.2.6)

3. Know the significance of developments in medieval English legal and constitutional practices and their importance in the rise of modern democratic thought and representative institutions (e.g., Magna Carta, parliament, development of habeas corpus, an independent judiciary in England). (7.6.5)
4. Understand the scientific method advanced by Bacon and Descartes, the influence of new scientific rationalism on the growth of democratic ideas, and the coexistence of science with traditional religious beliefs. (7.10.3)
5. Examine the origins of modern capitalism; the influence of mercantilism and cottage industry; the elements and importance of a market economy in seventeenth-century Europe; the changing international trading and marketing patterns, including their locations on a world map; and the influence of explorers and mapmakers. (7.11.3)

There are a total of sixty-one of these complex sub-standards in the *California History-Social Science Content Standards* for seventh grade. That translates into addressing each one of these in an average of one and a half class meetings, a task that a college professor may find challenging.

Students are tested on a portion of these content standards each trimester in my district, and they complete a comprehensive test on social studies content from all three middle school grade levels at the end of eighth grade. This emphasis on coverage over depth goes against most current research regarding the ways in which children learn and is proving to be increasingly unsuccessful for a growing number of students at my site. As the *California History-Social Science Framework* (2000) states, there should be more emphasis on “the importance of studying major historical events and periods in-depth as opposed to superficial skimming of enormous amounts of material” (p. 5).

Curriculum Proposal

Connecting Past to Present is set within a unit study of the European Middle Ages, but this curriculum can be adapted to fit most other content areas. Figure 9 lists the California State Board of Education's History-Social Science Standards requirements for this unit.

<p>7.6 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Medieval Europe.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study the geography of the Europe and the Eurasian landmass, including its location, topography, waterways, vegetation, and climate and their relationship to ways of life in Medieval Europe. 2. Describe the spread of Christianity north of the Alps and the roles played by the early church and by monasteries in its diffusion after the fall of the western half of the Roman Empire. 3. Understand the development of feudalism, its role in the medieval European economy, the way in which it was influenced by physical geography (the role of the manor and the growth of towns), and how feudal relationships provided the foundation of political order. 4. Demonstrate an understanding of the conflict and cooperation between the Papacy and European monarchs (e.g., Charlemagne, Gregory VII, Emperor Henry IV). 5. Know the significance of developments in medieval English legal and constitutional practices and their importance in the rise of modern democratic thought and representative institutions (e.g., Magna Carta, parliament, development of habeas corpus, an independent judiciary in England). 6. Discuss the causes and course of the religious Crusades and their effects on the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish populations in Europe, with emphasis on the increasing contact by Europeans with cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean world. 7. Map the spread of the bubonic plague from Central Asia to China, the Middle East, and Europe and describe its impact on global population. 8. Understand the importance of the Catholic Church as a political, intellectual, and aesthetic institution (e.g., founding of universities, political and spiritual roles of the clergy, creation of monastic and mendicant religious orders, preservation of the Latin language and religious texts, St. Thomas Aquinas's synthesis of classical philosophy with Christian theology, and the concept of "natural law"). 9. Know the history of the decline of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula that culminated in the Reconquista and the rise of Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms.
--

Figure 9: California History-Social Science Standard 7.6

The goals of *Connecting Past to Present* are to use culturally relevant teaching practices as described in the Review of Literature to provide students with meaningful learning

experiences in social studies in order to help them learn to self-monitor their learning behaviors and to empower them with tools to help them broaden their thinking. To achieve these goals, *Connecting Past to Present* includes practices that are rooted in culturally relevant teaching theory as well as those recounted in *Best Practice* (Zemelman 2005). See Figure 10.

Elements of <i>Connecting Past to Present</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus questions that connect the past to the present and encourage students to think about issues such as equity, tolerance, and distribution of power • Workshops based on content standards and KWHL (know, want to know, how to learn it, what was learned) responses that enrich these skills and provide students choices in which to learn content in depth • Learning goals and work habits monitoring • Bloom's Taxonomy as a scaffold to higher-level thinking • A final research project in which students chose a topic, gather information, create a final project that shows their understanding, relate it to the focus questions, and share it with the class • Critical consideration of historical issues through current events

Figure 10: Elements of *Connecting Past to Present*

These compare favorably with the recommendations regarding culturally relevant teaching and Zemelman's best practices in social studies listed in Table 3.

The first objective is to assess students' prior knowledge of this time period. Most students will have at least rudimentary understanding of the times due to the high interest of the subject matter (knights, castles, Crusades). A KWHL graphic organizer (*Know, Want to know, How to find that information, what we Learned*) serves this purpose well and gives the teacher background information regarding students' knowledge and skills on which to develop workshops for the unit. Ideas that students want to learn more about

are a good starting point for this. They also allow for the discovery of focus questions that provide a forum for critical thinking and discussion.

Mini-lessons take place for a portion of each class meeting. These mini-lessons serve as opportunities for the teacher to model skills needed for research (finding specific information, taking notes, analyzing primary sources) and to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills, which are reinforced in the workshops. In addition, the mini-lessons are an opportunity to use current events, such as news articles, political cartoons and CNN Student News, to address the focus questions. The workshops allow students to choose three of six different topics for further study. For the unit on the European Middle Ages, the six workshops focus on the following:

- Inequalities prevalent in the lives of serfs and peasants as compared to the lives of nobles
- Religious conflicts associated with Charlemagne's efforts to unite Europe under one ruler
- Persecution of Jews during the Black Death
- King John's abuse of power and government
- Religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians during the Crusade years
- Inequities in the lives of medieval men and women

These foci support the requirements as spelled out by the *California Grade Seven History-Social Science Content Standards* and listed in Figure 9.

Following collaborative workshop sessions, students respond to a writing prompt that is designed to get them to reflect on their learning for that day and to establish plans for the next class meeting. These reflections are also used occasionally to check their

understanding of the focus questions for the unit, which gives the teacher the ability to monitor and adjust the mini-lessons to fit students' needs. These writings are mainly kept in a writing notebook, but can also be collected as exit tickets as students leave the room.

The final component of the unit is a research project that requires them to use Bloom's Taxonomy as a tool to elevate the level of thinking they apply to their projects. They will be guided through the process of choosing a research topic, designing a leading question that helps them focus their research on a particular issue related to their topic, gathering and organizing information, and creating a final product: a research booklet that addresses the leading question. Students create quizzes to go with their booklets, which are completed by students in the other half of seventh grade and who are not in my classes. These other students continue to follow the pacing calendar's path of study of the Middle Ages, so they do not participate in this portion of the unit. This research process also includes daily reflections and self-monitoring of their on-task and off-task behaviors, as defined by the students themselves.

Evaluating Connecting Past to Present

Connecting Past to Present has three main goals for student progress, and one goal for the teacher's own growth and practices. The student goals of *Connecting Past to Present* are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Student goals for *Connecting Past to Present*

Goals	Activities	Evaluations
Students will self-regulate their work habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students set goals • Students chart their on-task and off-task behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observations • Analysis of students' behavior charts • Pre/post comparison of students goals • Student interviews
Students will improve their higher level thinking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Research project • Current events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use of higher level thinking (based on Bloom's Taxonomy) on pre/mid/post assessment • Students' application of higher-level thinking on their final products compared to their application of higher level thinking prior to the unit (based on Bloom's Taxonomy)
Students will progress towards a critical perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus questions: tolerance, equality, and conflict • Application to current events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative analysis of student discussion comments and work samples • Student interviews

Success towards these goals is measured in several ways. To measure students' self-monitoring of their work habits, the results of their work habits charts as well as my own observations of sample students during the research process are analyzed. To determine how well they improved their abilities to think at higher levels, their final products include an assessment component that evaluates their ability to think at different levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Finally, to measure how well they advance towards a critical perspective, anecdotes from discussions, responses to writing prompts and other student work samples are analyzed.

In addition to the student goals listed in Table 5, there is a teacher goal to incorporate culturally responsive practices in the classroom. This teacher goal is evaluated through a breakdown of elements of *Connecting Past to Present* and through student work samples.

VI. Implementation of *Connecting Past to Present*

Setting

To describe the setting, I will start globally and work inward to the classroom. El Dorado (pseudonym) is a culturally diverse town located in northern San Diego County whose demographics include a population that is approximately 52% White, 39% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 2% Black and 3% designated other, primarily those of mixed race and Native American heritage (<http://zipskinny.com/state.php?state=CA>). Several years ago, district administrators redrew school boundaries. As a result of this action, Happy Valley Middle School has become increasingly populated by Latino students who have struggled in the traditional classroom. With this reality has come the challenge to adopt classroom practices that engage and challenge a student population that is not succeeding at the basics of learning (reading, writing, and mathematics) as measured by the California Standards Test (CST). Consider the following information from the district's data included in Figure 11.

Demographic Information for Happy Valley Middle School
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 74% of students are Latino• 17% are White• 3% are African American• 2% are Asian• 69% receive free or reduced lunch

Figure 11: Demographic information for Happy Valley Middle School

As illustrated above, the student population is not truly a reflection of El Dorado's overall racial demographic. Whereas Latino students account for almost 75% of Happy Valley's student population, Latinos comprise less than 40% of the city population overall.

In addition, minority students at Happy Valley also tend to achieve at a much lower rate than students who are White. Figure 12 supports this observation.

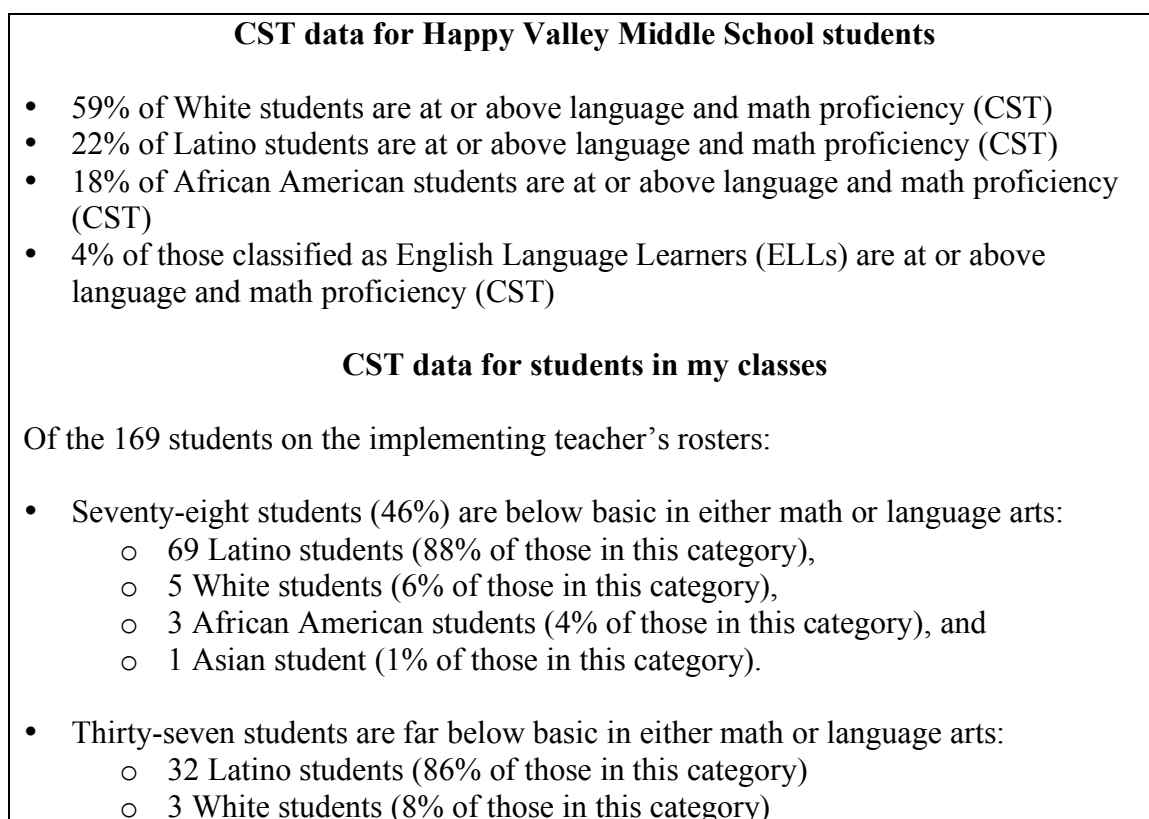


Figure 12: CST data for Happy Valley Middle School

Let us assume the overall demographic information for the school is consistent with the demographics for the students in my classes. Latino students make up 74% of the student population, yet account for 88% of those below basic in math or language arts. They also constitute 86% of the students deemed far below basic as measured by the CST. These numbers vividly illustrate the fact that a majority of the students at Happy Valley Middle School are not succeeding according to the testing methods used to measure academic success. Even worse is the disparity between White students and their African American and Latino counterparts.

For my implementation, I chose one of my six social studies classes because it included students of a variety of skill levels. There were thirty-one students in the class. These included twenty-six Latino students, four Caucasian students, and one Filipino student. Two were sent to Happy Valley from other schools, in lieu of expulsion, and placed in Happy Valley's Opportunity class, which is a self-contained classroom for students on the verge of expulsion. During implementation, one of these two students was expelled and sent to the district's Community Day School, a last chance placement for students before full expulsion from the district. The other thrived, even winning my trimester award for top student.

Approximately 40% of students in the class were designated English Language Learners (ELLs), ranging from CELDT (California English Language Development Test) level two to CELDT level five. Although no student had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), one had a 504 plan for accommodations due to ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). Of the thirty-one students in the class, nine received extensive interventions through the counseling department. Reasons for intervention included counseling for conflict mediation and social skills, referral to and participation in county mental health services, referrals to Child Protective Services due to abusive circumstances at home (one student had recently been removed from his home), homelessness, and counseling due to "family situations."

Within the timeframe of this implementation, a student brought a knife to school and pulled it on another student during a fight in their physical education class. This resulted in five-day suspensions for seven students, one of whom faced a likely expulsion. While all of the students suspended were not in the class in which

implementation was carried out, this incident served to divide students throughout the seventh-grade into factions supporting either of the two sides. In addition, there were at least ten more suspensions during the course of the implementation for reasons such as fighting, gang activity, and campus disruption. The overall effect was to alter students' attitudes and classroom morale in negative ways.

Sample Students

I chose four students (identified using pseudonyms) within this class as a sample population for closer observation. The first, George, was a very bright, insightful young man. He was an eager contributor in class discussions and had great ideas, but he tended not to complete his assignments. At the outset of implementation George had a D average in the class. The second, Mario, was a low achiever who struggled with basic reading and writing. He had an overall positive attitude, but he was sometimes so overwhelmed by his lack of English language proficiency (his California CELDT level was two) that he frequently sat quietly and waited for me to discover that he needed help. At the outset of the implementation, Mario had a C average in the class. The third, Antonia, was the exemplary student. She was bright, motivated, and well respected by her peers. At the outset of implementation, Antonia had an A average in the class. The fourth student, Beatriz, was very similar to Mario in that she lacked many of the basic skills needed to overcome learning challenges in the classroom. She had a very good attitude, but sometimes got distracted, probably due to her inability to focus on academic work that often proved to be challenging. She also refused to bring her glasses to school, which affected her ability to complete assignments in class. At the outset of the implementation,

Beatriz had an F average in the class. I chose these four students for their wide range of abilities and the differences in their personalities.

Implementing Teacher

Two years ago my peers chose me as a district teacher of the year, mainly due to the rapport I build with many of our struggling learners. I promote what I like to think is a democratic classroom environment in which students have opportunities to supply input on learning activities, and each unit is concluded with a reflective piece aimed at getting student feedback to be included in the design of future units of study. In my thirteenth year of teaching, I have a wealth of experience working alongside students of diverse backgrounds. These experiences include teaching third through twelfth grades in such settings as a highly prestigious private school for dyslexics located in a small town in South Carolina and an independent-study charter school populated mainly by juvenile offenders and dropouts located in downtown San Diego, California. I consider classroom management my strength, and I am willing to experiment extensively to improve instructional strategies. My greatest concern is that there is an increasing number of students attending our public schools who are subjected to what is often referred to as a “factory model” of education, where experiences have been reduced to reading instruction and memorization of trivial bits of information to make up for students’ deficits. I am a firm believer in providing students with choices and instruction that builds on their abilities to succeed in a school system that does not always put their needs first.

At the beginning of the implementation, my focus was to create a classroom culture in which all learners would be valued for the diversity they brought to the table.

Classroom norms and procedures were created in conjunction with the students and their expectations for the year; a warm classroom culture was created through the use of activities based on ideals of multicultural education (a multicultural quilt, “I am” and “We are” poems); and overarching historical themes (geography, religion, achievements, politics, economics, society) were introduced in order to make sense of the many units to be covered. For the duration of the school year, including the implementation timeline, the class met every other day for ninety minutes, which is referred to as an “A/B schedule”. This A/B schedule proved to be a challenge to establishing consistency and classroom procedures, such as bringing necessary materials to class and completing unfinished assignments at home.

Implementation-Phase One

The purpose of this phase of the implementation is to identify students’ prior knowledge and interests related to the unit, to create focus questions for the unit, to complete workshops related to the standards and interests of the students, and to assess their understanding of the content and their ability to use Bloom’s Taxonomy to think at higher levels. The general format followed for this phase of implementation consisted of a warm-up related to the day’s lesson; an interactive lecture note-taking session or mini-lesson related to the day’s content theme and objectives; student participation in workshops; and reflection and closure. In reality, there was often very little time for reflection and closure, even though I made honest efforts to include this portion of the lessons. Students were seated in groups of four to six at each table, and they were encouraged to work together on most activities.

Step One – Identifying Students’ Prior Knowledge and Interests

The objective for the first step of this phase was to find out what students already knew about Medieval Europe and to find out what they wanted to learn more about this time period. Students used their writing notebooks to inventory their prior knowledge of the Middle Ages using a KWLH graphic organizer (see Appendix p.118). This chart included space for what they already knew, what they wanted to learn more about, methods for seeking additional information, and what they learned about the topic. The European Middle Ages is a very high interest unit; each year students tend to have a reasonable foundation of knowledge about this period of history. To stimulate their prior knowledge, the class watched movie clips related to the time period, matched vocabulary cards of key vocabulary words from the unit with definitions, and “walked through” the applicable section of the textbook. They worked in groups to begin table group KWLHs. Possible topics for independent research were then gleaned from the *W* portion of the KWLH, on which students listed what they wanted to know more about. We compiled a list of these and wrote them onto a piece of butcher paper displayed on the wall. Students were encouraged to add to this list at any time during the unit.

Step Two – Creating Unit Focus Questions

The objective for the second step of this phase was to help students establish focus questions for the unit and to give them an overview of the main events of the Middle Ages that could serve as a framework on which to organize new content as it was studied. To begin, students viewed a video that presented an overview of the European Middle Ages. This was periodically stopped in order for students to take Cornell notes, a two-columned method of note-taking that requires students to react to the content, and for

the teacher to check for understanding using note cards with students' names on them. At the conclusion of the video, students took turns in their table groups sharing ideas from their Cornell notes and writing down new information. They also used a technique called Mr. Stick (<http://www.writingfix.com/>), with which they were already familiar, to react to the content of the notes. This activity required that they read through their notes in their small groups, draw a character that displayed feelings towards the content of the notes, and write an explanation for why the notes made the character feel that way. Students use this technique to connect their own feelings and thoughts to the content.

The remainder of the time was spent examining the Cornell notes and KWHLs for themes. Using the whiteboard as a place to list themes, students were guided to the focus questions listed in Figure 13 through discussion.

Focus Questions for the Unit

1. Do all people have an equal voice in government or a fair share of power?
2. How do different religious beliefs lead to conflict?
3. Do some members of society have advantages others do not have?

Figure 13: Focus questions for the unit

I had anticipated that some students would not be able to fully comprehend the focus questions as worded, so the students worked in groups to reword the questions in language that would be friendlier to them. These were written onto sticky notes that were placed below the original questions, which had been posted on the bulletin board. See Figure 14.

Student Rewrites of the Focus Questions for the Unit

1. Does every person get to help decide laws?
2. Why do people fight over religion?
3. Do some people who are richer have advantages others do not have?

Figure 14: Student rewrites of the focus questions for the unit

Throughout the implementation of the unit, students who needed to do so were allowed to go to the bulletin board to see these scaffolded versions of the questions in order to help them clarify their understanding. These focus questions would be referred to throughout the remainder of the curriculum implementation as a means to organize the academic content and to relate these historical concepts to current events. They were also used to create the six workshops that follow.

Step Three – Completing Workshops

The objectives for the third step of this phase were to set expectations for our workshops and to begin work on these. Workshops involved gathering information through the use of primary sources, literature, maps, videos and the textbook; organizing this information using Cornell notes and other graphic organizers; synthesizing and expressing opinions on what was learned through the use of Rafts (Role, Audience, Form, Topic), writing assignments that included writing letters, creating a wanted poster, designing a political cartoon, and creating an acrostic poem. Each workshop required students to conclude with a paragraph connecting the workshop to one of the unit's focus questions, in terms of both the European Middle Ages and contemporary times. One of the workshops required that students create a political cartoon. For this reason I began the class with a political cartoon related to the treatment of the different candidates in the ongoing presidential primaries. One of the candidates was a woman, and the cartoon implied that she was receiving unfair treatment because of her gender. Students entered

the room to a three-part writing prompt:

1. What do you see?
2. What do you think this means?
3. Which focus question(s) does this relate to?

Students worked in groups to answer the three questions. It became apparent early into the discussions that many students had not understood the purpose of the cartoon. I had six volunteers, mainly high achievers, come to the middle of the room for a “fishbowl” activity. During the fishbowl activity, the six volunteers, facilitated by me, used the three questions above to model a conversation in which they worked through the process of analyzing a political cartoon. Those outside of the fishbowl were instructed to write down questions they had as they observed this process. At the conclusion of the activity, which took much more time than planned, there was a rich discussion of the ideas expressed by the political cartoon.

I then introduced the six workshops, structured settings for research, on which they would work collaboratively. They could use each other for help and reference, but they were to complete their own products. The workshops were centered on the three focus questions (see Figure 13) and included the content about which students had expressed a desire to learn more in their KWHL responses. Table 6 shows the relationships between the workshops and the focus questions.

Table 6: Connections between focus questions and workshop topics

Focus Question	Workshop Topic
Do all people have an equal voice in government or a fair share of power?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inequalities between the lives of serfs and the lives of nobles 2. King John's abuse of power
How do different religious beliefs lead to conflict?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Charlemagne's persecution of non-Christians 4. Causes of the Crusades
Do some members of society have advantages others do not have?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Persecution of Jewish Europeans during the Black Death 6. Inequalities between the lives of European men and women during the Middle Ages

There were two workshops that related to unequal distribution of power, two workshops that addressed religious conflict and intolerance, and two workshops focused on inequalities in society. The content included the oppressed lives of Medieval European serfs, King John's abuse of power and the resulting Magna Carta, Charlemagne's efforts to unite Europe and violent attempts to convert conquered peoples to Christianity, the differences between Christians and Muslims that led to the Crusades, the persecution of European Jews during the Black Plague, and the lack of equal rights afforded to medieval women. Students were instructed to choose three of the six activities to complete, but no two could be from the same focus question, a portion of the directions several students forgot or ignored in their desire to do the workshops that appealed to them.

At the conclusion of the workshop portion of the unit, students organized their three final products into a "foldable" (see Appendix p. 131), with which they used a rubric to self-evaluate their work (see Appendix p. 130). The foldable consisted of a large piece of construction paper on which students could situate their three activities. This created organized, usable products students could consult for the summative assessment.

Step Four- Assessing Students through Self-quizzes

The greatest challenge in evaluating students' success in understanding the workshops was the numerous combinations of completion. For example, students could complete workshops in any order, as long as they did not complete them in a combination that included one and four, two and five, and three and six together. These pairings were prohibited because those workshops involved the same focus questions. This meant that students had widely varying demonstrations of knowledge of the content, making a uniform assessment impossible. To address this conundrum, I allowed the students to make up their own self-quizzes.

Throughout the year the students had been using question stems based on Bloom's Taxonomy to create questions that promote higher-level thinking. To capitalize on this competency, I had the students create a self-quiz in which they made up six questions to answer. Each question had to address a different level of the Taxonomy, and only two questions could be about any particular workshop. This required students to include their knowledge of all three workshops they had completed. They were given a rubric to help them understand what was expected, and we went over this before the quiz.

It was students' performance on this activity that illustrated to me the students' need for further instruction using Bloom's Taxonomy, as well as the need to empower students with this tool in order that they may consciously elevate their thinking. Table 7 illustrates Antonia's questions and answers, as she wrote them, on each level of the Bloom's Taxonomy self-test.

Table 7: Student questions and answers from Bloom's Taxonomy-based self-test

Bloom's Level	Sample Questions	Sample Answers
Knowledge	Who is Charlemagne?	A great king who formed an empire in western Europe
Comprehension	What can you say about the lives of women?	Women had to do chores around the house and didn't have enough freedom.
Application	What examples can you find to the lives of serfs?	They were always working and were very poor.
Analysis	Why do you think Charlemagne was strong?	He conquered new lands north to south.
Synthesis	What would happen if the mens got hurt?	The kindom will fall apart because no one would protect it.
Evaluation	Why did they have to work for the lord of manor?	They were born into slavery.

Antonia's answers show only superficial addressing of the question. She answers the questions in simple sentences and does not elaborate. Although hers is not one of the best examples of performance on the self-quiz, it is comparable to those of many students in the class.

An analysis of students' performance on the workshops and the self-quiz, combined with my own observations of the classroom during this process of structured inquiry, led to three findings:

1. Although some students had demonstrated the ability to successfully incorporate different levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, many of them needed more explicit instruction on the meanings of the levels of the Taxonomy and how to use it to broaden their thinking.
2. Some students had not satisfactorily incorporated the focus questions into their assessments and had vaguely addressed them in their workshop activities.

3. A number of students lacked the self-monitoring skills necessary to learn independently, as was evidenced by my observations of their behaviors during the independent workshop time.

Addressing these three findings became the goal of the second phase of the implementation.

Implementation- Phase Two

The implementation of Phase Two of this unit began with three purposes:

- To provide students with a tool to help them broaden their thinking. This took the form of a usable graphic of Bloom's Taxonomy (see Appendix pp. 158-159).
- To provide them with a strategy to help them monitor their academic behaviors. This included setting goals and using a work habits chart designed to help them monitor their progress towards these goals.
- To help students gain a better understanding of and connection to the focus questions.

My goal was to get them closer to a critical view of both historical and contemporary events. See Figure 15.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING

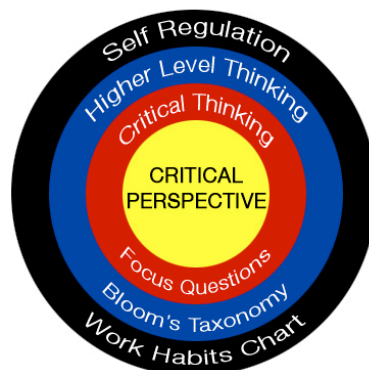


Figure 15: The aim of phase two of *Connecting Past to Present*

As Figure 15 illustrates, *Connecting Past to Present* incorporates culturally relevant teaching practices to guide students towards a critical perspective. It empowers them with self-regulation strategies to monitor their academic behaviors, knowledge of Bloom's Taxonomy to get them to think at higher levels, and focus questions to get them to think critically.

Establishing Behavior Goals

I began the first day of this phase of the implementation with the following warm-up questions:

- What does it look like when someone is on-task? What might that person be doing?
- What does it look like when someone is off-task? What might that person be doing?

After taking time to write to this, students shared their responses in their table groups.

One student in each table group, the recorder, wrote down the ideas the members of the group had in common, and they used the document camera to share these with the class.

We then compiled a class list of on-task behaviors and a list of off-task behaviors. These were posted on the bulletin board for all to see. Table 8 lists the behaviors students decided to focus on.

Table 8: Student-identified on-task and off-task behaviors

On-task Behaviors	Off-task Behaviors
Asks questions when stuck	Distracts others
Reads about the topic	Wastes time
Takes notes on the topic	Talks when should be listening
Behaves when the teacher is not watching	Writes notes to friends
Follows directions the first time	Messes around
Completes work	Does not bring materials to class
Listens when others are speaking	Plays pencils and other objects
Writes in binder reminder	Does work from other classes
Participates in discussions	Does not do what is assigned

In an effort to keep this process relevant for the students, I used their ideas regarding these behaviors, rather than my own, to create a chart on which students could self-evaluate their behaviors as they completed the research project, described below. As a baseline method of evaluating their behaviors, I had them think about their dominant behaviors during the completion of the workshops and check off those that matched the on-task and off-task behaviors on the chart.

Prior to the implementation I had tried to assist students in goal setting, but what they came up with was often vague and immeasurable. Upon completing the work habits charts that I had turned into a handout and provided for each of them, they created specific goals for the upcoming research project. They had to get their goals signed by a teacher or parent who would assist them towards their goals. I offered to sign them because many of them have turbulent home lives that would make it difficult to get someone from home to sign off. I also knew that some students would want me to be the teacher to help them out during this process. The only condition they had to meet to obtain my signature was to attend a meeting with me after school to discuss their goals.

Table 9 illustrates example student goals prior to and following this exercise.

Table 9: Sample student goals before and after work habits activity

Student	Pre	Post
Beatriz	Get good grades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish assignments on time • Stop passing notes
George	Turn in all of my work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring materials to class • Listen more and talk less
Antonia	To be a better person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write in binder reminder • Stop doing work from other classes

All three of the sample students' goals show a trend from the vague to the specific. For example, Beatriz's desire to get good grades requires a number of variable actions to take place; however, her desire to stop passing notes in class and to finish her assignments on time are specific and measurable. In addition, these goals may, in fact, be the route to achieve her desire to get good grades. In a similar vein, George realized, through this exercise, that he could take specific actions to help him in his quest to turn in all of his work. Antonia went from a broad, personal character goal to action goals she could pursue to make her a more competent learner in social studies.

Research Project Using Bloom's Taxonomy

Students are frequently required to complete research projects in middle school, but are often ill equipped to take on such a task. I have observed through my years of teaching social studies that student research often results in products that list random facts about the topic. It has been the exception, rather than the norm, for student research to reflect higher-level thinking of the topic. To help students improve on this capacity, I decided to require students to construct a research booklet that takes their knowledge of their topic through the six steps of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Before beginning the research project, it was necessary to help students better understand what each of the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy required them to do. I chose to explicitly instruct them in this by having them create pictographs of each of the six terms used to name the levels. Although sometimes these vary, for the sake of this project I settled on the terms used by Anderson and Sosniak (1994): *knowledge*, *comprehension*, *application*, *analysis*, *synthesis*, and *evaluation*. In their table groups, students were instructed to create a pictograph of one of these six Bloom's Taxonomy

terms. These pictographs would be posted on the bulletin board to help those who forgot or did not understand each level as we arrived at it. Students received a word and definition and were informed that they were to create a usable definition in their own words and an illustration to go with their definition. These were later presented to the class, and samples were posted on the wall for later reference.

Students then completed pre-research plans (see Appendix p. 143) to help them get started on the project. This plan included:

- Deciding upon a research topic
- Creating guiding questions related to the three focus questions
- Brainstorming possible sources of information
- Listing methods for organizing information
- Planning ahead for problems they might encounter while researching their topics
- Devising possible solutions for research problems

We went over these step-by-step. We modeled sample questions for research and strategies for settling on topic ideas, which included consulting the KWHL graphic organizers they had placed in their writing notebooks and the topics chart on which they had listed their research ideas during phase one of the implementation. To further help those who struggled with this, we used a fishbowl exercise to model the pre-research steps and examples of how to fill in each of the steps. I had volunteers (six very capable students with wide ranging motivation levels and academic success rates) form a panel in the center of the room. One of these volunteers led the others through the steps as they shared their information. Another student served as the recorder and used the document camera to record ideas so that others in the class could see what was being written, which

was especially helpful for several of the English Language Learners in the class. The rest of the class filled out their plans as this was modeled and, at the conclusion, asked the panel questions. This worked very well, as students demonstrated better understanding of the organizer following the fishbowl experience. Table 10 illustrates samples from students' pre-research plans.

Table 10: Examples from students' pre-research plans

Pre-research Plan	Student Examples
Research Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knights • The Black Death • The lives of women • Foods they ate
Guiding Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could anyone become a knight? • Did everyone get the Black Death? • What was it like to be a woman in the Middle Ages? • Did people in the Middle Ages eat the same foods we eat now?
Possible Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet • Books in the class • The public library • Encyclopedias • The textbook
Methods to Organize Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T-charts • Cornell notes • Illustrations • Web diagrams
Anticipated Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding enough information • Procrastinating
Possible Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the foldables from the workshops • Use the Cornell notes from other activities • Do the research in steps • Use all possible sources in the classroom

After completing this plan, it was time to get started on the research booklet.

Step One of the Research Booklet-Knowledge

The primary focus of this step of the research project was to help students understand what is meant by *knowledge* so they could gather and record information

related to their topics and guiding questions. According to Anderson and Sosniak (1994), “Knowledge...includes those behaviors and test situations which emphasize the remembering, either by recognition or recall, of ideas, material, or phenomena” (p. 18). Before students could show their knowledge of their topics, they first had to understand what the term “knowledge” meant.

Soccer is a very popular sport at Happy Valley Middle School, as evidenced by the large number of students who regularly wear soccer jerseys from their favorite teams, primarily the Mexican national team and teams from the Apertura, Mexico’s professional soccer league. In addition, many of them play for a club team or the school team, and all students at Happy Valley play soccer in their physical education classes. As a result, each of them has at least some knowledge of the game of soccer. To capitalize on this asset, I began the first day of the implementation with the following warm-up:

- Write as much as you can about soccer and how it is played.

After giving them time to write, I had them compile their ideas in their table groups. A recorder took down information from each person. We discussed their responses and the methods they had used to record their knowledge of the game of soccer. We then talked about the term *knowledge*, referring to the pictographs they had created and their responses to the warm up, and we listed ways to display our knowledge about a topic. These included taking Cornell notes, listing information in bullets, making timelines, creating fact charts, defining key terms, and listing main ideas. We used these as examples of how to record knowledge of our topics for the research booklet.

To begin the research process, I gave them the step one instructions (see Appendix p. 144) and walked them through this. I alluded back to the warm-up on soccer

to illustrate how they had already displayed their knowledge of this sport. To help them gather information, I had checked out from our school library all of the materials related to the European Middle Ages, about 100 books in all. I also reminded them that the textbook could be used as a source of information. An interesting observation I noted was that very few of them actually used the textbook as a reference tool.

During the research time I noticed that most of them were highly involved and engaged in their task. A few had trouble because their topics were too broad. For example, Mario had chosen the Crusades as his topic and was overwhelmed with the amount of content this included. After a short discussion, he decided to focus on the Crusaders' experiences, as this was the subject of his guiding question. We ended the day with exit ticket reflections, through which several students expressed their desire to use the Internet to search for additional information. Before they packed up to leave, they checked off their behaviors for the day on their work-habits charts. As students walked out the door to go to their next class, they had to tell me in their own words what *knowledge* means. This was an idea I had gotten from the exemplary social studies teacher in Zemelman (2005). Their task for next time was to complete the *knowledge* portion of their research booklet. Figure 16 is an excerpt from one student's knowledge page in her research booklet.



Figure 16: An excerpt from the knowledge page of a research booklet

As the reader can see, this student sample shows a great deal of factual knowledge about the lives of knights.

Step Two of the Research Booklet-Comprehension

The primary focus of the comprehension phase of the research project was for students to display their understanding of their topics and guiding questions in their

research booklets. According to Anderson and Sosniak (1994), comprehension includes “those objectives, behaviors, or responses which represent an understanding of the literal message contained in a communication” (p. 19). For this implementation, the “communication” was students’ responses to the Step One warm-up as well as their display of knowledge of their topics in their research booklets.

To begin the class, I continued with the soccer theme and created the following warm-up prompts, from which they were to choose one:

- Re-read what you wrote in the last warm-up. Use that information to compare soccer to another sport.
- Use information from your previous warm-up to illustrate and explain soccer to an alien from another planet.

After writing individually to the prompts, they worked in their groups to display their comprehension of soccer on a single sheet of white paper. Following this, they used the document camera to share these with the class. We then discussed the meaning of *comprehension*, using the pictographs they had previously created, and we listed the various methods to display our understanding of a topic, referring back to the examples from the warm-up. These methods included comparing it to something else, summarizing the main points, illustrating it, describing it in our own words, and giving examples. I clarified that using bullets to list information, a student favorite, does not show comprehension. Their goal was to convince me they understood important ideas related to their topics and guiding questions.

I gave them the step two instructions for the research booklet (see Appendix p. 145) and walked them through the requirements. I alluded back to the warm-up on soccer

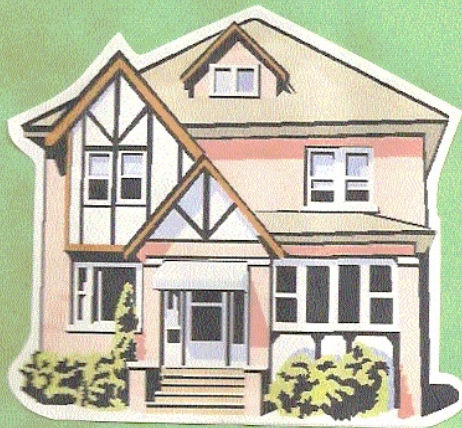
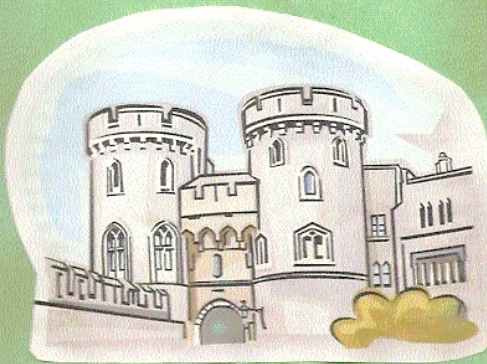
to illustrate how we had shown our comprehension of this sport. Several students were still having trouble finding sources for information, especially those who were using the compare/contrast approach to showing their comprehension. For example, one student was comparing castles to modern mansions. Another was comparing knights to modern soldiers. The plan they devised was to locate outside resources independently or after school with me. A number of them took me up on the offer to come in after school and were successful finding information on the Internet.

Before they packed up to leave, they checked off their behaviors for the day on their work-habits charts. As students walked out the door to go to their next class, they had to tell me in their own words what *comprehension* means. Their task for next class meeting was to complete the *comprehension* portion of their research booklet. Figure 17 is one sample of a student's comprehension page in her research booklet.

Comprehension

Question: Compare and contrast castles to modern homes.

- *Both were and are places in which people can live in.*
- *Both were and are made of durable materials for a safe living.*
- *Both have and had a way to protect themselves against intruders.*
- *Both were and are used to show the ownership a person has over a certain territory.*



- *Castles had towers, moats, and drawbridges for protection.*
- *Castles were made of stone.*
- *Castles were the homes for only Kings and Queens.*

- *Modern homes have alarms and fences for protection.*
- *Modern homes are mostly made out of durable wood.*
- *Modern homes are for everyone including the rich and the poor.*

Figure 17: Excerpt from the comprehension page of a research booklet

This student chose to compare castles to modern houses in order to show her comprehension of the components of a castle. The following two weeks, the students were off for spring break.

Modification to the Curriculum

Upon returning from the two-week break, I decided to take a day to review the concepts of tolerance and equality because I wanted students to keep these issues in mind as they completed their research. My goal for this modification was to get them to better understand these two concepts so that they could better connect them to the focus questions (refer to Figure 15). To do so we began with the following writing prompt:

- What happens when people meet someone new and/or different from them? Give examples of how they may act?
- Are all people equal? Explain why or why not?

Following time to write and share in table groups, we held a class discussion in which students addressed issues of tolerance and equality, as illustrated by Table 11.

Table 11: Student quotes during discussion of tolerance and equality

Regarding Tolerance	Regarding Equality
“Differences can lead to conflict when people are not tolerant.”	“People are not equal because some have more than others.”
“People can be mean and leave others out of stuff.”	“Rich people are treated better.”
“They will be mean to those who are different if they are not tolerant.”	“The president can do whatever he wants.” (Several had this same comment, although worded differently.)

As the reader can discern, these responses were very superficial in terms of addressing the concepts. I used a Power Point presentation that I had created for an interactive lecture during which students took Cornell notes and discussed the concepts in their table

groups. This presentation included the meanings of tolerance and equality, examples of each from famous historical events, and high interest photos and video clips from the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.

Following the interactive lecture students created collages to illustrate the ideas of tolerance and equality. They had made collages before, so they were familiar with this process. As a class we decided that the most effective posters would be voted on, and these examples would be posted for others to refer to for the remainder of the unit. I then asked them to connect the ideas of tolerance and equality to events that took place during the European Middle Ages. This was done in small table group discussions during which a recorder listed their ideas, Table 12.

Table 12: Students links between tolerance and equality and historical events

Tolerance	Equality
“The Crusaders took lands from people that were not Christian.” (Lack of tolerance leading to conflict)	“Not every person had an equal voice in government. People like peasants had nothing to do with the government.” (Lack of equality)
“During the Black Death the Christians burned the Jews because they thought the Jews had poisoned the wells.” (Lack of tolerance leading to persecution)	“Women had less power than men. Women couldn’t get a divorce even if the man was violent.” (Lack of equality)

When compared to the student quotes in Table 11, the observations in Table 12 show a better grasp of the terms as well as application to the content being studied. This improved understanding of the concepts of tolerance and equality would be the key to later analysis of current events, during which students showed improved ability to think critically about contemporary issues.

Step Three of the Research Booklet-Application

The primary focus of the application phase of the research project was for students to apply their understanding of their topics and guiding questions to create a display in their research booklets. According to Anderson and Sosniak (1994), it is difficult to distinguish between the comprehension and application levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, as both are meant to show understanding of a topic or idea (p. 20). Unlike comprehension, which is meant to demonstrate the degree of understanding of a topic, they write, the emphasis in application is "on remembering and bringing to bear upon given material the appropriate generalizations or principles" (p. 21). For this step of the implementation they had to apply their understanding of the topic to demonstrate the general ideas they had learned from their research.

To begin step three, students started with the following warm-up prompts, and were again asked to complete one of them:

- Re-read your last warm-up, about soccer. Create an illustration that shows one of the important parts of a soccer game. Write a one-sentence description of what is happening in the picture
- Create an interview with a soccer ball. Use the 5 W's and H (who, what, when, where, why, how) to create questions you would ask a soccer ball in an interview. Devise possible responses to the questions.

Upon completion, they shared their responses in their table groups. The majority of students chose to create the illustration, which did not surprise me because I knew that many of them like to draw. We then discussed the meaning of *application*, using the pictographs they had previously created, and we listed the various methods they could

use to apply their knowledge of their topics, referring back to the examples from the warm-up. These methods included creating an interview with someone associated with their topic, sequencing key ideas and/or events according to their guiding question, and solving an issue associated with their topics. Their goal was to apply the important ideas related to their topics and guiding questions.

I gave them the step three instructions (see Appendix p. 146) and walked them through the requirements. I alluded back to the warm-up on soccer to illustrate how we had applied our understanding of soccer to create interviews and illustrations. Students then spent time creating the application portion of the research project as I circulated to help those in need of assistance.

Before they packed up to leave, they checked off their behaviors for the day on their work-habits charts. As students walked out the door to go to their next class, they had to tell me in their own words what application means. Their task for next time was to complete the application portion of their research booklet. Figure 18 is one example of a student's application page in his research booklet.

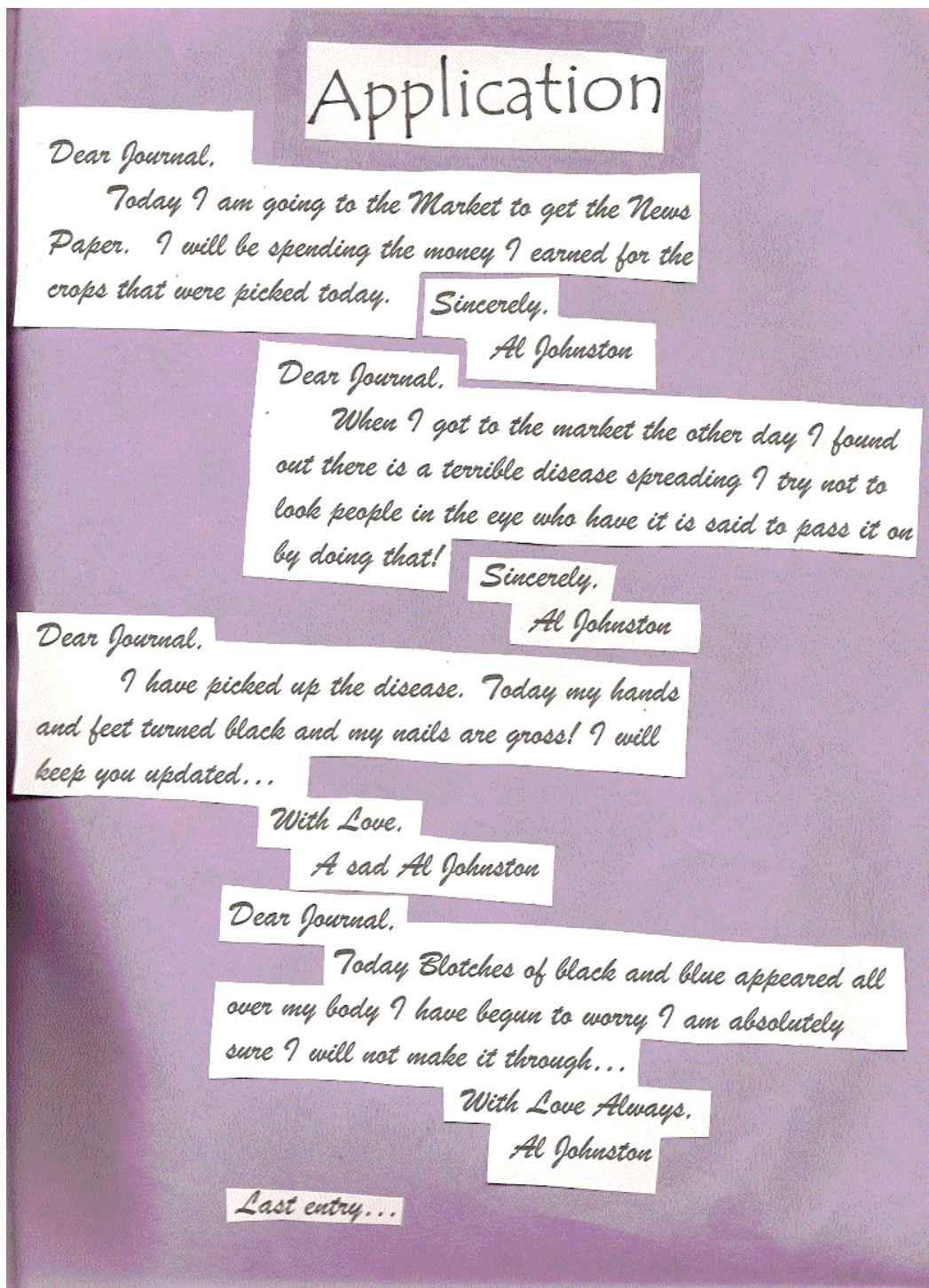


Figure 18: Excerpt from the application page of a research booklet

This student applied his understanding of the Black Death to create a journal of the last days of a victim of this disease.

Step Four of the Research Booklet-Analysis

As we worked our way up Bloom's Taxonomy, it became more and more challenging to create warm-up prompts that would match the level of thinking required, yet be accessible to the students. According to Anderson and Sosniak (1994), analysis should be used "as an aid to fuller comprehension or as a prelude to an evaluation of the material" (p. 21). For the warm-up, and the subsequent research step that followed, I chose to have students analyze their topics in terms of the focus question issues of tolerance and equality so that during the evaluation step of Bloom's Taxonomy they could do the same.

To begin the class, students responded to the following warm-up for this step:

- Think of the behaviors that are demonstrated on the soccer field during a game.

Complete a Venn diagram that compares the ideas of social equality or tolerance to the actions that take place on a soccer field.

I predicted that some students would have difficulty with this, so I allowed them to work in their groups to create one Venn diagram per table. After they had time to complete this task, each table group shared their diagrams. Afterwards, we discussed the meaning of *analysis*, using the pictographs they had previously created, and we listed the various links between the concepts of tolerance and equality and some of their topics.

I gave them the step four instructions (see Appendix p. 147) and walked them through the requirements. I alluded back to the warm-up on soccer to illustrate how we had analyzed this sport in terms of tolerance and equality. Students then spent time creating the analysis portion of the research project as I circulated to help those in need of assistance.

Before they packed up to leave, they checked off their behaviors for the day on their work-habits charts. As students walked out the door to go to their next class, they had to tell me in their own words what analysis means. Their task for next time was to complete the analysis portion of their research booklet. Figure 19 is an excerpt from a student's analysis page.

Differences	
The Black Death	Tolerance and Social Equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people blamed Jews for poisoning wells • Jews burned or torched <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence • No respect which later led to killing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Equality • Respect • Nonviolence • Everyone was equal to the plague. It spread and killed rapidly.
Similarities	

Figure 19: Excerpt from the analysis page of a research booklet

This student analyzed the Black Death in terms of tolerance and equality. He addresses the mistreatment of the Jews and even observed that the spread of the plague demonstrated equality by infecting everyone, not just those from certain demographic groups.

Step Five of the Research Booklet-Synthesis

The primary focus of the synthesis phase of the research project was for students to combine their understanding of their topics and guiding questions with the concepts of tolerance and equality.

According to Anderson and Sosniak (1994), synthesis is

a process of working with elements, parts, etc., and combining them in such a way as to constitute a pattern or structure not clearly there before. Generally this would involve a recombination of parts of previous experience with new material, reconstructed into a new and more or less well-integrated whole (p. 23).

For this step of the implementation students were to combine their understandings of the concepts of tolerance and equality with their knowledge of their research topics.

Prior to the arrival of students to the classroom for step five of the implementation, I put a number of magazines on each of the tables. When the students entered the classroom, they immediately began flipping through these. I gave them a few minutes to continue doing this without direction because I knew they would want to look through the magazines. I then prompted them to look at the covers of all of the magazines at their tables and share what they had in common. They volunteered such commonalities as dates, titles, main stories, pictures to go with the main stories, and the fact that each magazine cover seemed to address a theme for that particular issue. I listed these components of magazine covers on the whiteboard, gave each of them a blank sheet of white paper, and revealed the following warm-up prompt:

- Design a magazine cover that could be used for a soccer magazine. The topic of the issue is tolerance and equality on the soccer field. Be sure to include the components of a magazine cover we just listed.

Of the six warm-up prompts during the implementation, this proved to be the most popular. Students were so involved in their designs that conversation was almost nonexistent. I gave them more time to complete this exercise than the previous warm-ups

because they were so engaged, and they asked if they could have extra time to finish them. Afterwards, students were very excited to share their products.

We then discussed the meaning of *synthesis*, using the pictographs they had previously created, and the ways in which their warm-ups had employed this concept. We listed other methods through which they could combine their topics with the concepts of tolerance and equality. These ideas included writing a skit, song or poem; inventing something that would help increase tolerance and equality within their topic; and, as with the warm-up, creating a magazine cover that integrated these concepts with their research topic. I gave them the step five instructions (see Appendix p. 148) and walked them through the requirements. Students then spent time creating the synthesis portion of the research project as I circulated to help those in need of assistance.

Before they packed up to leave, they checked off their behaviors for the day on their work-habits charts. As students walked out the door to go to their next class, they had to tell me in their own words what *synthesis* means. Their task for next time was to complete the *synthesis* portion of their research booklet. Figure 20 is one sample of a student's synthesis page in her research booklet.

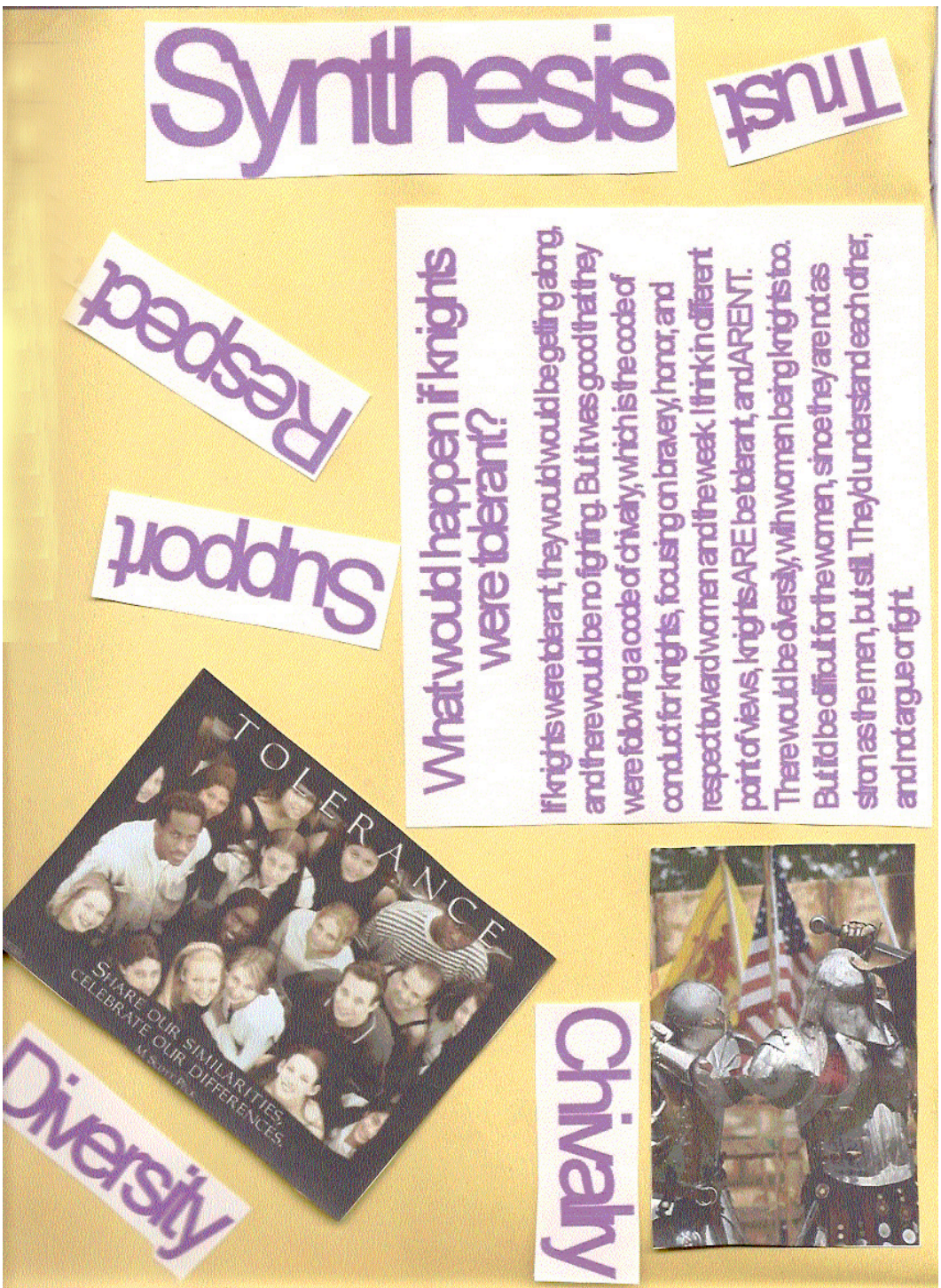


Figure 20: Excerpt from the synthesis page of a research booklet

This sample shows integration of the concepts of tolerance and equality with the student's newly gained understanding of the lives of knights.

Step Six of the Research Booklet-Evaluation

According to Anderson and Sosniak (1994), evaluation “involves the use of criteria as well as standards for appraising the extent to which particulars are accurate, effective, economical, or satisfying” (p. 24). In the case of this implementation, the criteria for evaluating research topics came in the form of the use of the concepts of tolerance and equality. Students would also use their own informed opinions to evaluate their research topics on their own terms.

Students entered the classroom and were instructed to answer the following questions as a warm-up:

- What is your opinion of soccer? Why?
- What would you recommend to improve tolerance and equality in the game of soccer?
- How would you rate the game of soccer in terms of tolerance and equality? Why?

Following their writing time, students shared their responses in their table groups. A recorder at each table was given the task to compile the group responses, which were shared with the class. We discussed the meaning of *evaluation* using the pictographs they had previously created. I gave them the step six instructions (see Appendix p. 149) and walked them through the requirements. I once more alluded back to the warm-up on soccer to illustrate how we had evaluated this sport using similar criteria. Students then spent time creating the evaluation portion of the research project as I circulated to help those in need of assistance.

Before they packed up to leave, they checked off their final behaviors on their work-habits charts and tallied these up for the entire unit. The results were later addressed

in post-research reflections students completed in order to assess their progress modifying their work habits. As students walked out the door to go to their next class, they had to tell me in their own words what *evaluation* means. Their task to for next time was to complete the *evaluation* portion of their research booklet. Figure 21 is one excerpt from a student's evaluation page in her research booklet.

Why did people blame the Black Death on the Jews?

People blamed the Black Death on Jews. I think their actions were ignorant. They did not have a strong, stable reason to blame the plague on the Jews. They had a good explanation or way how it could have happened, for example, they said Jews put poison in wells. But how did they know it was the Jews? They were ignorant towards the Jews.

Figure 21: Excerpt from the evaluation page of a research booklet

Assessment of Research Projects

When I designed the curriculum, I had two additional objectives to achieve in regards to the research booklet: students would use them to make an oral presentation of their discoveries to the class, and they would create quizzes for their booklets that would be taken by students in the other seventh-grade social studies teacher's class. We completed neither of these due to time and uncontrollable circumstances.

First, we simply ran out of time and could not take additional class meetings for students to present their booklets, a turn of events which thrilled some students who were nervous about standing in front of the class but dampened the spirits of others who were

looking forward to sharing their discoveries. At the conclusion of the research phase, I found that we were already a number of weeks behind on the pacing calendar. Although I usually do not give in to such pressures, I felt the urge to move on because the school year was rapidly winding down and there was an enormous amount of content yet to address. If we did not get through at least a portion of the remaining units of study, students would have additional struggles the following year in American history, which begins right where seventh-grade social studies leaves off.

Second, the other social studies teacher got seriously ill and was out for several weeks as I approached the end of my implementation. A number of substitute teachers filled in for her during this absence, and all of them struggled with maintaining classroom order during this period of time. As a result, I did not have an opportunity to send the research booklets over for this final activity. To make up for this I used the workshop rubric (see Appendix p. 130) students had used throughout the process as the grading criteria.

The summative assessment of the research booklet consisted of a second self-test based on the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Students were instructed to create a six-question test and then go back and answer the questions. Table 13 displays George's questions and answers as he progressed through the six stages of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Table 13: Student responses on the Bloom's Taxonomy self-test

Bloom's Level	Questions	Answers
Knowledge	How did the Black Death start?	The Black Death started by rats with fleas traveling from Asia to Europe. For example rats would get on the boats and make their way to different countrys.
Comprehension	Can you explain why people burned the Jews?	They burned the Jews because people thought they cataminated the wells of that was just their explanation. The real reason was because they hated the Jews and would burn them in pits
Application	What questions would you ask in an interview with a Jew that got burned?	I would ask why do you think you got burned? Were other Jews getting sick but they still burned you?
Analysis	If more people knew what killed them, what might the outcome have been?	Well for example the Jews wouldn't have got burned. More people would have survived. And someone would have made some type of medicine.
Synthesis	Can you see a possible solution to the Black Death?	Back then no because how would they know what was killing them. But some people thought they did have a solution blaming Jews. Today we have solutions like shots, medicine, ext..
Evaluation	Why was it better/worse that the Black Death came in winter?	It was better for example people would not get hot so in winter you could just warm up. It was worse as well for example what would they have to eat? All the crops would die.

George's test shows that he has more than a superficial understanding of the issue. Not only does he show understanding of the causes of the Black Death, he understands that the Jews were treated unfairly and that this was a result of discrimination when he writes that the real reason Jews were burned was that they were hated by others. He shows understanding that there was also a shortage of food that accompanied the plague, which compounded the problem. His responses to the test requirements clearly illustrate that George has some understanding of Bloom's Taxonomy and how to use it to elevate his thinking. Assessment of this was based on a four-point rubric based on the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (see Appendix pp. 158-159).

Assessment of Work Habits

As previously stated, students had concluded a work habits chart they had used to monitor their behaviors during the research process. I also observed one of the sample students each of these meetings to assess their accuracy in monitoring their own behaviors. At the end of each class meeting they had marked the on-task and off-task behaviors they had demonstrated during that class period. (See Table 8 for the full list of behaviors.) At the end of the research project they were to reflect on their progress. Overall, the classroom trend was that students slightly improved their on-task behaviors as a group; however, they cut their of-task behaviors in half. This is discussed in greater detail in the evaluation of the curriculum.

In the sample students that I observed more closely, there was a range of changes.

Table 14 illustrates their changes.

Table 14: Students self-monitored changes in their demonstrated work habits

Student	On-task (pre)	On-task (post)	Off-task (pre)	Off-task (post)
George	5	7	7	2
Mario	6	7	5	2
Antonia	7	9	2	0
Beatriz	7	9	7	2

All four students show an increase in on-task behaviors, although only slight. When I consulted my own written observations I noticed that Mario and George had set their on-task behaviors lower than what I observed. As far as their off-task behaviors, all four of the students observed cut these quite considerably, as evidenced by Table 14 and my own observations of their behaviors in class. In their post-reflections they had to elaborate on their behaviors and their progress towards their goals. Sample comments are highlighted in Figure 22.

Students' Reflections on Progress Towards Their Goals

- “This helped me stay on task because if I behave bad I have to write that down.”
- “Now I write in my binder reminder so I don’t forget my work.”
- “I stop passing notes and did my work.”
- “I stayed on-task all the time I was doing so much better.”

Figure 22: Students’ reflections on progress towards their goals

Connecting Past to Present

Upon completion of the workshops and research projects, I felt very comfortable with students’ abilities to use Bloom’s Taxonomy to think at higher levels. To capitalize on this competency, I began to have them analyze current events through the themes of tolerance and equality, which connected to the unit’s focus questions. Magazine stories, newspaper articles and CNN Student News proved to be excellent sources for such information. CNN Student news proved to be the most beneficial source because I could download podcasts the day before each class, control the portions to be viewed and replay parts as needed to facilitate student understanding. In addition, video news proved to be more accessible than print news for many students due to their varying levels of reading comprehension and their unfamiliarity with the structure of newspaper articles. Their knowledge of Bloom’s Taxonomy allowed me to give them choices of activities to complete to get them to think about these stories at different levels.

The first activity we completed dealt with what has been dubbed by the press as *Jena Six Episode* in Louisiana. In 2006, several Black students sat under a tree at a high school in Jena, Louisiana. Historically, this tree had been the territory of white students. The day after the Black students sat there, several nooses were discovered hanging from the tree. Shortly thereafter, several Black students beat up a White student. The Black students were arrested and charged with attempted murder. Although the charges were

later reduced, six months later one of the Black students remained in jail. By comparison, the White students who had hung the nooses from the tree received suspensions, but they were not prosecuted for committing a hate crime.

For this activity, we began with a video from CNN Student News highlighting the specifics of this event. Students were instructed to take notes on the events as they unfolded. Following this, they were required to use Bloom's Taxonomy to think deeply about the issue. All students had to use the first three levels of the Taxonomy to show their understanding of the issue. They could then choose one of the three higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to analyze the story, synthesize it with another issue, or evaluate the elements of the story. Figure 23 shows Antonia's finished product from this activity.

NOTES	<u>knowledge</u>	<u>comprehension</u>	SUMMARY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2006 • parents complained • people felt this was a hate crime • fights broke out • black students hurt white student • oak tree was cut down • protests • jena town • nooses hung on tree • oak tree (white tree) • northeast Louisiana • the jena six • boy was beaten and sent to hospital 	<p>In 2006 there was an oak tree at jena high school known as the white tree when a black boy sits under there three nooses were hung by white students. parents began to complain and people thought of it as a hate crime. Then 6 black students now known as the jena 6 beat up a white student and knocked him unconscious, he was then sent to the hospital but later returned that day. this all started protests, and the oak tree was later cut down.</p>	
PICTURE	<u>application</u>	<u>analysis</u>	VENDIAGRAM

Figure 23: Student current events examination using Bloom’s Taxonomy

This sample is quite typical of student responses as a whole. It shows that she has incorporated the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy to show deeper understanding of the events in Louisiana, and she has connected them to the issues of tolerance and equality.

Another current event activity involved examining a letter home written by a soldier in Iraq. The letter mentioned the death and starvation the soldier had witnessed. The class discussion involved the soldier's experiences and how they related to students' experiences or events they had studied. Figure 24 highlights some of the student responses.

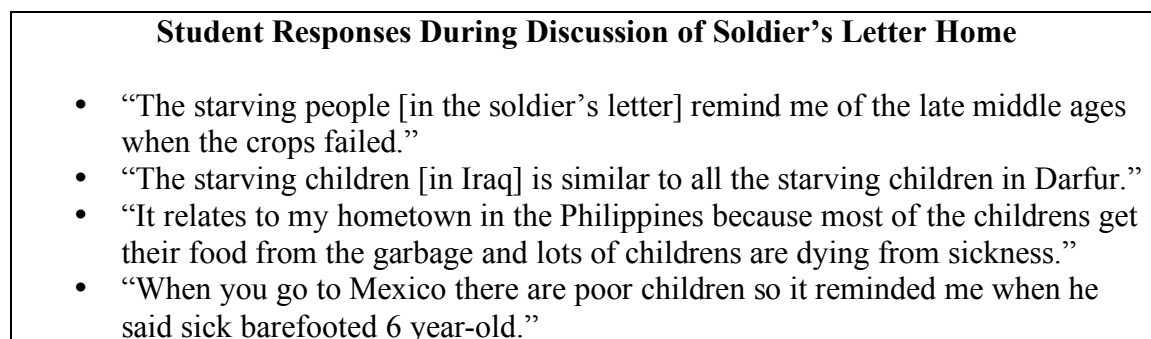


Figure 24: Student responses during discussion of soldier's letter home

Other issues examined using a similar method of discovery included:

- The issue of race and gender in the current election (equality)
- The crisis in Darfur (conflict and equality)
- The disparity in educational opportunities afforded children in different settings (equality)
- The prevalence of bullying in our schools (tolerance)

I will include more of the results of these activities in the evaluation portion of this writing to clearly illustrate the progress that students made in connecting past events to present events using the elements of *Connecting Past to Present*.

The final assessment of this portion of the implementation consisted of student analysis of a *New York Times* story (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/24/us/24land.html>) about a young man in Ohio who had been severely bullied throughout his public school

experiences. We read the article together, and students had to use all six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to show their understanding of the events in the story. Some chose to create questions and answers, whereas others used a variety of methods to display their understanding. As an example of this assessment, I have chosen to include Beatriz's responses to this assignment. Recall that she had struggled in all of her classes, never wore her glasses to school, and was a very low level student, academically. Table 15 illustrates her responses, included as she wrote them.

Table 15: Student examples from Bloom's Taxonomy-based self-test

Bloom's Level	Questions	Answers
Knowledge	How did Billy Wolfe bullying and beating happen.	It all began when a boy prank called billy's house and billy told his mom who told the pranksters mother and the next day the boy who prank called showed billy a list of 20 boys who wanted to beat up billy.
Comprehension	Explain what is happening to Billy every time he goes to school.	Billy is getting punched, kicked, and bullied at school and some kids would lie to another kid about billy so he can beat up billy.
Application	What question would you ask in an interview with Billy bullies.	Why do you guys beat-up billy. Is it because you're bored, or mad or did you just like beat billy up.
Analysis	If billy's beat-ups didn't happen, what might the outcome have been	Billy would have been able to live a happy and free life and go home without bruises, cuts, or black eyes.
Synthesis	Can you see a possible solution to billy's beat-ups.	The bullies or boys did not like billy and they all thought he was a nerd because he was tall or wore glasses or he had a learning disability. Students should be nice and respect other students. They can also try getting along with each other and by being nice and say thank you and excuse me.
Evaluation	How would you change the fact that billy is getting bullied.	I can convince the bullies to see the happy and fun side of billy. None of the kids are really not showing much tolerance or equality because the bullies always fight and treat billy different than other kids.

To assess her responses, I used a four-point rubric based on Bloom's Taxonomy (see Appendix pp. 158-159). Through this activity, Beatriz has shown that she understands the main content of the article. She has also successfully used Bloom's Taxonomy to get

herself to think about the event at a higher level. For example, she not only recounts the key events, she has also shown insight as to why the other boys pick on Billy, she has proposed several ideas that may improve the situation, and she connected the abuse of Billy to the ideas of tolerance and equality. When I shared this sample with her language arts and science teachers, they were amazed that she could produce at this level. I was very pleased with her grasp of Bloom's Taxonomy in such a relatively short period of time.

Revisions for Future Implementations

Important components of *Connecting Past to Present* consisted of assessing students' prior knowledge and interests related to the unit of study; creating focus questions that allowed for the study of historical and contemporary events through common themes; constructing workshops that addressed the focus questions, incorporated students' interests and prior knowledge, and encouraged them to think critically about historical events; enabling students to complete a research project on a topic of their choice by empowering them with higher level thinking through the use of Bloom's Taxonomy and a strategy to monitor their work habits; and connecting past and present through the study of current events. There are several revisions I will make to future implementations of *Connecting Past to Present*.

First, I believe that the complexities of Bloom's Taxonomy require it to be incorporated over an extended period of time. In a more perfect setting, teachers in all subject areas would use it in their classes to reinforce students' familiarity with this structure, although it is highly unlikely this will happen due to various factors. Some students failed to grasp the purpose of the Taxonomy, which kept them from using it to

their full benefit. This could be addressed by emphasizing each of the levels over a greater period of time.

Second, I believe that the topics of tolerance and equality, as they relate to conflict, should be introduced at the beginning of the unit, or even the beginning of the school year. These are themes that occur throughout seventh-grade social studies. They allow students to take a stance on many issues, and provide for stimulating discussions. I began the implementation with the desire to lead students to discover the focus questions, so I did not address tolerance and equality prior to starting the implementation. As the implementation progressed, I had to go back to help students better understand these ideas. A possible solution is to introduce these ideas at the beginning of the year and addressing them in all of the units of study.

Third, research project possibilities should allow for more variety of choices that are not written or drawn. In my desire to help all students grasp Bloom's Taxonomy, I feel that I may have stifled the creativity of those who grasped the concepts right away. This is a personal flaw in my own teaching that is exposed by my tendency to over scaffold in order to ensure that all students "get it". Future implementations, in which I exhibit less teacher control, will allow for more flexibility in this regard.

Revisions for Future Research

Results of the implementation of *Connecting Past to Present* were positive. Students learned to set goals and monitor their own behaviors to help them meet those goals. They demonstrated the ability to think at higher levels through applying the principles of Bloom's Taxonomy. Finally, they demonstrated development of a critical perspective by addressing issues of tolerance and equality in the past as well as present.

This experience opens the door to several areas of possible future research. For example, what form could this curriculum take in other subject areas? Could it be used in math and science to help students build connections to what they are required to learn? What implications could this have on the efforts to create system-wide reform?

Assessment and Evaluation of the Curriculum

To assess the effectiveness of *Connecting Past to Present*, I analyzed student work samples, pre, mid and post assessments, and my own observations noted during the implementation.

VII. Evaluation of *Connecting Past to Present*

When I set out on this great adventure of a curriculum project, I wanted to find out whether or not it would be possible to implement a culturally relevant approach to instruction that would empower students with tools necessary to become more active in the learning process. The challenge with such an endeavor is the difficulty involved when trying to show measurable growth. To address this, I decided to focus my research on the constructs of higher-level thinking (as based on Bloom's Taxonomy), self-monitoring of work habits, and students' development of a critical perspective towards historical and current events. To measure changes in these three realms I decided to analyze results from pre, mid and post testing to measure growth in higher-level thinking, a work habits chart on which students' measured their own actions in class, and student work samples. Table 16 provides an overview of the student goals and evaluation strategies.

Table 16: Overview of student goals and evaluation strategies

Goals	Pre-Post Surveys	Pre-Post Test	Writing Reflection	Teacher Observations	Work Samples	Work Habits Charts	Student Interviews
One Students will monitor their in-class work habits to progress towards self-created learning goals.	X		X	X		X	X
Two Students will use Bloom's Taxonomy as a tool to think at higher levels		X	X	X	X		X
Three Students will progress towards a critical perspective			X	X	X		

For each of the goals, I will give a brief summary, describe the findings for the class as a whole, and then describe the findings for the sample students I observed during my implementation.

Student Goal One: Students will self-monitor their work habits

Summary

As previously described, students worked together to define what they perceived to be on-task and off-task behaviors. I compiled the work habits they came up with into a list of nine behaviors for each of those two categories. Students then used these to create goals they would focus on during the research process. Each day they measured their progress towards these goals by reflecting on their work habits for that meeting. At the

end of the research process, students compiled their numbers to see how behaviors changed during this time. The results point towards overall progress towards their goals.

Findings

According to Stipek (1998), students typically have more success improving positive behaviors as opposed to reducing negative behaviors (p. 46). Students in my implementation class appeared to have done the opposite. Table 17 shows the change in their on-task behaviors.

Table 17: Students' self-monitored on-task behaviors during research project

Pre-assessed	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
6.34	6.25	6.37	6.16	6.36	6.26	6.56

On the pre-assessment of on-task behaviors, made before students began to monitor their work habits on a daily basis, students averaged 6.34 out of nine behaviors. By step six, the final measurement of their on-task behaviors, this had increased to 6.56, a negligible 3% change for the better. One explanation for this may be that they overstated their on-task behaviors in the pre-assessment, and they may have judged themselves harsher during the course of the project. This fact is supported by my own observations of sample students during this process. For example, during the *comprehension* step of the research process I observed Antonia demonstrate seven of the on-task behaviors; however she only marked herself as exhibiting four of these. Marcos and German had similar discrepancies in their self-monitoring of on-task behaviors when I observed them. None of my observations uncovered examples of students giving themselves too many on-task behaviors.

Unlike students' measurements of their on-task behaviors, off-task behaviors showed significant change. See Table 18.

Table 18: Students self-monitored off-task behaviors during research process

Pre-assessed	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
3.84	2.57	1.92	1.88	2.0	1.92	1.74

On the pre-assessment of off-task behaviors, made before students began to monitor their work habits on a daily basis, students averaged 3.84 out of nine behaviors. By step six, the final measurement of their work habits, this had decreased to 1.74 off-task behaviors. Examination of the numbers in Table 18 shows that students improved their off-task behaviors significantly. Students in the class managed to decrease their off-task behaviors by almost 53%. This improvement may have actually been better than indicated. During my own observations of the sample students, I found two cases in which students had given themselves more off-task behaviors than I had observed. During step two, Antonia had given herself three off-task behaviors, whereas I only observed one. During step five, Mario gave himself three off-task behaviors while I had marked off one. Although this may indicate that students did not accurately monitor their behaviors in class, it definitely shows that they were being honest in their efforts. Sample students did not deflate their numbers to reflect fewer off-task behaviors, according to my own observations. In addition to these scores on their behavior charts, students also reflected on the process and their feelings about its usefulness.

The following quotes from the sample students' reflections regarding the experience also indicate that they were conscientiously working to improve their behaviors in class, as illustrated in Figure 25.

Student Reflections on Work-habits Change

- “I wanted to get more on-task than off-task, so it kept me doing my work.”
- “I started writing in my binder reminder because it was one of my goals and I wanted to achieve it.”
- “I would’ve kept writing notes to my friends because I would have had my mind on that instead of trying to get more goals.”
- “It helped because my goal was getting more on-task behaviors so I didn’t want that many off-tasks...when my friends were talking I would be doing my work...”

Figure 25: Student reflections on work-habits change

These comments show that the effort to improve was present. It could be argued quite reasonably that based on these comments students were more motivated to succeed at their goals than to modify their behaviors. Even if this were the case, the results indicate that students can improve their behaviors by monitoring themselves.

Student Goal Two: Students will improve their higher level thinking skills

Summary

One common complaint I have heard from colleagues is that students do not employ their higher level thinking skills as often as teachers would like. I have felt this way myself. A discovery I have made during my years in the classroom is that many students do not know what is being asked of them when they are told to think about what they want to write or say. *Connecting Past to Present* empowers students with a scaffold to higher-level thinking, and the implementation of this project showed it was successful at getting students to do so.

Findings

Over the course of this implementation, students were assessed three times for their abilities to use Bloom’s Taxonomy to think at higher levels. The pre-assessment was given upon completion of the workshops. Students used their completed workshops to

create individual quizzes based on the information in their foldables. Each question had to come from a different level of Bloom's Taxonomy, and had to include an answer. The mid-assessment followed the format of the pre-assessment. The difference was that they used their research booklets from phase two of the implementation to complete their self-created quizzes. The post-assessment was different from the previous two because I wanted to see how well they could apply their knowledge of Bloom's Taxonomy to a real-life situation. For this assessment, students had to read a *New York Times* article about a young boy in Arkansas who had been severely bullied for years by many other students at his school. They then had to use Bloom's Taxonomy to analyze the article. The same four-point rubric (see Appendix pp.158-159) was used to evaluate students on each of the assessments. To illustrate their growth, Table 19 shows the average scores, on a rubric scale of 1 to 4, students in the class achieved on each of the three assessments.

Table 19: Class average of students' scores on Bloom's Taxonomy assessments

Bloom's Taxonomy Level	Pre	Mid	Post	Average	Change (Pre-Post)
Knowledge	1.6	2.8	2.8	2.4	1.2 (30%)
Comprehension	1.7	2.3	2.8	2.3	1.1 (28%)
Application	1.4	2.2	3.1	2.2	1.7 (43%)
Analysis	1.9	1.8	2.8	2.2	.9 (23%)
Synthesis	1.5	2	2.3	1.9	.8 (20%)
Evaluation	1.5	2	2.6	2	.5 (13%)

These numbers clearly show a trend in a positive direction regarding students' ability to think at higher levels as based on Bloom's Taxonomy. On the pre-assessment, student averages for each of the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy were between 1.4 and 1.9 on a scale of one to four. On the post-assessment, student averages for each of the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy were between 2.3 and 3.1. Although growth was less drastic at the

higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, this is to be expected due to the increasingly difficult levels of thinking that are required.

Case Study Examples

To further illustrate how well *Connecting Past to Present* helped students think at higher levels, it is necessary to look at the performance of the sample students on the assessments. Table 20 displays the gains made by the sample students' from the first assessment to the final assessment.

Table 20: Sample students' change from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment

	Beatriz	George	Antonia	Mario	Change (Pre-Post)
Knowledge	+ 1.5	+ 1.5	+ .5	+ 2	+ 1.38 (34%)
Comprehension	+ 1.5	+ 1	+ 1.5	+ 1	+ 1.25 (31%)
Application	+ 1	+ 2	+2.5	+ 1	+ 1.63 (41%)
Analysis	+ 1	+ 1	+ .5	+ 1	+ .88 (22%)
Synthesis	+ 0	+ 1	+ 1	+ 1	+ .75 (19%)
Evaluation	+ .5	+ .5	+ 2	+ 1	+ 1 (25%)

All four students showed improved ability to use Bloom's Taxonomy as a tool to reach higher-level thinking. This has several important implications on instruction.

First, such a tool gives students a built-in scaffold to elevate their thinking beyond the knowledge level. For example, students often give summaries when reporting on an issue, but they rarely go beyond that. The ability to use Bloom's Taxonomy allows them to take what they have learned, to connect with it and to give a thoughtful opinion on it. This could be quite useful when trying to get students to answer an essay prompt. Rather

than constrict them with too many concrete scaffolds (e.g. you must have x paragraphs, write y pages, etc.) teachers can instruct them that they must adequately address designated levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Second, if students understand how to apply Bloom's Taxonomy, the teacher can differentiate instruction more effectively. For example, one student may be required to apply all six levels of the taxonomy on an assignment, whereas another may be required to apply the first three levels of thinking and one of the other three higher levels of thinking. Of course, those who wish to do so can do more than the required if he/she chooses. This keeps each student within his/her zone of proximal development, and frees the teacher from the time-consuming task of creating many different assignments to meet the needs of various students within the same class.

Finally, the ability to apply Bloom's Taxonomy allows students to take more responsibility for their own learning. When students understand the concept of "elevating their thinking" (as I put it to my students) they have the ability to push themselves and become better independent learners. This, in turn, allows the teacher to give them more choices in learning activities without having to run off and keep track of multiple worksheets.

Student Goal Three: Students will progress towards a critical perspective

Summary

The third student goal of *Connecting Past to Present* was to get students to connect historical and current events in a way that would help them progress towards a critical view of both. This proved to be difficult to measure quantitatively, so I will focus on anecdotal evidence to show their progression. One must consider that this unit took

place during a study of the European Middle Ages. Usually such a unit requires that students learn a tremendous amount of trivia about the time period, such as famous people, dates of wars, and a whole host of other such factual based information. Through the course of *Connecting Past to Present*, students went beyond this.

During the final portion of the implementation, the class spent time using current events to examine issues of tolerance, equality and conflict. It was during these activities that students showed just how far their thinking had progressed. For example, after examining a newspaper article about one middle school's brand new cardio equipment, George had an astute observation: "This is like the focus question on equality. Students in other schools have better programs and things we do not have." I tried not to agree too vigorously.

After we viewed a video on the crisis in Darfur, we had a pretty emotional discussion about the atrocities that were taking place in this portion of Africa. The discussion was elevated when one student cried out, "Mr. Maratea, I'm going to be an activist when I get older!" At first her classmates appeared puzzled. One student asked her what an activist was. She replied, "It's someone who makes things better." After she said this, another student inquired as to how they could make a difference. I had them work in their table groups to come up with ideas for action. Figure 26 includes examples of what they came up with.

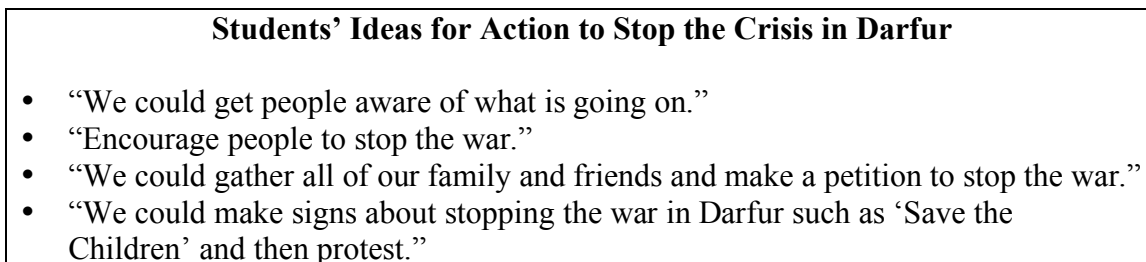


Figure 26: Students' ideas for action to stop the crisis in Darfur

Although the implementation ended before they could take action, it clearly shows that students were progressing towards a critical view of world events.

Overall Summary and Discussion

Towards the conclusion of the implementation something remarkable happened at El Dorado Middle School. One of the administrators at El Dorado had warned students that the color purple would soon be banned from campus because it had become associated with gang activity. When students came to my class the next day they were livid, mainly because this color had not been banned at other middle schools in the district where most of the students were White. Several students mentioned that this was not equality. After they had some time to vent their anger, I asked them what they were going to do about this proposed ban. Some said they were going to skip school. Others suggested protesting during school. I reminded them that whatever they decided to do, they had to be ready to face the consequences, as all protestors must be. This exchange occurred on a Friday. The following Monday, scores of seventh graders (mainly students in my social studies classes) showed up wearing purple. Some students were dressed in purple from neck to toe. The administrator who had announced the approaching ban had to back down. The planned ban on purple was dropped. Not only had they taken a critical view of an issue on campus, they had organized and they had taken action.

Teacher Goal: To incorporate culturally relevant teaching practices

As stated previously, there are several aspects of culturally responsive practices that occurred throughout the literature (Figure 8). Table 21 shows how components of *Connecting Past to Present* address these.

Table 21: Culturally responsive teaching and components of the approach

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices	Connecting Past to Present
Connects learning activities and content to students' lives and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus questions • Workshops • Research projects
Constructivist approach to build on prior knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KWHL • Research project
Provides choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Research project • Warm-ups
Students establish learning goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals based on work habits
Builds students' competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work habits • Bloom's Taxonomy • Research project
Promotes autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Research project
Creates a classroom learning community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work habits • Collaborative establishment of focus question

This innovative approach used students' prior knowledge and experiences to guide learning activities. Students had numerous opportunities to work together on learning tasks. Meaningful choices were provided in the form of workshop and research opportunities. Students were also provided with tools to help them become better learners. They also began to think more critically about the world around them.

There are other forms of evidence that suggest that students felt a connection to what they were doing in my social studies classes. Student discipline records indicate that my classes included some of the most frequently disciplined seventh graders on

campus. For example, during the implementation of *Connecting Past to Present*, students on my roster received 205 infractions from either their teachers or administrators. Infractions are slips given out to students who use profanity, show up late to class, disrespect teachers, disrupt class, and like behaviors. Table 22 shows the breakdown of infractions given out by subject area.

Table 22: Infractions given to my students by subject area

Subject	Number of Infractions
Language Arts	41
Math	54
Science	13
Exploratory/Elective	11
PE	23
Administration	63
Social Studies	0

Although this data should not be used to reflect negatively on other teachers' practices, the numbers do show that students in social studies were less likely to get into trouble. I believe the main reason behind the lack of discipline issues in social studies is connected to the practices implemented during this curriculum project. There is evidence to support this claim.

Throughout the course of the school year I have students reflect on each unit of study as it is completed. At the conclusion of this implementation I had them write a reflection of their experiences. Examples of their responses are included in Figure 27.

Students' Reflections on *Connecting Past to Present*

- “I liked the workshops because I got to choose.”
- “We got to draw, color, design and work with friends in various activities.”
- “I liked that we could help each other, and that there were workshops where you had to draw.”
- “I’m better working with a partner because I sometimes struggle to complete assignments.”
- “Mr. Maratea, you are there to help us, but you cannot help all of us we are too much. So that’s why I like working in groups.”
- “Bloom’s Taxonomy made me think to the next level.”

Figure 27: Students reflections on *Connecting Past to Present*

Overall, students responded positively to the curriculum, as illustrated by Figure 22.

Those comments that were negative mostly involved the desire to have more time in the workshops. One student even requested that we do workshops every day.

Conclusion

Overall, implementation of *Connecting Past to Present* was a success. As demonstrated by the data, students successfully monitored their work habits, they improved their abilities to think at higher levels, and they progressed towards a critical perspective. In addition, I managed to incorporate a number of culturally responsive practices into my own pedagogy. To further validate claims that the curriculum was a success, the reader should know that a number of seventh grade teachers implemented aspects of this innovative approach into their own classrooms. For example, two language arts teachers capitalized on students’ abilities to access Bloom’s Taxonomy to differentiate instruction in their classes. Another language arts teacher incorporated issues of tolerance and equality in her classes. Unfortunately, two of these teachers were laid off due to budget cuts, and the third, a former district teacher of the year, was

reassigned to teach art classes. Analysis of such decisions could be the topic of another research project.

VIII. Conclusion

I began this project with the desire to help the increasing number of struggling students who walk through my classroom door each August. I read through the literature and became convinced that implementing culturally responsive teaching principles into my own practices would improve the academic experiences of my students. Such an approach would also empower them with the ability to view the world in a more critical light. I created an environment in which students were exposed to a much more democratic and collaborative classroom experience than is the norm. I devised methods of teaching and assessing that would provide quantifiable evidence that, contrary to popular criticisms of culturally relevant teaching practices, this does not have to be an academically lightweight pedagogy. I discovered that creating a classroom environment founded on empowerment of the students, while exhausting and puzzling at times, can be done in a manner that is relevant, challenging, and rewarding.

Any efforts to teach in a culturally relevant manner must:

- Relate to students' lives and experiences
- Challenge students academically
- Improve students' academic competencies
- Build upon prior knowledge and strengths
- Include students in learning decisions
- Establish meaningful relationships between teachers and students
- Build a community of learners

There are challenges to such an approach. Table 23 illustrates some of the obstacles I faced in the implementation of this project.

Table 23: Challenges to implementation of *Connecting Past to Present*

Challenge	Effect of the Challenge
Pacing calendars rush teachers through content	There is often little time for constructivist teaching
Administrators tend to frown upon anything that may appear controversial	Teachers are often unwilling to take risks
Colleagues often do not want to spend the energy, or take the risks necessary, to support such an approach in other curricular areas	It is difficult for one teacher to make an effective difference while working alone
Schools that need to follow such an approach are often the ones facing the most restrictive reform measures	There is little freedom to try new teaching approaches that do not specifically address material that is “on the test”
Students were often absent from class for administrative and discipline reasons	Continuity of curriculum was disrupted and students had to play “catch-up”
Demands on the implementing teacher’s time after school	It was difficult to give students needed after school
Students’ lack of familiarity with an approach that leaves them great latitude in which to show their understanding	It took time for students to get used to the notion that there was not “one right answer” to a learning objective

These are many of the same issues recounted in the research literature. The reality is that there are few factors working in favor of teachers who seek to make learning relevant for all students.

The current system of accountability-based reform does little to help the plight of this country’s poor and disadvantaged students, a group dominated by minorities. As Ayers (2001) writes, “In large, impersonal systems, teachers are expected to become obedient, to conform and follow rules – we are expected to deliver curriculum without much thought, and control the students without much feeling” (p. 19). Due to the disparity between those who have the tools to succeed academically and those who do not, it is up to educators, especially those in the classroom, to do what is morally correct and teach in a manner that gives all students a chance to learn. This great nation of ours implemented a system of public education with the hopes that it would keep our

democracy strong throughout the ages. An educated society is a vigilant society. An educated society is a prosperous society. An educated society elects intelligent leaders. An educated society provides for a healthy democracy. When vast numbers of students fail to finish school, and as a result have the doors of opportunity slammed shut, our society ails. Since system-wide change cannot be implemented in a single classroom, it is up to teachers to do whatever it takes to help all students succeed within this system. *Connecting Past to Present* represents one possible approach.

Appendix-Connecting Past to Present

This transformative approach to empowering students with the cultural capital of the school by creating a more democratic classroom is one teacher's attempt to bring such practices to a population that traditionally has not been afforded such learning experiences. *Connecting Past to Present* combines culturally relevant practices with an innovative use of Bloom's Taxonomy and elements of self-monitoring of academic behaviors to create an approach intended to empower students with autonomy and higher-level thinking skills. It should be looked at as an approach to enhancing current curriculum rather than a curriculum in and of itself. It assumes:

- Teachers are looking to make learning more relevant for an increasingly diverse student body
- Teachers want students to think in different ways
- Administrators will allow teachers to promote critical perspectives in their students
- Teachers can manage a classroom in which they must give up quite a bit of control over the learning process
- Teachers feel that classroom experiences should be learner centered and constructivist

Connecting Past to Present consists of two phases. The first phase involves beginning with a KWHL (*Know, Want to know, How to find that information, what we Learned*) graphic organizer and creating workshops for students to choose from. Daily planning and activities include objectives, warm-ups to be completed in a writing notebook, sharing out, and reflection. Much of class time is spent working collaboratively. Phase two consists of completing a research project through the use of Bloom's Taxonomy as a guide to higher-level thinking. Students choose topics related to the European Middle Ages, and they complete their own investigations of these. In addition, on-task and off-task work habits are defined and monitored through this process. The table on Appendix page 115 illustrates the steps of each phase.

Implementation of *Connecting Past to Present*

Phase	Step	Objective
One	One	To assess students' prior knowledge and interests
	Two	To create unit focus questions
	Three	To complete workshops
	Four	To assess students' understanding of content
Two	One	Identify work habits to be monitored
	Two	Define the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy
	Three	Complete pre-research plan
	Four	Research Step One – Knowledge
	Five	Research Step Two – Comprehension
	Six	Research Step Three – Application
	Seven	Research Step Four – Analysis
	Eight	Research Step Five – Synthesis
	Nine	Research Step Six – Evaluation
	Ten	Assessment of the Research Booklets and students' understanding of their topics

Implementation-Phase One

The phase one activities involve completing a KWHL and breaking down the content of the unit into three focus questions. This approach is based on the European Middle Ages, but can be adapted to fit the needs of other content areas. For the unit on the European Middle Ages, the focus questions are:

- Do all people have an equal voice in **government** or a fair share of power?
- How do different **religious** beliefs lead to conflict?
- Do some members of **society** have advantages others do not have?

These are incorporated into six workshops, from which students have to choose three to complete. What follows is a brief description of daily objectives and activities I included in the unit as implemented. Handouts are included following each step of this phase of the implementation.

Step One – Identifying Students' Prior Knowledge and Interests

Objective(s):

- *To find out what students know about Medieval Europe*
- *To find out what we want to learn about the Middle Ages*

Summary:

Use the KWHL to assess for prior knowledge and interests. Videos clips, unit vocabulary and textbook walkthroughs of the relevant pages of the textbook are good for activating prior knowledge.

KWHL**Topic:**

K What do you know about the topic?	W What do you want to know about the topic?	H How can you learn more about this topic?	L What have you learned about the topic?
• • • • • • •	• • • • • • •	• • • • • • •	• • • • • • •

Step Two – Creating Unit Focus Questions

Objective(s):

- *To create focus questions related to the overall themes of the unit*

Summary:

The goal is to establish the focus questions to be used throughout the unit. To do this students can view a video that encompasses the main events and ideas from the European Middle Ages. The focus questions for the unit are:

- Do some members of society have advantages others do not have?
- Can differences over religion lead to conflict?
- Does every person have an equal voice in government or a fair share of power?

Step Three – Completing Workshops

Objective(s):

- *To create expectations and consequences and introduce each of the workshops*

Summary:

The goal for this step is to set classroom expectations for behaviors and consequences and to introduce students to the workshops. This is also a good time to establish which activities students are going to need help with. For example, workshop six requires them to create a political cartoon. Students may or may not be familiar with the format of these. The workshops also require them to write letters, to create an acrostic poem, to analyze primary sources, and to make maps. These skills make good topics for fishbowl activities and/or mini-lessons to begin each step.

The fishbowl process is used as a method to capitalize on the strengths of more competent learners in order to help those who are struggling with requirements of the workshops. For example, students may still have trouble understanding political cartoons. A group of students who understand this concept can be used to model political cartoon analysis for the rest of the class. Have them come together in the classroom in a spot where all others can observe them as they break down a political cartoon. Those outside of the “fishbowl” watch as they do this. At the conclusion, those outside of the fishbowl are given the opportunity to ask the fishbowl group any questions they may have about the process. I used this fishbowl method throughout the implementation to great effect. It is up to the teacher to determine which areas students need help.

The handouts on pages 121 through 129 of the Appendix can be used to help students understand the requirements of the workshops. Directions for each of the six workshops, followed immediately by the necessary handouts, are also included in these pages. The rubric for evaluating the workshops is on Appendix page 130 of the Appendix. Students use it to self-evaluate first, and then the teacher does the same. It should be used throughout the workshop phase of the implementation as a guide for formative evaluation of students’ understanding of the content.

Middle Ages Learning Objectives

Choose three of the following activities to complete. Be sure to look at the directions for each and complete ALL products required.

Activity	Focus Question
1. Serf letter to the lord of the manor	Do all people have an equal voice in government or a fair share of power?
2. Charlemagne acrostic poem	How do different religious beliefs lead to conflict?
3. Black Death persuasive letter	Do some members of society have advantages others do not have?
4. Wanted: King John	Do all people have an equal voice in government or a fair share of power?
5. Crusades map with plan for peace	How do different religious beliefs lead to conflict?
6. Medieval times political cartoon	Do some members of society have advantages others do not have?

Activity choices:

Date completed:

Activity one **or** activity four

Activity two **or** activity five

Activity three **or** activity six

Medieval Europe Workshop One

Use the following directions to complete this activity.

<p>Focus Question: Do all people have an equal voice in government or a fair share of power?</p>
<p>What level of Bloom's Taxonomy is this activity? Level One, Knowledge: Describe the lives of serfs.</p>
<p>What do I do?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read about the lives of serfs and take Cornell notes. 2. Use the information you have gathered to complete the following RAFT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role: You are a serf • Audience: The lord of the manor • Form: Write a letter • Topic: Your goal is to let the lord of the manor know about the difficulties you face as a serf, and to inform him of the steps he can take to make your life better. Your letter should include plenty of information from what you have learned about the lives of serfs.
<p>What sources can I use to learn about this issue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The readings in the folder • Your textbook • Notes from the videos we have watched in class
<p>What do I need to turn in?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cornell notes on the lives of serfs 2. Letter to the lord of the manor. 3. A paragraph that answers the focus question. Be sure to include details from what you learned about the lives of medieval serfs.

Medieval Europe Workshop Two

Use the following directions to complete this activity.

<p>Focus Question: How do different religious beliefs lead to conflict?</p>
<p>What level of Bloom's Taxonomy is this activity? Level Two, Comprehension: Summarize in the form of an acrostic poem</p>
<p>What do I do?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read about the life of Charlemagne and take Cornell notes. Pay close attention to the many wars Charlemagne fought and the reasons for these conflicts. 2. Use the information you have gathered to complete the following RAFT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role: You are a Medieval poet. • Audience: Nobles at a royal feast 400 years after the death of Charlemagne • Form: Write an acrostic poem • Topic: Write an acrostic poem about the life of Emperor Charlemagne. Be sure to include at least four details about the religious conflicts that he was involved in. You should use the word CHARLEMAGNE as the main word.
<p>What sources can I use to learn about this issue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The readings in the folder • The books in the classroom • The orange textbook • Notes from the videos we have watched in class
<p>What do I need to turn in?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cornell notes on the life of Charlemagne 2. Acrostic poem 3. Write a paragraph that answers the focus question for this activity. Be sure to include details from what you learned about the life of Charlemagne.

Medieval Europe Workshop Three

Use the following directions to complete this activity.

<p>Focus Question: Do some members of society have advantages others do not have?</p>
<p>What level of Bloom's Taxonomy is this activity? Level Three, Application: Identify examples of mistreatment in the context of a significant historical event</p>
<p>What do I do?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine the primary sources in the file. As you do this, fill in the document analysis handout. 2. Use the information you have gathered to complete the following RAFT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role: You are a modern day historian • Audience: The people who lived during the Middle Ages • Form: Write a persuasive letter • Topic: Write a persuasive letter to the people of the Middle Ages. In this letter, be sure to explain the Black Death and its real causes, describe their treatment of Jews, and judge their actions as either good or bad.
<p>What sources can I use to learn about this issue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The readings in the folder • The books in the classroom • The orange textbook • Notes from the videos we have watched in class
<p>What do I need to turn in?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completed document analysis form 2. Persuasive letter 3. Write a paragraph that answers the focus question for this activity. Be sure to include details from what you learned about the Black Death and the treatment of Jews during this tragedy.

Workshop Three
Document Analysis

1. What type of document(s) did you examine? (Piece of art, photograph, text)

2. Write about the document(s) by focusing on who, what, when, where, why and how.

3. Write a summary of the document(s). What are the main ideas?

4. Choose an interesting quote or feature from the document(s). Write or describe the quote or feature in the space below and tell why you chose it.

5. Write one question about the document(s) that comes to mind. This question should be from level three, four or five on Bloom's Taxonomy. Try to answer the question.

6. Write your reaction to the document(s). What do you feel about the document and the issue it involves? Does it relate to other historical events you have learned about? Does it relate to anything going on in the world at this time? Does it relate to any of your own experiences?

Medieval Europe Workshop Four

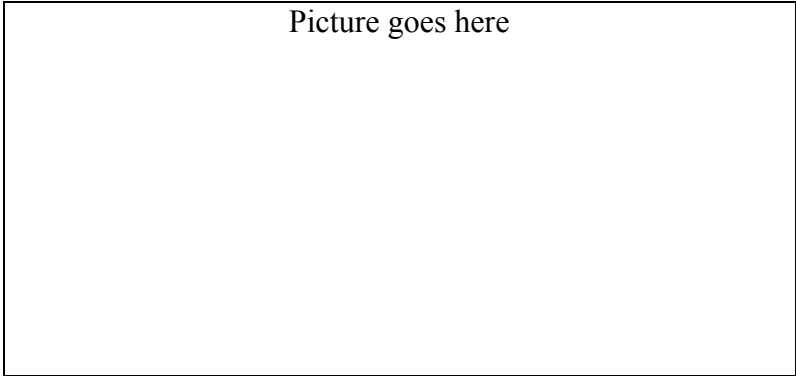
Use the following directions to complete this activity.

<p>Focus Question: Do all people have an equal voice in government or a fair share of power?</p>
<p>What level of Bloom's Taxonomy is this activity? Level Four, Analysis: Examine King John's abuse of power and the response of the nobles</p>
<p>What do I do?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the background information on King John and take Cornell notes that focus on King John's abuse of his power and the reactions of the nobles. 2. Read aloud, with others completing this activity if possible, the Reader's Theater titled <i>The Baron's Confront King John</i>. Add to your Cornell notes. 3. Examine the portions of the Magna Carat and add to your Cornell notes what you have learned about this document. 4. Use the information you have gathered to complete the following RAFT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role: A noble in the time of King John • Audience: Other nobles • Form: You will create a wanted poster of King John • Topic: Your wanted poster should describe what King John did that was wrong and explain how signing the Magna Carat would help make things better. Use the template to guide you.
<p>What sources can I use to learn about this issue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The readings in the folder • The books in the classroom • The orange textbook • Notes from the videos we have watched in class
<p>What do I need to turn in?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cornell notes on King John 2. Wanted poster 3. Write a paragraph that answers the focus question for this activity. Be sure to include details from what you learned about King John's abuse of power and how the nobles helped change this.

WANTED

King John

Picture goes here



Who is he?

When did he live?

Where did he live?

Wanted for: (how did he abuse his power?)

What is the reward? (Keep it appropriate to the Middle Ages)

Medieval Europe Workshop Five

Use the following directions to complete this activity.

<p>Focus Question: How do different religious beliefs lead to conflict?</p>
<p>What level of Bloom's Taxonomy is this activity? Level Five, Synthesis: Create a plan to end a historical conflict</p>
<p>What do I do?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use pages 327 and 328 to label the following places on the map: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England, France, Spain, Holy Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, Palestine • Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic Ocean • Rome, Paris, Constantinople, Antioch, Acre, Damascus, Jerusalem • Draw the routes that the Crusaders took to the Holy Land 2. Read the handouts on the reasons for the Crusades and the two sides involved. Fill in the Venn diagram with the reasons each side had for fighting. 3. Watch the following parts of the video on the laptop: 4. Use the information you have gathered to complete the following RAFT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role: You are a time traveler • Audience: Muslims and Christians during the years of the Crusades • Form: A peace plan that will end the fighting • Topic: Write a peace plan that would allow the Christians and the Muslims to end the Crusades and live in peace. Remember that a good plan means that both sides have to compromise. This means that both sides will have to give up some of the things they want in order to have peace.
<p>What sources can I use to learn about this issue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The readings in the folder • The books in the classroom • The orange textbook • Notes from the videos we have watched in class
<p>What do I need to turn in?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map of the Crusades 2. Venn diagram 3. Peace plan 4. Write a paragraph that answers the focus question for this activity. Be sure to include details from what you learned about the Crusades.

Medieval Europe Workshop Six

Use the following directions to complete this activity.

<p>Focus Question: Do some members of society have advantages others do not have?</p>
<p>What level of Bloom’s Taxonomy is this activity? Level Six, Evaluation: Judge the inequalities of Medieval society through the creation of a political cartoon</p>
<p>What do I do?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read about the lives of men and women during the Middle Ages. As you read, fill in the “talking heads” with information about the lives of men and women. 2. Use the information you have gathered to complete the following RAFT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role: You are a comic artist • Audience: People who read the newspaper • Form: A political cartoon • Topic: Create a political cartoon that shows how the rights of men and women were not equal during the Middle Ages.
<p>What sources can I use to learn about this issue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The readings in the folder • The books in the classroom • The orange textbook • Notes from the videos we have watched in class
<p>What do I need to turn in?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talking heads 2. Political cartoon 3. Write a paragraph that answers the focus question for this activity. Be sure to include details from what you learned about the lives of men and women during the Middle Ages.

Workshop and Research Project Rubric

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Accuracy of Facts	All information is correct. Information was taken from reliable sources.	Almost all information is correct. Information was taken from reliable sources.	Some information may be incorrect.	NO facts are reported OR most information is correct.
Information Gathered	The writer has gathered more than enough information using Cornell notes, pictographs, Venn diagrams and T-charts. Other methods of writing information may also be used.	The writer has gathered enough information using Cornell notes, pictographs, Venn diagrams, and T-charts. Other methods of writing information may also be used.	Information gathered does not include enough information to fully understand the topic and/or the focus question.	There is no evidence that the writer gathered information OR information is unrelated to the topic and/or focus question.
Connection to Focus Questions	The writer has successfully connected the topic to the focus questions and other related issues in more than one way.	The writer has successfully connected the topic to the focus questions at least once.	The writer made an attempt to connect the topic to the focus questions.	The writer has not tried to connect the information to the focus questions. The ideas and the way they are expressed seem to belong to someone else.
Appearance	All products are complete and neatly written. Pictures are original, neatly drawn and colored. Writing shows that the writer made more than one draft to correct and revise writing.	All products are complete. Most are neatly written. Pictures are original, neatly drawn and colored. Writing shows that the writer made more than one draft to correct and revise writing.	Most products are complete and legibly written. Pictures may be from other sources and/or not colored. Writing shows that the writer made some effort to correct and revise writing.	Products are incomplete and may be difficult to read. Pictures are original, neatly drawn and colored. Writing shows that the writer made no effort to correct and revise writing.
Grammar and Spelling	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

Step Four-Assessing Students Understanding of the Content

Objective(s):

- *To assess workshops using a self-quiz based on Bloom's Taxonomy*

Summary:

Students take their three completed workshops and organize them into what Dinah Zikes calls a foldable (<http://www.dinah.com/>). For my implementation this meant creating a tri-fold using large construction paper. Students then organized each of their three workshop products onto each of the three folds. This foldable is used in the final assessment using Bloom's Taxonomy.

Summative assessment of students' knowledge of the events of the Middle Ages is done through a self-quiz. Students use the handout on Appendix pages 132 and 133 to write six questions based on the information in their foldables. They then answer these questions. This is assessed using the rubric on Appendix page 134.

Middle Ages
Foldable Quiz

Use your foldable to create a question and answer for each level of Bloom's taxonomy. You must have at least two questions from each of your workshops.

1. Bloom's level one

Which workshop is this from?

Question: _____

Answer: _____

2. Bloom's level two

Which workshop is this from?

Question: _____

Answer: _____

3. Bloom's level three

Which workshop is this from?

Question: _____

Answer: _____

4. Bloom's level four

Which workshop is this from?

Question: _____

Answer: _____

5. Bloom's level five

Which workshop is this from?

Question: _____

Answer: _____

6. Bloom's level six

Which workshop is this from?

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Bloom's Taxonomy Rubric

Knowledge	Shows thorough knowledge of the topic/issue; completely addresses one of the question stems or key words; one of the activities is completed	Shows accurate knowledge of the topic/issue; addresses one of the question stems or key words; one of the activities is completed	Shows some knowledge of the topic/issue; relates to one of the question stems or key words; one activity is mostly complete	Shows no knowledge of the topic/issue; does not address a question stem or key word
Comprehension	Shows deep understanding of topic/issue; completely addresses one of the question stems or key words with several details and examples; one of the activities is neatly completed; written in own words	Shows understanding of topic/issue; addresses one of the question stems or key words with more than one detail or example; one of the activities is neatly completed; written in own words	Shows some understanding of topic/issue; relates to one of the question stems or key words with at least one detail or example; one of the activities is mostly complete; written in own words	Shows no understanding of the topic/issue; does not address a question stem or key word
Application	Uses knowledge of topic/issue in a new way; completely addresses one of the question stems or key words; includes several details and examples related to the topic or issue	Uses knowledge of topic/issue in a different way; addresses one of the question stems or key words; includes more than one detail or example related to the topic or issue	Uses knowledge of topic/issue in a different way; relates to one of the question stems; includes at least one detail or example related to the topic or issue	Does not apply the topic/issue some way; does not address a question stem or key word
Analysis	Shows detailed understanding of specific areas of the topic/issue; completely addresses one of the question stems or key words; includes multiple examples related to the topic or issue	Shows detailed understanding of a specific area of the topic/issue; addresses one of the question stems or key words; includes more than one example related to the topic or issue	Shows some understanding of a specific area of the topic/issue; relates to one of the question stems or key words; includes at least one example related to the topic or issue	Shows no understanding of a specific area of the topic/issue; does not relate to one of the question stems or key words
Synthesis	Clearly combines topic/issue with another topic/issue; creates a new idea or solution to a problem; completely addresses one of the question stems or key words	Combines topic/issue with another topic/issue; creates a new idea or solution to a problem; addresses one of the question stems or key words	Attempts to combine topic/issue with another topic/issue; alludes to a new idea or solution to a problem; relates to one of the question stems or key words	No attempt to combine topic/issue with another topic/issue; does not relate to one of the question stems or key words
Evaluation	States and clearly defends a position/opinion on the topic or issue with facts and examples; completely addresses one of the question stems or key words	States and defends a position/opinion on the topic or issue with facts and examples; addresses one of the question stems or key words	Attempts to state and defend a position/opinion on the topic or issue with facts and examples; relates to one of the question stems or key words	No attempt to state or defend a position/opinion on the topic/issue; does not relate to one of the question stems or key words

Implementation-Phase Two

The phase two activities involve the following steps:

- Creating a list of on-task and off-task behaviors students can use to monitor their behaviors throughout the research process.
- Using the KWHLs that students completed in Phase One of the implementation to select research topics.
- Completing the pre-research process in which students anticipate possible problems they will encounter along with possible solutions to these problems.
- Guiding students through the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy in order to complete the project, which results in a research booklet on their topic.
- Evaluating their ability to use Bloom's Taxonomy through a student-created self-test using the research booklets.

This process begins with explicit instruction on the topics of tolerance and equality. In addition, this phase includes the warm-ups I used on each of the steps. Each day, a new level of Bloom's Taxonomy is introduced, along with the requirements of that particular step of the research process. The product is a research booklet which is assessed using the rubric on Appendix page 130. Students then use this booklet to complete a Bloom's Taxonomy-styled self-quiz, similar to that completed at the conclusion of the workshops. Directions for each step follow, along with general implementation procedures. Teachers will need to modify the curriculum where they see fit.

Pre-implementation

Objective(s):

- *To learn about tolerance and equality*
- *To create a collage that helps us better understand the terms tolerance and social equality*

Warm up:

- What happens when people meet someone who is different from them? Give examples of how they may act.
- Are all people equal? Explain why or why not.

Summary:

Students write to the prompt individually then discuss in their small groups. Following this they take Cornell notes (<http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>) on an interactive presentation led by the teacher. For my own implementation I created a power point that contained clear definitions of the terms tolerance and equality. It also included photographs from the civil rights movement of the 1960's. Following this, students worked with partners they chose to create collages that illustrated these concepts. These were presented to the class and exemplary collages were chosen by the students for display in the bulletin board for future reference.

Phase Two: Step One

Objective(s):

- *To create common understanding of on-task and off-task behaviors in order to improve work habits*

Summary

The goal in this step is to have students determine what they view to be on-task and off task behaviors. These are compiled into a checklist on which students assess their overall behaviors during the preceding workshop activities. They use these behaviors to set goals for the research phase of the implementation (see Appendix p. 139). Each day they monitor their behaviors and check off those they exhibited that day (see Appendix p. 138). The purpose of this is to make them aware of their behaviors in class and the effects of these behaviors on their academic progress.

My Goals for This Unit

Use the behaviors from the work habits pre-assessment to set three learning goals for yourself. Then complete the questions that follow in order to have a plan of action for the unit.

My 3 goals for this term are:

These goals are important to me because:

My “to do” list to reach my goals:

The consequences of achieving my goals are:

The consequences of not achieving my goals are:

Who will support and help me to achieve my goals and how?

Phase Two: Step Two

Objective(s):

- *To define the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy* (see Appendix pages 158 and 159 for a handout that may assist the students in this step)

Summary

The goal in this step is to have students create pictographs that illustrate each of the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. To do this each of the table groups is assigned one of the following terms:

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

Their task is to create a usable definition of the word and a pictograph that illustrates the meaning. Several effective examples of their pictographs should be placed on the bulletin board for future reference.

Phase Two: Step Three

Objective(s):

- *To introduce the requirements of the research project*
- *To complete a pre-research plan of action*

Summary

The goal in this step is to introduce students to the requirements of the research project. This includes creating a pre-research plan of action. The purpose of this plan is to help students decide on a topic for inquiry and to help them anticipate problems and issues they may encounter as they complete their research booklets. I used a fishbowl activity to have a group of strong students model this process for those who had trouble. The teacher introduces the pre-research handout on Appendix page 143. Students are led through this process to help them arrive at a topic and preliminary actions to take during the research process itself, especially in regards to finding sources, collecting and organizing information, and overcoming anticipated challenges. An additional handout is provided (see Appendix p. 142) to demonstrate to students the expectations to be met for completion of the research process.

**Middle Ages
Research Project Requirements**

Have the teacher check the following assignments as you complete them.

Assignments	Teacher Check
1. Work Habits and Goals signed by parent or teacher	_____
2. Pictograph of a Bloom's Taxonomy term	_____
3. Pre-research project survey	_____
4. Pre-research plan with topic	_____
5. Completed Step One-Knowledge	_____
6. Completed Step Two-Comprehension	_____
7. Completed Step Three-Application	_____
8. Completed Step Four-Analysis	_____
9. Completed Step Five-Synthesis	_____
10. Completed Step Six-Evaluation	_____
11. Completed Final Booklet	_____
12. Completed Work Habits Chart with attached reflection	_____

Pre-Research Plan

Use the following to begin your research project. The goal for this exercise is to have a topic chosen, a focus question to guide you, and a plan of action for finding and gathering information.

After looking at my KWHL, going through the books in the classroom, and looking at the topics listed in the room, I have decided to research...
The question I have created by combining my topic with one of the focus questions is...
The sources I plan to use to learn about my topic are...
To collect and organize the information I collect, I will use...
Problems that I think I may have when trying to research my topic include...
To get past these problems, I plan to...

Phase Two: Step Four

Objective(s):

- *To gain a better understanding of knowledge as it applies to Bloom's taxonomy*
- *To complete the knowledge portion of the research process*

Warm up:

- Quietly write as many facts as you can in five minutes about soccer (Theme may be changed to better meet the needs of individual teachers). Do not worry about spelling or grammar. Be prepared to share your facts with your group.

Summary:

Students write to the warm-up and share out in small groups. A class discussion follows during which a connection is made between their warm-up responses and Bloom's Taxonomy's knowledge level. Examples from their pictographs should be reviewed. The Step One instructions for the research booklet are discussed. Students then work on fulfilling the Step One requirements. Fishbowl activities can be used whenever necessary.

Knowledge

What do I do?

1. Using the level one question stems on Bloom's Taxonomy, create a leading question that will allow you to display the many facts you learn about your topic. Write this question at the top of the first page of your research booklet.
2. Find sources of information related to your topic.
3. Record facts and information in your booklet that help answer your leading question. Be sure to use the entire space in the booklet. You can use bullets, Cornell-style notes, summaries, 5-W's, and other methods to gather information.
4. Find a picture or create an illustration that you can use for this part of your research.

What sources can I use to answer my leading question?

- The textbooks
- The books in the classroom
- Notes from class activities
- The Internet

How do I know I have finished this step?

- The Knowledge page of your research booklet is complete and you have a picture that goes with your leading question.

Phase Two: Step Five

Objective(s):

- *To gain a better understanding of comprehension as it applies to Bloom's Taxonomy*
- *To complete the comprehension portion of the research process*

Warm up:

- Re-read your last warm up, about soccer. (Again, this topic can be changed to fit needs of teacher).
- Use that information to compare soccer to another sport.

OR

- Use that information to illustrate and explain what soccer is to an alien from another planet.
- Do not worry about spelling or grammar. Be prepared to share your facts with your group.

Summary

Students write to the warm-up and share out in small groups. A class discussion follows during which a connection is made between their warm-up responses and Bloom's Taxonomy's comprehension level. Examples from their pictographs should be reviewed. The Step Two instructions for the research booklet are discussed. Students then work on fulfilling the Step Two requirements. Fishbowl activities can be used whenever necessary.

Comprehension

What do I do?

1. Using the level two question stems on Bloom's Taxonomy, create a leading question that will allow you to show that you understand your topic. Write this question at the top of the second page of your research booklet.
2. Use the information gathered in the Knowledge section of your research booklet to answer the leading question for this section. You may also need to find more sources of information related to your topic.
3. Record facts and information in your booklet that help answer your leading question. Be sure to use the entire space in this section of the booklet. You can use Venn diagrams, T-charts, web organizers or other methods.
4. Find a picture or create an illustration that you can use for this part of your research.

What sources can I use to answer my leading question?

- The textbooks
- The books in the classroom
- Notes from class activities
- The Internet

How do I know I have finished this step?

- The Comprehension page of your research booklet is complete and you have a picture or illustration that goes with your leading question.

Phase Two: Step Six

Objective(s):

- To gain a better understanding of application as it applies to Bloom's taxonomy
- To complete the application portion of the research process

Warm up:

- Re-read your last warm up, about soccer.
- Sketch an illustration that shows a different part of a soccer game. (Kickoff, goal, winning the game, penalty kick, free kick, pass)
- Write a one-sentence description of what is happening in the picture.
or
- Create an interview with a soccer ball. Use the 5 W's and H to create *three* questions you would ask a soccer ball in an interview. Create answers the soccer ball may respond with

Summary:

Students write to the warm-up and share out in small groups. A class discussion follows during which a connection is made between their warm-up responses and Bloom's Taxonomy's application level. Examples from their pictographs should be reviewed. The Step Three instructions for the research booklet are discussed. Students then work on fulfilling the Step Three requirements. Fishbowl activities can be used whenever necessary.

Application

What do I do?

1. Create a leading question using the level three question stems from Bloom's Taxonomy. Write this question at the top of page three of your booklet. Use this question to guide you in completing this step.
2. Do one of the following:
 - Create interview questions and answers related to your topic. Think of the example we completed using soccer as the topic. You can interview a person connected to your topic or even an object. Use the 5 W's and H to guide you as you create these questions.

OR

 - Sketch a series of illustrations that help answer your leading question. Think of these sketches as a way to show others what you have learned about your topic. Create a sketch for each of the 5 W's and H, for total of six sketches.

What sources can I use to answer my leading question?

- The knowledge and comprehension sections of your research booklet
- The books in the classroom
- The Internet

How do I know I have finished this step?

- The Application section of your research booklet is complete.

Phase Two: Step Seven

Objective(s):

- *To gain a better understanding of analysis as it applies to Bloom's taxonomy*
- *To complete the analysis portion of the research process*
- *To show that we can analyze our topics in terms of issues of tolerance and equality*

Group Warm up:

- Think of the behaviors that are demonstrated on the soccer field during a game.
- Complete a Venn diagram that compares the ideas of social equality and tolerance to the actions that take place on a soccer field.
- Complete this with your group and be prepared to share.

Summary

The goal in this step is to get students to analyze their topics through the lens of tolerance and equality. Students write to the warm-up in small groups. A class discussion follows during which a connection is made between their warm-up responses and Bloom's Taxonomy's analysis level. Examples from their pictographs should be reviewed. The Step Four instructions for the research booklet are discussed. Students then work on fulfilling the Step Four requirements. Fishbowl activities can be used whenever necessary.

Analysis

What do I do?

1. For this step, your goal is to analyze (to look closely at) your topic for issues of tolerance and social equality. This helps for better understanding of the entire topic.
2. Complete one of the following:
 - Use a Venn diagram to compare your topic to the ideas of tolerance and social equality.

OR

- Write a detailed paragraph that investigates how issues of tolerance and social equality are related to your topic.

What sources can I use to answer my leading question?

- The first three sections of your research booklet
- The books in the classroom
- The Internet

How do I know I have finished this step?

- The Analysis section of your research booklet is complete.

Phase Two: Step Eight

Objective(s):

- *To gain a better understanding of synthesis as it applies to Bloom's taxonomy*
- *To complete the synthesis portion of the research process*
- *To show that we can synthesize our topics with issues of tolerance and equality*

Group Warm up:

- Sketch a magazine cover that could be used for a soccer magazine. The topic of the issue is **tolerance** on the soccer field.
- Be sure to include the date, magazine title, main story about tolerance, a picture to go with the main story, other stories related to the topic

Summary:

The goal is to get students to combine the knowledge from their topics with the ideas of tolerance and equality. Students are provided with a quarter sheet of blank white paper to write to the warm-up. They then share these in small groups. A class discussion follows during which a connection is made between their warm-up responses and Bloom's Taxonomy's synthesis level. Examples from their pictographs should be reviewed. The Step Five instructions for the research booklet are discussed. Students then work on fulfilling the Step Five requirements. Fishbowl activities can be used whenever necessary.

Synthesis

What do I do?

1. For this step, your goal is to synthesize (combine) what you know about your topic with your knowledge of tolerance and equality.
2. Complete one of the following on the fifth page of your research booklet:
 - Create a magazine cover for your topic. This edition of your magazine should focus on tolerance and equality as they relate to your topic. Be sure to include illustrations and headlines for your magazine cover.

OR

 - Write a detailed paragraph about your feelings towards your topic. Be sure to include reasons for why you feel the way you do. Be honest and use your knowledge of the topic to write this.

What sources can I use to answer my leading question?

- The first four sections of your research booklet
- The books in the classroom
- The Internet

How do I know I have finished this step?

- The Synthesis section of your research booklet is complete.

Phase Two: Step Nine

Objective(s):

- *To gain a better understanding of evaluation as it applies to Bloom's taxonomy*
- *To complete the evaluation portion of the research process*
- *To show that we can evaluate our topics in terms of tolerance and equality*

Warm up:

Use two of the following four questions to write a paragraph about your attitude towards the game of soccer:

1. What is your opinion of soccer? Why?
2. What would you recommend to improve the game of soccer?
3. How would you rate the game of soccer? Why?

Summary

The goal is to get students to evaluate their topics in terms of tolerance and equality. Students write to the prompt individually. They then share these in small groups. A class discussion follows during which a connection is made between their warm-up responses and Bloom's Taxonomy's evaluation level. Examples from their pictographs should be reviewed. The Step Six instructions for the research booklet are discussed. Students then work on fulfilling the Step Six requirements. This is the final step for researching and completing their research booklets. The next step is to assess these.

Evaluation

What do I do?

1. For this step, your goal is to evaluate your topic.
2. Select at least two of the question stems to evaluate your topic. Only use question stems from level six of Bloom's Taxonomy.
3. Be sure your answers are written in a good descriptive paragraph that uses facts and details to support your ideas.
4. Go back and complete any sections of your research booklet that have not been checked off yet.

What sources can I use to answer my leading question?

- The first four sections of your research booklet
- The books in the classroom
- The Internet

How do I know I have finished this step?

1. The Evaluation section of your research booklet is complete.
2. All steps of your booklet are complete.

Phase Two: Step Ten

Objective(s):

- *To assess the research booklets*
- *To assess our level of understanding of our topics using Bloom's Taxonomy*

Summary:

The first goal of this step is to have students use the rubric to assess their research topics. Use the rubric on Appendix page 130 to guide them through this so that they can self-assess the booklet first. Then the teacher uses the same rubric to assess student work.

The second goal of this step is to assess their understanding of the topic they researched. This takes the form of a self-quiz created using the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, similar to the quiz completed following the workshops. Provide them with the Usable Bloom's Taxonomy on Appendix pages 158-159. They are required to create six questions and answers based on each of Bloom's Taxonomy levels of thinking, as they did in the workshop phase of the implementation. The format I used is on Appendix pages 152 and 152. This is assessed using the Bloom's Taxonomy rubric on Appendix page 134.

Middle Ages Research Booklet Final Test

Use your foldable to create a quiz for your topic. Include a question and answer for each level of Bloom's taxonomy. Your answers should use the entire space provided by including details and examples.

1. Bloom's level one

Question: _____

Answer: _____

2. Bloom's level two

Question: _____

Answer: _____

3. Bloom's level three

Question: _____

Answer: _____

4. Bloom's level four

Question: _____

Answer: _____

5. Bloom's level five

Question: _____

Answer: _____

6. Bloom's level six

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Connecting Past to Present

The final step is to use current events to link the focus questions to contemporary events. This can take a number of forms. For example, they take notes as they read a newspaper article or watch a video and apply this knowledge to the requirements at each of the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. The ensuing discussions should lead them to a connection between the historical events studied and the issue they observed. For the unit on the European Ages, recent issues related to the focus questions include:

- The crisis in Darfur
- The controversy in Jena, Louisiana
- The religious conflicts in the Middle East
- The 2008 election for President of the United States, especially regarding issues of race, gender and age

The handout on pages 154 through 157 is used to have students take an issue through Bloom's Taxonomy.

Usable Bloom's Taxonomy

Level	Key Words	Question Stems	Activities
I. Knowledge-knowing or remembering information about a topic or issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembering • Describing • Locating • Defining • Labeling • Listing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who, what, when, where, why...? • Find the definition of... • How did ... happen? • How would you describe...? • Describe what happened after... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Cornell notes on a topic. • Find the 5 W's about... • Make a timeline. • Make a facts chart. • Define key terms. • Make a list of main facts. • Label a map.
II. Comprehension-understanding a topic or issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizing • Comparing • Illustrating • Explaining • Giving examples • Classifying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the main idea of...? • Write in your own words about... • Explain what is happening.... • Provide examples of... • What can you say about...? • Can you explain why...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the topic or issue. • Write a summary of... • Make a pictograph of the topic. • Write a report of the important events. • Compare...with... • Draw a diagram that shows... • Create a quiz with answers for... • List and describe major ideas/events.
III. Application-using your knowledge on a topic to do something	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using • Making • Interviewing • Sequencing • Solving • Demonstrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you use your knowledge of... to...? • What examples can you find to...? • What questions would you ask in an interview with...? (Include answers) • Do you know of another example where...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a cartoon strip about... • Write a journal entry of a person connected to the event. • Make a map of... • Make a puzzle or game about the topic. • Write an instruction booklet about your topic. • Create interview questions about... • Create a skit, short play, or tableau. • Demonstrate how something works.

<p>IV. Analysis- examining a topic or issue very carefully</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing • Contrasting • Surveying • Advertising • Debating • Prioritizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is...similar/different to...? • What was the underlying theme...? • If...happened, what might the outcome have been? • What conclusions can you draw from...? • How would you categorize...? • What evidence can you find to show...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have Mr. Stick comment on... • Survey classmates for their opinions related to the topic or issue. • Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast your topic to another. • Write a commercial to sell a product related to the topic. • Write a report on the topic.
<p>V. Synthesis- using your knowledge of a topic to create something, or combining that knowledge with another idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining • Creating • Designing • Making • Inventing • Improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you improve...? • Can you design a...to...? • What would happen if...? • If you could...what would you do? • Can you create a new use for...? • Can you see a possible solution to...? • Create a new design for... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write about your feelings towards the topic or issue. • Design a book or magazine cover for the topic or issue. • Write a play about the topic or issue. • Create a song or poem about the topic or issue.
<p>VI. Evaluation- judging the value of the topic or issue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judging • Rating • Checking • Grading • Debating • Recommending • Experimenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your opinion of...? Why? • Can you defend a position about...? • How would you change...? • What are the positives and negatives of...? • How would you rate...? Why? • Why was it better/worse than...? • What would have happened if...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a letter to the editor. • Debate an issue. • Write a persuasive speech. • Prepare a court case to present your point-of-view. • Write a recommendation for...? • Investigate... • Create your own ending for... • Take a classroom poll about an issue.

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