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Introduction and Purpose

If there exists one constant in the field of education, it is that teachers want to talk about teaching. From discussions on effective lessons and success stories to issues with parents and administrators, educators in the K-12 school system have a tendency to engage in conversations with peers regarding their experiences in the classroom. This occurs for a number of reasons. For one, any educator will acknowledge that teaching is not a traditional "9-5 job" in which a teacher leaves the building and forgets about what occurred during the day. Rather, many teachers leave their school while continuing to process the day's events. Teachers, for instance, often seek the feedback and support from friends and family on situations that arise while teaching. Additionally, because teaching is such an intense career where the work never seems to reach a definitive conclusion, such conversations can serve simply as a place where teachers vent and seek encouragement from those around them (Ayers, 2001).

It was from such a conversation that the purpose of this essay was generated. More specifically, the idea for this manuscript manifested itself in an unstructured conversation among multiple student teachers during their capstone course in the spring of 2013. Shortly after this conversation, the authors – one a doctoral student of curriculum and instruction and two student teachers of the social studies – discussed the latter's experiences in their teacher education program as well as those that had occurred as they had completed their student teaching requirements for the semester. What derived from this conversation was the notion that the theories they had been taught by their professors and what they felt they had accomplished throughout their student teaching placement differed greatly. In this sense, the student teachers both had a working understanding of the theories and aims of the social studies classroom as advocated by the leading scholars in the field of education and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), but their experiences as teachers provided them with a far different experience than they had imagined or felt prepared for in terms of achieving such aims.

The conversation, ultimately, led to a discussion on potentially useful supports and resources for novice educators that could assist in achieving components of democratic education in the social studies classroom. The overarching theme of such discussions was that much of the

literature in the field of education is either inaccessible, impractical, or simply too foundational to be of use to novice and in-service teachers. It was after this idea was constructed that the authors derived the purpose of this paper: to provide novice teachers with several practical lessons that are grounded in theory and constructed to meet the oft-referenced aims of education in a pragmatic manner. To that end, the authors will first provide a brief analysis of experiences of novice educators at the K-12 level. The essay will then transition into a discussion on the often noticable gap between academia and the American public school system. From there, the authors will present a detailed discussion on four practical lessons that are grounded in theory and have been successfully implemented into the social studies classroom by novice teachers. Ideally, the following discussion will serve to both inform novice and mentor teachers on the literature being generated in academia while simultaneously informing their pedagogy in a practical manner.

Background

There are few areas in the field of education where scholars, teachers and policymakers alike are capable of reaching a clear consensus (Evans, 2004). From the aims of education and the most effective means for achieving such objectives to the standards used for measuring whether such goals have been met, there consistently has been an array of views and ideals written about and initiated in K-12 schools and universities across the United States (Adler, 2008; Barton, 2012; Evans, 2004). Though with the American school system being so influential on society and such a complex entity, it is expected that this would be true.

This is not to say, however, that certain views and ideals are not consistent across the field of education. When it comes to the education of future generations, a clear aim is to provide students with the best possible schooling to develop them into autonomous citizens capable of critically thinking about issues and improving various conditions in our society (Dewey, 1933; Gutmann, 1999; Hess, 2004a; Parker, 2005). In this sense, scholars and policymakers have charged schools with the task of teaching students to empathize with others, critically think about various perspectives, and partake in dialogue and discussion amongst those whose opinions differ from their own (Barton, 2012; Hess, 2004a; Gutmann, 1999). All of this, it can be said, should lead to the fostering of students who are aware of their role in American society and capable of contributing to it in a meaningful and democratic manner. And while the question of "what kind of citizen do we want to educate toward?" quickly becomes a point of contention in academia, the idea of eliminating idiocy (in its original Greek meaning) and opening up students' minds to ideas that are different from their own remains consistent in the literature (Hess, 2004b; Hess & Posselt, 2001; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Parker, 2005). In this sense, the American public school system has the responsibility of providing students with a true democratic education, which Amy Gutmann (1987) describes as a form of education which prepares students for "participating in democratic politics, to choosing among (a limited range of) good lives, and to sharing in the several subcommunities, such as families, that impart identity to the lives of its citizens" (p. 42). For the remainder of this essay, Gutmann's ideal for a democratic education will serve as the theoretical underpinning for how the authors view the aim of education.

Supporting and Retaining New Teachers

Given the broad underlying goal in education for promoting democratic citizenship amongst students, the question needs to be asked of how can teachers be trained and supported in order to effectively raise the likelihood of achieving such an aim? One essential component to doing this is through the retention and effectiveness of teachers who are progressive in practice and informed on the current theories in the field. To that end, while the details on training and initiation of teachers are vague in terms of "what works", the idea that teacher education programs need to produce well-trained and supported teachers who stay in the classroom has remained a staple in the field in terms of improving the school system and, thus, society as a whole (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

Further, when teachers are well-trained and well-supported, one can imagine that their experiences as teachers will be better and, thus, the attrition rate in the field (which is troubling, to say the least) will decrease (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). As noted throughout the literature, a large portion of teachers leave the field within their first few years for a variety of reasons ranging from simple classroom management issues to feelings of being overwhelmed or inadequate (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Goodwin, 2012; Hebert & Worthy, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003: Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Tait, 2008; Veenman, 1984). Whatever the reason, the research clearly indicates that both student teachers and novice in-service teachers alike often feel ill-prepared to handle the demands and the rigor of teaching in a K-12 school in the American public school system (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Korthagen, 2001; Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, Pressley, 2008). So much so, in fact, that about 30% of new teachers in the United States leave the classroom within their first five years of teaching; a number that is an estimated 50% higher in low-socioeconomic status schools (Hebert & Worthy, 2001; Ronfeldt, Loeb, Wyckoff, 2013). Such statistics make sense given that teaching is so pressure-filled and one of few professions where individuals new to a field have as many – if not more – responsibilities than their veteran counterparts (Tait, 2008).

What is most disheartening about the high attrition rate of new teachers is that such educators enter into the classroom with a sense of vigor and enthusiasm that is often unmatched by their more seasoned colleagues. New teachers who are fresh out of their university training are often more idealistic, creative, and familiar with the new and more progressive literature being published and practiced at the university level (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Therefore, such practicing teachers bring with them a potential to overturn the status quo and bring drastic changes to schools and students alike. Because the estimate is that well-over 100,000 new teachers enter into the field every single year, such educators are valuable resources for promoting social change, engaging students and bringing new life and perspectives to the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007).

However, not only are new teachers leaving the field at an alarming rate, they are also not integrating the methods and theories that they learned at the university level in their practice while they are teaching. As noted by Bergmann, Bernath, Hohmann, Krieger, Mendel, & Theobald

(1976) and Walter (1974), the vast majority of new teachers go into teaching with the intention to incorporate the aforementioned theories of democratic education into their pedagogy but end up failing to do so (as translated and summarized in Veenman, 1984). Though written upwards up 40 years ago, these two studies reflect the current research demonstrating how teachers' implementation of their university training could – at best – be referred to as scarce (e.g., Knowles & Theobald, 2013; Russell, 2010). It is, therefore, essential to acknowledge that while preservice teachers are often well-intentioned, motivated and, knowledgeable on the aims and objectives of schools, their experiences as teachers often change their pedagogy drastically.

The Need For Communication

So what can be done to assist new and developing teachers in a manner that will improve the likelihood of their efficiency and simultaneously lower the chances of new teachers leaving the profession? For one, a dialogue needs to be created between what is being produced in academia and what actually occurs in the American school system. Unfortunately, much of the theoretical literature published in scholarly journals is inaccessible to practicing teachers and administrators in schools. This occurs for a variety of reasons (Darling-Hammond, 2007). For instance, the literature is often written for academic journals and includes a language unfamiliar to those in the classroom (Zeuli, 1992). Additionally, access to scholarly journals is often expensive and, thus, teachers would rather search online for information as opposed to paying for costly subscriptions to academic publications. A third concern – and likely the most practical – is that teachers simply have neither the time nor the interest in staying updated on the current literature in the field of education. Teaching is – by all accounts – a demanding occupation and most educators find the need to separate themselves from teaching after spending upwards of nine hours in a classroom five days a week. Teachers, therefore, are often inundated with extensive amounts of paperwork, multiple classes to prepare for, parent-teacher conferences, extracurricular activities, and a number of other responsibilities (Tait, 2008).

These reasons, though not all-encompassing, have created a seemingly distant gap between academia and the practicing teacher. So what needs to be done to close this gap and create a conversation between the K-12 schools and universities in order to most effectively support new teachers? While answering the question is certainly impossible in one article (or one book, or even several years' worth of newly published literature), it is absolutely possible to create an accessible bridge between practicing teachers and education programs across the country. As such, this paper seeks to contribute to such literature by providing K-12 teachers with practical methods that have been both tested in the classroom by novice teachers and are grounded in the theories and ideals of the university level. In this sense, the paper will be rooted in the theories of academia and what is often viewed as "good" teaching. More specifically, Darling-Hammond's (2007) notion that teaching goes beyond the traditional vision of an educator lecturing will be used as justification for the lessons that will be presented.

After working together throughout the course of a semester, the following practical teaching strategies were developed as means to meet the aims of a democratic education. It is the hope that this essay and its contents will serve to inform both new and veteran teachers on ways in

which they can use the knowledge they learned in their teacher education programs in an effective and meaningful manner in the classroom. The lessons provided are by no means "one size fits all" and should be tailored to meet the course, level and students in the classroom.

Practical and Progressive Strategies for Teachers

1. Infusing Anonymous, Online Perspectives

The first of these ideas originated at the university level, but has since been applied to the K-12 classroom through a student teacher in the high school classroom. At its foundation, the lesson is grounded in the assumption that students must learn about open-ended (and often controversial) issues and the varying opinions surrounding them in a rational and evidence-based manner (Alleman & Brophy, 1998; Seixas, 1993). Reflecting the expectations of the Common Core State Standards, the newly-released C3 Framework, and the writings of many scholars calling for knowledge construction (e.g., Banks, 2002) and critical thinking (e.g., Hess, 2009), this lesson seeks to introduce students to the varying perspectives and opinions of anonymous online users through the website www.debate.org. At this website (which has coined itself "The premier online debate website"), users post questions to its hundreds of thousands of daily users who then vote on the issue and make brief arguments for their beliefs. Given that the material they are reading is anonymous, it allows students to read without the belief that the author is the "expert" who should not be questioned. Rather, it encourages students to consider themselves equal in ability and knowledge to the author and, thus, question what they are reading. Such a form of education is reminiscent of Freire's (1973) claim that within an ideal classroom, "The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (p. 67). In this sense, the democratic education as advocated for by Gutmann is reached in that students and teachers work together to construct knowledge in an equitable environment.

For instance, a quick search on Debate.org on whether America should have used the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II brings up an array of debates and threads discussing the historical issue. The most frequently viewed and responded to, however, shows that as of April, 2013, the sides are at 49% 'yes' and 51% 'no'. These results are followed by hundreds of brief explanations for why people voted as they did. While using the comments of such anonymous users may seem counteractive to the presentation of authentic and validated knowledge to students, it can also be argued that showing students uncensored and even misinformed voices will allow them to better understand how to formulate a valid argument (again, reflecting expectations of the Speaking and Listening standards within Common Core).

The lesson itself, however, requires more structure than solely providing students with the views of online users. Rather, it is encouraged that teachers use a "lightening" teaching method to allow for students to see a number of perspectives in a short amount of time. Typically, the teacher will print a number of opinions on any subject being discussed in class and cut them into individual slips of paper. The educator will then give each student one and put 20 seconds on a timer on the board. The students will then only have the 20 seconds to read the opinion at which point they will pass the sheet of paper to the student seating next to them and the timer will be

reset for another 20-second period. This goes for about 4-5 minutes (thus exposing students to the opinions of fifteen people).

Students then participate in a discussion of what they read or, similarly, provide a written synopsis of the differing opinions that were present in the readings. Students are encouraged to make predictions regarding implications of social policy or recommendations for potential decisions. The idea being that in a short period of time, students are exposed to various perspectives on a standard-based topic that is surrounded by controversy and subjectivities. Given that the current climate of teacher education often surrounds itself with the teaching of tolerance and empathy, such an idea promotes students' learning about and understanding of one another's differences (Banks, 1993; Gutmann, 1999; Hess, 2009). Students, thus, participate in a form of democratic education in that they are exposed to the views of others and asked to formulate their own opinions based on beliefs, experiences, and knowledge.

Ultimately, presenting students with such material is not only appealing in that it provides them with an array of perspectives, it also allows them to see legitimate ways to develop a persuasive argument. This activity can be done on a range of topics including – though certainly not limited to – the teaching of evolution in schools, the second amendment, Additionally, it provides novice teachers with an activity that is often "safe" in that it is too fast-paced to allow for distracts or misbehavior. Thus, students can be working on and analyzing a variety of perspectives from anonymous users without having the burden of their peers to prevent them for learning. Teachers, therefore, incorporate many of the aspects of a democratic education while simultaneously being able to maintain a positive classroom climate.

2. Outline a Court Case

This activity is grounded in the notion that novice and veteran educators alike often have high expectations for fostering discussion and debate among their students (Hess & Posselt, 2001; Macedo, 2004; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Unfortunately, however, such teachers are often quick to discover that their students may be ill-prepared to engage in discourse with their peers, uncomfortable expressing personal opinions in front of the class or simply too uninformed to argue on a given topic (Allen, 2010). As such, this activity was designed for social studies teachers seeking to integrate open-ended topics and interactive dialogue into their classroom while simultaneously scaffolding students to a level where they feel confident hosting a classroom debate through evidence-based logic, professional demeanor and collaborative learning. For practicality, the following activity will be described using the teaching of a court case as the foundation for what students should learn through the implementation of this lesson. However, it should be noted that the activity can and should be tailored to an array of different topics in the various disciplines of the social studies.

The activity begins by having students gain a foundational understanding of a court case. This is done to prevent students from using ill-informed claims or remaining silent on an issue. Students, thus, are initially presented with a brief secondary source describing a case. Ideally, this source will provide an objective analysis of the case while neither influencing nor indoctrinating students. Additionally, the description should present both sides of the argument while not informing students of the court's ultimate decision (this will come later). Moreover, students

should be gaining nothing more than a working understanding of the case during the first portion of this activity. The hope for doing this is that it will help to foster an evidence-based discussion and prevent any of the practical issues of teaching (e.g., behavioral issues, incorrect claims, and the like) from occurring throughout the remainder of the activity.

Once students have read their secondary source (10-15 minutes, traditionally), students receive a copy of the "Outline a Court Case" document with the instructions to complete it in both a reflexive and subjective manner (See figure 1). Students then choose a side and, essentially, "rule" on the case prior to discovering what was actually decided. For instance, the first question students must address is what they would have supported had they been a justice at the time of the court case. Such a questions asks students to take sides using background knowledge, think critically about a public issue, and empathize with those from a different era.

SCOPES/MONKEY TRIAL

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions regarding the *The Scopes Trial* information that you gathered from the secondary source. You must use complete sentences to receive credit.

1) Which state do you agree with? (circle one.)

       William Jennings Bryant   OR   Clarance Darrow

2) List 5 arguments that could be used **AGAINST** your opinion
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.

3) List 5 ways you would **RESPOND** to these arguments.
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.

4) List 5 arguments you would make **AGAINST** the opposing.
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.

5) List a minimum of **THREE** ways you would defend your stance; these ARGUMENTS must relate directly to the Constitution or other Supreme Court decisions (found on page 754 in the text.)
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.
   f.
   g.

Figure 1: Court Case To Debate (Using the Scopes trial as an example)

Following their decision, students are asked to use prior information to determine five examples of how the contending side will formulate an argument against their side. Consequently,

students will list facts and arguments that they will use to combat the opposition's arguments. For instance, if a student is reading about the ever-controversial Scopes/Monkey trial of the 1920s and they believe that John T. Scopes was justified in his decision to discuss evolution in the classroom, they will then present five counter-arguments that an attorney or justice may use in a courtroom. Such a requirement, ideally, will develop students who can better understand the perspectives of others and create a counterargument based on speculation and prediction. Further, mandating students' use of rationality and logic in creating an argument matches the Common Core Standards in which secondary students are expected to "explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence" (National Governors Association, 2010, p. 24).

Following this, students list five arguments against their hypothetical opponents. These can be basic arguments reflecting background information and can range from legal, moral, or ethical principles. Students, therefore, are asked to put their thoughts and beliefs on paper prior to engaging in a dialogue so they are prepared to debate and informed on how to defend their beliefs. Ideally, having students who are knowledgeable prior to participating in a dialogue will limit behavioral issues and increase engagement. Next, students identify three constitutional arguments for their side of the debate. With this, students withhold their own subjectivities and, in turn, substitute them for the constitutional law influencing the original decision (thus integrating political science and American history). This, ideally, teaches students that their opinions are often counteractive to that of the government (both currently and historically), but that neither their views nor those of the government and the Constitution are wrong.

Once students have completed the accompanying document, they are paired with one of their peers (preferably someone who selected the opposite opinion as their own) and asked to discuss the issue by both comparing what they wrote. Additionally, students are asked to discuss the potential implications of the court's decision. This could either be their understanding of what did happen or what would happen due to a ruling. Students, in this case, are encouraged to predict how a social policy could impact the general populace. In theory, this process will open them up to new perspectives and spark conversation that is both evidence-based and surrounding the standard-based material that most teachers are expected to cover in their curriculum. Traditionally, this lasts for 3-5 minutes and it tailored to class-size, academic level, and previous experiences with collaborative learning. Next, students are encouraged to conduct a class discussion in which all sides are brought to the table. Students, therefore, hear one another's evidence-based views and do so in a manner that promotes the use of multiple perspectives and legal elements to a court case. This provides a forum for the teacher to share the formal ruling on the case so that students can discuss their feelings toward the decision. In the instance of the Scopes/Monkey trial, the battle over evolution in school is still – 90 years later – constantly discussed in the school system. Moreover, the revealing of what was decided in 1925 can be tied into the current educational system. This can, however, certainly be applied to many other open-ended court cases (e.g., Wisconsin v. Yoder, Grutter v. Bollinger, Lochner v. New York).

3. "What Do YOU Stand For?"

"What Do YOU stand for?" expands on a traditional game known as Intra-Act, which is designed to increase students' engagement in readings through additional comprehension and

reflection (Hoffman, 1979). Intra-Act, more specifically, provides students who have completed a reading with a set of higher-order thinking questions to stimulate critical thinking and reflection. The use of Intra-Act in the social studies classroom, specifically, uses the notion of a democratic education to direct participants toward a stronger understanding of how society and culture shape both historical and contemporary events. The aim of integrating literacy and social studies, moreover, is attempted through the integration of controversial topics into the social studies classroom. The purpose is to encourage students to address controversial issues in a practical and effective manner and educate them on the perspectives of others, controversy surrounding numerous issues, and best means for interacting with one another on such topics.

The first step is to introduce students to a topic of contention. This can be any medium ranging from a news-broadcast to a scene from a sitcom. For this specific lesson, students viewed a TedTalk highlighting various superheroes created from the 99 attributes of Allah. After students view the clip (or been introduced to the topic through another form), students are divided into groups of three. Teachers then present students with a copy of the "What Do YOU Stand For?" document (See Figure 2) that students must keep to themselves. The worksheet has a series of statements taken directly from the clip. Underneath each statement is a grid containing four places for the names of each member of the group and a spot to mark whether the group members agree or disagree with the statement. The students read each statement and predict how their peers would respond to each statement. The idea is to encourage students to make predictions on their peers based on their knowledge of that person. Their preconceived notions of their peers are often going to be incorrect and – thus – students will have to reconsider their ideas regarding that individual. Students are traditionally given three minutes to complete the worksheet before five to ten minutes of discussion. After the individual groups have had time for discussion, a debriefing session occurs to remind students that this is an activity based on respect for one another's opinions, which maintains as a key component of a multicultural education.

Superheroes Inspired by Islam
I. The superheroes will help citizens see Islam as more relatable

Name	Agree	Disagree		Name	Agree	Disagree

II. These superheroes can change negative stereotypes that Americans have about Muslims

Name	Agree	Disagree		Name	Agree	Disagree

III. The 99 Attributes of Allah are basic human values

Name	Agree	Disagree		Name	Agree	Disagree

IV: Using superheroes to humanize Islam can promote tolerance and understanding.

Name	Agree	Disagree		Name	Agree	Disagree

Figure 2: "What do YOU stand for?" document

What is appealing about this activity – like many of the other strategies recommended in this essay – is how applicable it is to various topics (and TedTalks). Such TedTalks as "The History of Our World in 18 minutes", "The Danger of a Single Story" and "The Myths that Mystify" offer students opportunities to discus history, stereotypes, and religion (respectively) in an educational context that can be applied to the broad table in Figure 2 relatively easily. Additionally, such an activity often encourages students to think not only of their opinions in regards to controversial issues, but also to consider how their peers may view the same controversial issue (subsequently leading to a key component to democratic education; the understanding of how knowledge is constructed). Such aims are indicative of the works of Hess (2009) and Parker (2005).

4. Political Cartoons: A New Method for Using Them Effectively

Academia frequently promotes the use of primary sources to novice educators. Moreover, teacher education programs prescribe to the notion that students should engage with primary sources as they analyze perspectives, seek biases, discuss controversies, and explore documents for underlying themes and information (Dutt-Doner, Cook-Cottone, Allen, 2007; Thomas, 2004). Yet, what can be observed in many classrooms is that primary sources are rarely used to their full

potential, which should include the development of students into historical investigators (Thomas, 2004). Though even when they are successfully infused into a curriculum, true analysis by students is often surface-level and directly tied to standard-based content (limiting the scope). The aim for this lesson, thus, was to provide educators with a new use to the primary source that may assist them in fostering student reflection, critical thought, and historical investigation.

This lesson involves analyzing primary sources - specifically political cartoons - and connecting what students have learned to their own lives. However, it should be noted that the use of political cartoons is not a new method in the social studies classroom. Rather, its integration into the classroom has been promoted for several decades (Thomas, 2004). Because of this, the lesson does not try to reinvent the wheel; rather, it attempts to make the wheel spin both more efficiently and, thus, more effectively. Such primary sources are especially key as education shifts towards meeting the Common Core Standards, where analytical and critical thinking skills become more of a focal point in students' growth in the classroom.
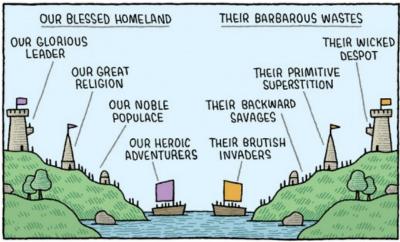
With this lesson, Dr. Seuss's political cartoons were used to teach students about World War II while simultaneously developing critical thinking and analytical skills. What made Dr. Seuss so appealing to students was the their familiarity with Dr. Seuss's work from their elementary education. Students were immediately intrigued to learn of the undertones in Dr. Seuss's work and were surprised to find that the readings often read to them as children contained many themes and biases that connected to the material in their textbooks.

Students are initially exposed to 5-10 political cartoons and asked to write down ideas regarding themes, biases, and purposes of the image in 30-second increments. With the use of 10 examples, only five minutes of class is taken up and students see a range of ideas and perspectives. Once students had gone through the first component, a discussion is attempted on their ideas. This allowed students to hone their analytical and interpretive skills both individually and collectively. Students during this discussion were asked to describe what they said and the hidden messages within each cartoon, the biases the author likely had, and even to predict how the cartoons may have impacted the general populace's views toward the axis powers. In many instances, students asked for the cartoons to be "replayed" so they could point out symbolism or allegory in Dr. Seuss's work. Such behavior demonstrated students' engagement in the lesson and ownership of the content. Additionally, students were asked to give their thoughts on how current political cartoons portray politicians and celebrities. Because many of the political cartoons studied portrayed leaders of the allied and axis powers throughout WWII, students were asked to give their thoughts on Dr. Seuss's opinions and biases and what impact these might have had on society; much like the political cartoons of today.

It should be noted here that there exists an array of topical cartoons that can provide students with opportunities to explore current and critical issues (and remain standards-based). Provided here is a sample of cartoons we have used to encourage discussion on relevant issues that students are often motivated to speak about. The three cartoons – centered around nationalism and ideologies, Hilary Clinton's email scandal and the NSA, and the merits of social media for activism, respectively – provide students with opportunities to engage in discourse with peers about issues that they have certainly heard or read about, but perhaps never quite explored in great detail.
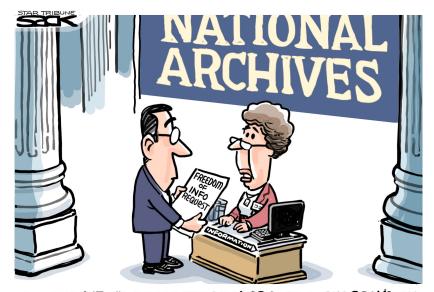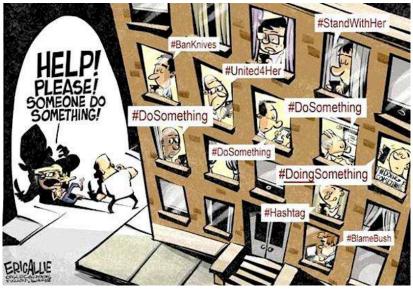
Source: Tom Gould; The Guardian Review

Source: Steve Sack, Star Tribune

Source: Erin Allie, The Cagle Post

As a class, students can discuss what these portrayals mean and how these cartoons related to public and personal opinions of politicians and ideologies. To that end, the use of such primary sources worked to meet many of the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education by expressing bias and perspectives and – in the instance of the sources – hidden meanings in texts and illustrations.

Conclusion

The field of education is constantly evolving on account of the new literature, ideas and recommendations being both produced and disseminated on a consistent basis. Despite this, however, a gap can often be found between the practice of teaching and the research being conducted in academia. There exists a need to develop a conversation between the theory that may not be separated from the practice, but often is not implemented in the idealistic manner that is called for at the university level. Ideally, this essay and its strategies will serve as a way for both new and veteran teachers to either rediscover the aims of education or be introduced to new ideas and practices that have been successful for three educators attempting to ground their pedagogy in the ideals of academia.

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