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The Use of Reflective Practices in Applying Strategies Learned Through Professional Development in Social Studies Instruction

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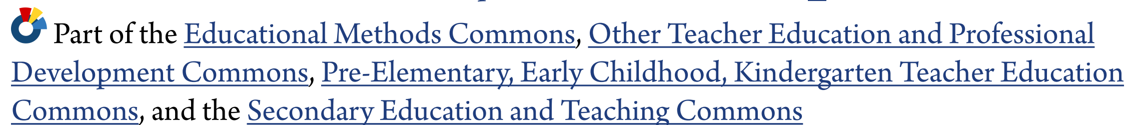
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The Use of Reflective Practices in Applying Strategies Learned Through Professional Development in Social Studies Instruction

by
Montra L. Rogers

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2016

Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Montra L. Rogers under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

Where another author's ideas have been presented in this applied dissertation, I have acknowledged the author's ideas by citing them in the required style.

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Date

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I am most grateful for the opportunities and experiences this study afforded me and for the chance to work with a phenomenal dissertation committee. I am especially thankful to Dr. Desir - her expertise and candor were a true blessing.

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Abstract

The Use of Reflective Practices in Applying Strategies Learned Through Professional Development in Social Studies Instruction. Montra L. Rogers, 2016: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. ERIC Descriptors: Reflective Teaching, Educational Strategies, Professional Development, Theory Practice Relationship, Social Studies

This applied dissertation examined how middle school social studies teachers in a large urban school district in Texas described and documented their process of self-reflection as they integrated instructional strategies learned in professional training into their social studies courses. The study further explored how social studies teachers perceived reflective practice as an element of professional development and how a reflective practice model such as reflective journaling helped middle school teachers document their process of self-reflection as they applied new strategies to their instructional approaches. The researcher explored the teachers' actions through the concept of organization learning theory, conducted face-to-face interviews, and analyzed documents, observation notes, and journal responses to uncover the processes, practices, and perceptions of middle school social studies teachers.

This study's findings revealed that, to implement strategies learned during professional development training, participants incorporated newly learned practices into their existing practices and routines. These practices or routines included creating resources and sharing and collaborating with peers. In addition, social studies teachers documented their process of integrating the QSSSA (Question, Stem, Signal, Share, Assess) conversation strategy into their instructional approach by planning lessons that facilitated the use of the newly learned strategy, implementing said lesson, and assessing student learning. Finally, the study's findings confirmed that professional learning experiences that include elements of reflective practices, such as professional learning communities, provided middle school teachers a greater sense of self-efficacy as they worked to integrate the QSSSA conversation strategy into their instructional routines. Furthermore, a reflective practice model such as journaling provided teachers an avenue to consider both their own practice and the individual needs of their students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative dominates educational discourse at national, state, and local levels. However, the effort to standardize what students from kindergarten through twelfth grade should know and be able to do in English/language arts and Mathematics has met some resistance. In Texas, the state in which the study took place, elected officials passed legislation prohibiting the implementation of Common Core State Standards. To summarize, the bill prohibits the Texas State Board of Education from adopting national curriculum standards developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative. In addition, the order also prohibits a school district from using Common Core State Standards to fulfill requirements to provide instruction in essential knowledge and skills at appropriate grade levels, and it prohibits a school district or open-enrollment charter school from being required to offer any aspect of a common core state standards curriculum. Finally, the law prohibits the Texas Education Agency from adopting or developing a statewide standardized test based on CCSS (House Bill 462). State law prohibits Texas educators from implementing the common core standards. However, the Common Core Standards Initiative, along with the federal reforms that directly impact education in the state of Texas, have forced school systems and education agencies around the country to seek solutions to improve teacher quality (Marrongelle, Sztajn, & Smith, 2013; Petersen & Young, 2004).

How do we as a nation improve the quality of America's teachers? Kent (2004) suggested that staff development is the catalyst to reach this goal, as professional development is the first step toward facilitating the transfer of theory into instructional

practices. Current staff development training models range from short-term traditional training with few opportunities for follow-up or monitoring (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Littky & Grabelle, 2004) to professional training that includes guided practice, coaching, feedback, and reflection (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Klein, 2004). Our current training models are inconsistent and are not successful; professional development is not changing our fixed patterns of learning (Mancabelli, 2012). Teachers are not transferring information from staff development training into instructional approaches (Hill, 2009).

Phenomenon of interest. Reflective practice addresses the issue of transfer, that is, the challenge of implementing strategies learned in professional development training into instructional approaches. To be transformative, initiatives surrounding professional development training must include elements of reflective practice to improve instruction (Seed, 2008). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) assert that reflective practice is based on the belief that change begins with the individual and many barriers to change are rooted in the unexamined beliefs that shape our behaviors. Creating change involves examining behaviors, bringing unexamined thought processes to the forefront, and purposely self-monitoring both behaviors and thought processes (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). By gaining a better understanding of their practices through reflective practice, teachers are likely to change their instructional habits (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2004).

According to York-Barr et al. (2004) and Cooper and Boyd (1998), there are four forms of reflective practice that lead to improved instruction and the professional growth of teachers: (a) individual reflective practices, (b) partner reflective practices, (c) small group reflective practices, and (d) large group reflective practices. There are many

approaches to each type of reflective practice. Teacher portfolios are one example of individual reflective practice, while cognitive coaching lends itself to reflective practice with a partner (Marzano, 2012; Rayford, 2010). Content specific meetings, with the purpose of designing and reviewing curriculum, instruction, and assessment, are a small group reflective practice. Additionally, the Japanese Lesson Study model is a widely popular example of a large group reflective practice (Dubin, 2010; Marzano, 2012).

Furthermore, by gaining an understanding of their teaching through reflective practice, social studies educators can employ the same processes to help students become reflective thinkers, as the very essence of reflective practice - inquiry, problem solving, and analysis - has long been associated with social studies education. Moreover, then Secretary of Education Arrne Duncan asserted that the goal of social studies education is to engage students in skills such as analyzing primary and secondary sources and utilizing problem-solving and decision-making processes (Duncan, 2011). Professional development training provides teachers the support necessary to facilitate instruction that engages students in these skills. Including reflective journaling as a part of the professional development training experiences allows teachers an opportunity to intentionally pause and analyze their instructional practices and individual actions; consequently, this reflective practice model facilitates a change in belief or practice (Marzano, 2012).

Background and justification. Current education reforms have focused the nation’s attention on teaching and learning in schools. This is significant as teacher quality is the number one factor affecting student achievement, surpassing other classroom barriers such as previous achievement levels, class size, homogeneity of the

class, and socio-economic factors (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Although professional development training is a means of improving teacher quality and student achievement, Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) argued that the United States is behind other nations in providing the vast majority of teachers with the kind of ongoing, intensive professional learning that has been shown to have a significant impact on instructional quality and professional growth. The average number of reported professional development hours in the United States was about 44, while teachers in many other high-achieving nations completed an average of 100 hours of professional development each year (Wei et al., 2010). The influential research of Joyce and Showers (1982) and Knight (2007) revealed that only 10% of teachers transfer strategies learned in professional development sessions into their instructional practices.

Although education reform efforts have led to greater emphasis on building teacher capacity, social studies education is often ignored at the national, state, and local level. Education reforms such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* as well as the Common Core Standards Initiative do not provide standards for social studies, and they fail to assess the knowledge and skills of the discipline. As a result, the amount of instructional time devoted to social studies has declined, most noticeably in elementary and middle schools (Misco, 2005). National trends reveal that social studies education is often sacrificed in favor of subject areas that are tested. For example, in Florida, students can supposedly graduate from high school without taking a social studies course (Misco, 2005). Misco (2005) also reported that Maryland has done away with social studies testing altogether, and many schools across the country have double blocked reading and math in lieu of social studies.

While social studies has been largely left out of federal assessment measures, 23 states do conduct state-level standardized social studies exams (Grant, 2010). This is true in Texas, where the study took place. Although social studies is not included in federal accountability programs, one middle school course, Social Studies Grade 8, is a part of the state's accountability rating system. Unlike reading and mathematics, this assessment does not count toward promotion requirements in the district of study or in many districts throughout Texas (Ereckson, 2012). Still, as in many other states around the country, courses where testing does not occur are often seen as an opportunity to increase math and reading instruction, and teachers of these courses are relegated to other duties as assigned. One campus administrator in the district of study felt so pressured to make adequate yearly progress that he elected to forgo the Social Studies Grade 6 curriculum in lieu of an additional reading course (Ereckson, 2012). How does the perception of social studies education at the national, state, and local level influence the value teachers place on social studies content, professional development, and improving teaching practices?

The setting in which this study took place is an urban independent school district located in the Southeast geographic region of Texas. The district encompasses 301 square miles within a large metropolitan city and includes approximately 54% of the geographic area of the city. For the 2015-2016 school year, the district serves an enrollment of 215,000 students in prekindergarten through twelfth grade programs in 283 schools. The district serves a diverse student population, with an ethnic composition of 62.1% Hispanic, 25.0% African-American, 8.2% White, and 3.6% Asian/Pacific Islander. Seventy-five percent of students are economically disadvantaged and 93% qualify for Title I funds. LEP/ESL students comprise approximately 30% of the entire student body.

There are 11,645 teachers with an ethnic composition of 37% African-American, 31% White, 26% Hispanic, and 4% Asian. Six percent of the district's teachers are beginning their careers, 30% have taught between 1-5 years, 21% have taught between 6-10 years, 23% have taught between 11-20 years, and 20% have taught for more than 20 years.

The district secondary social studies department builds teacher capacity and improves instruction through a variety of professional development opportunities that focus on improving content knowledge and pedagogy. For a number of years, a series of workshops introduced and modeled instructional strategies that emphasized historical literacy (inquiry skills, interpreting information from primary and secondary sources, and analyzing data from written and visual sources). These sessions were mandatory for the district's 60 Teaching American History Grant teachers. In addition, the Teaching American History Grant leadership team observed grant participants using a lesson-study protocol with the expectation of seeing inquiry, interpretation, and analysis strategies embedded in social studies instructional approaches. Most teachers implemented a poor variation of the strategies or failed to implement the strategies with fidelity. What was most disappointing was a teacher's inability to recall at least one strategy she found useful from the professional development sessions (C. Fairbanks, personal communication, March 23, 2011). When social studies teachers use self-reflection, they may conceptualize how their instructional practices support student learning and professional growth. The district of study has investigated several reflective practice models, classroom walk-throughs, instructional/peer coaching, the lesson study protocol, and most recently action research. Currently, the district of study is considering an individual reflective practice, teacher reflective journals.

The researcher is a veteran educator of eighteen years and is currently the Director of Secondary Social Studies Curriculum and Development (Grades 6-12) in the school district of focus. In this position, the researcher is responsible for overseeing the writing and revision of approximately 80 Social Studies curriculum documents for Grade 6 Social Studies through the core high school courses, creating district-wide assessments, and providing curricula and instructional support, as well as professional development. The U.S. Department of Education awarded the district's social studies department four Teaching American History Grants. The researcher assisted in the planning and implementation of a variety of professional development workshops, seminars, and study-trips that are specific to the goals of the grant, serving approximately 60 teachers who represent over 80% of the district's secondary schools.

Deficiencies in the evidence. The very notion of reflection, reflective practice, and the use of reflective practice models has dominated conversations in the education arena for a number of decades. An exploration of the literature revealed that the research is varied. Hrevnack (2011) emphasized the development of reflective thinking processes in pre-service teachers, enabling them to make connections between theory and practice, while Hayden (2010) highlighted the reflective practices of novice teachers. A number of studies (Gomez, 2005; Skretta, 2008) examined specific types of school-wide reflective practice models such as instructional coaching and campus walk-throughs. Anglea (2009) investigated the use of a book study as a reflective practice model to understand its impact on a teacher's sense of vocational purpose and classroom practice.

Rayford (2010) described the perceptions of elementary administrators and teachers concerning reflective practice; the study explored the perceived professional

practice of administrators and teachers as it related to reflective practice. Isai (2010) discussed the use of reflective dialogue as a means of enhancing teacher perceptions of a mastery experience, the rate of transfer of skills learned in professional development, and efficacy. There is limited information about the general perceptions of reflection, reflective practice as professional development, and its impact on teacher transfer of skills and strategies. This study examined how middle school social studies teachers use reflective practice as a vehicle for instructional change. Moreover, the study examined the use of the individual reflective model, reflective journaling, to meet this goal.

Audience. The primary audience for this study is elementary and secondary teachers, site or school administrators, staff development specialists, program coordinators and content managers, curriculum specialists, instructional coaches, and other educators who assume responsibility for professional development in school districts. Faculty involved in pre-service development of teachers and administrators may find this study useful as it offers strategies for development of professional educators. Finally, professional development consultants might also find this study useful, as it provides a rationale for including elements of reflective practice in their products and services.

Definition of Terms

Common core standards initiative. The Common Core is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life

(Marrongelle et al., 2013).

Elementary and secondary education act 1965 (ESEA). (Public Law 89-10.) As mandated in the Act, funds are authorized for professional development, instructional materials, and resources to support educational programs and promote parental involvement. The Act was originally authorized through 1970 and has been amended and reauthorized a number of times since its enactment. The ESEA was designed to address educational inequality (U. S. Department of Education, 1965).

Instructional strategies. Methods and techniques educators use to teach material.

Middle school. For the purpose of this study, middle school includes schools with grades 6 through 8.

No child left behind act of 2001 (NCLB). An Act by Congress intended to close the achievement gap through accountability, flexibility, and choice (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Professional development. Activities and interactions that increase knowledge and skills, improve teaching practices, and contribute to personal, social, and emotional growth (Desimone, 2009).

Professional growth. For the purpose of this study, professional growth is defined as "performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 13).

Race to the top grant initiative. This initiative offers incentives to states willing to encourage systemic reform to improve teaching and learning in America's schools. Race to the Top has led to raising standards and aligning policies and structures with the goal of college and career readiness. Race to the Top has helped drive states to improve

teacher effectiveness, use data effectively in the classroom, and adopt new strategies to help struggling schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

Reflection. The process or act of analyzing one's actions by focusing on the process of achieving the outcome (Killion & Todnem, 1991).

Reflective practice. York-Barr et al. (2004) defined reflective practice as, "An inquiry approach to teaching that involves personal commitment to continuous learning and improvement" (p. 3).

Teaching American history grant program. A discretionary grant program, funded under Title II-C, Subpart 4 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, which supports programs that raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of American history (Miller, 2011).

Transfer. For purposes of this study, transfer is defined as "a period of practice of the skill in context until it is tuned to the same level of fluidity as the previously existing repertoire" (Joyce & Showers, 1982, p. 5).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how middle school social studies teachers in a large urban school district in Texas document their process of self-reflection as they integrate instructional strategies learned in professional training into their social studies courses. This study benefitted educators and professional development consultants by helping them to use reflective practices to assist teachers with applying strategies learned through professional development to instructional approaches. Because of this new knowledge, teachers could improve the quality of instruction and demonstrate professional growth. Zmuda et al. (2004) suggests that in order to improve instructional

practices and facilitate professional growth, leaders need to stress the importance of transforming mindsets, not just practices, through the processes of dialog, debate, and reflection.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Johnson and Johnson (1984) recognized an educational crisis in public education that still exists today; there is a gap between the instructional methods used in classrooms and those verified by research as the most effective. In order to achieve sustainable reform, education systems must recognize and use research-based instructional strategies. A review of the literature on reflective practice as a means of facilitating the transfer of strategies and skills learned in staff development training into social studies instructional approaches will guide this inquiry. This chapter begins with an explanation of the theoretical perspective that underpins this inquiry. The second section of review, “Education Reform: The Teacher as Change Agent”, explores educational reform that recognized the role of the teacher in assisting change. Next, the section titled “Professional Development: A Vehicle for Education Change” examines the literature regarding characteristics of effective professional development, its enhancement of teacher content and pedagogical knowledge, and improvements in student learning. The following section, “Teacher Transfer: An Obstacle to Change” defines teacher transfer, looks at the processes that will aid transfer, and highlights those reflective practices that are necessary to achieve the transfer of instructional strategies into classrooms. An historical overview of reflective practice, the scholars who have influenced both theory and practice, and the reflective practice model, reflective journaling, is examined in this review of the literature. Furthermore, an overview of social studies education is provided. Finally, recent doctoral studies on reflective practice are shared to demonstrate a gap in the literature and the significance of this study.

Theoretical Perspectives

The problem that middle school social studies teachers in the school district of study are challenged with, applying strategies learned through professional development to their instructional approaches, is grounded in Argyris and Schon's (1996) work on organizational learning theory. A by-product of organizational inquiry, organizational learning theory encompasses the belief that whenever expected outcomes differ from actual results, individuals and groups will engage in an examination of practices to understand and solve the discrepancy. According to Prange (1999), a genuine element of organizational learning theory is experiential learning or learning through reflection on action. This very thinking should drive education reform efforts. Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) argued that reforming our public education system hinges on an exploration of processes that will facilitate changes in ideas, beliefs, and practices of teachers; reflective practice is one way to achieve this goal. Despite what we know about good practice, behavior patterns or instructional routines are tenacious; teachers resist change and they fail to transfer skills and strategies learned during professional development training into classroom practices (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

Education Reform: Teacher as Change Agent

The solution to America's public education woes, as it relates to improving instruction in order to increase student achievement, is found in its educators. As early as the 1983 groundbreaking report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform,* policy makers, educators, business and civic groups, foundations, researchers, and the like have advocated looking at teachers and teaching as a means of reforming public education in America. The report was created in response to the perceived inability of the

United States to compete in the international market; moreover, it was believed that poor education contributed to American unemployment (Good, 2010). *A Nation at Risk* was the work of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which concluded that education in the United States suffered from lack of rigor, was mediocre in comparison to other countries, and was not performing at the level necessary to make it the best education system in the world (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In addition, teachers were found to be poorly prepared and underpaid (Edwards & Allred, 1993). Good (2010) noted that while the report did not attempt to label America's education system as ineffective, it did find that the quality of teaching needed to improve.

Although the report recommended increasing achievement testing to measure student progress, adopting rigorous standards, and teaching basic skills, the most notable recommendations focused on improving the teaching profession by requiring higher teacher standards and competency testing (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This is significant, as previous reforms had not concentrated on the vital role of the classroom teacher in overhauling public education. Education gained greater visibility after the release of *A Nation at Risk* (Sunderman, 2009), as the American public had never before been introduced to the deficiencies in its national education system (Good, 2010). As a result, America's attention became fixed on reforming its public education system.

The Carnegie & Holmes reports. Numerous reports and analyses followed *A Nation at Risk*. *The Carnegie Report: A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* and *Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group* recommended overhauling teacher education programs and professionalizing the teaching profession (Carnegie

Forum on Education and the Economy & The Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1986). Keppel (1986) and Wiggins (1986) assert that both reports revealed a need to drastically change or restructure teacher education in order to improve the conditions of America’s schools. Because the classroom is the most effective preparation for teaching, both reports suggest that “clinical schools” or “professional development schools” are developed to serve the same function in education as teaching hospitals serve in the medical profession (Keppel, 1986, p. 20). Both groups proposed restructuring the teaching profession with instructors at the bottom, professional teachers in the middle, and career professionals at the top, and both groups agreed that each teaching level would garner a different rate of pay (Keppel, 1986).

The Carnegie and Holmes reports offered a rationale for and the benefits of the professionalization of the teaching professions. According to Labarre (1992), formal knowledge and workplace autonomy are key elements that are part of any successful claim of professional status; teachers must establish mastery of a specified body of knowledge. Such professionals will have greater control over the teaching profession, as they are certifiably capable of defining appropriate forms of practice (Labarre, 1992). The reports emphasized that both teachers and society would benefit from this professionalization effort. Teachers would win greater prestige, greater opportunity for career advancement, and, presumably, higher pay; moreover, society would gain a more competent and dedicated teaching force, which in turn would enhance student achievement (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy & The Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Labarre, 1992).

Educate America act of 1994. Policy makers looked to these groundbreaking

reports to guide future legislation as President Clinton signed the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* into law in 1994. The purpose of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, as surmised by Heise (1994), was to promote coherent, nationwide, systematic education reform, improve the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom, and define federal, state, and local roles and responsibilities for education reform. This legislation outlined national goals for education that were organized in categories such as school readiness and completion, student achievement, teacher education and professional development, mathematics and science education, adult literacy, and safe schools. As with *A Nation at Risk*, along with the Carnegie and Holmes reports, the *Educate America Act* recognized the power of teachers and teaching in reforming education. The law detailed its goals for teacher education and professional development: teachers, administrators, and other educators would have access to ongoing opportunities to acquire the additional knowledge and skills needed to teach challenging subject matter and to integrate new instructional methods, forms of assessment, and technologies into their instructional approaches (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Education reform in retrospect. Decades later, reports such as *A Nation at Risk* are still discussed as major pieces of educational history. Moreover, these reports received a great deal of criticism. Americans were still uncomfortable with student achievement levels ten years after the release of *A Nation at Risk* (Heise, 1994). Fullan (1991) and Heise (1994) surmised that reform efforts, such as the Carnegie and Holmes reports, produced limited success, and education remained unchanged. Through a series of interviews, Good (2010) highlighted the perspectives of members who served on the committee responsible for the *A Nation at Risk* report. Although proud of their

accomplishment, interviewees expressed disappointment in the document's inability to make "the ground swell change across the country" they had hoped for (Good, 2010, p. 380); they would like to have gone forward with the steps needed for a blueprint or action plan for the future (Good, 2010).

No child left behind act of 2001. Because of the perceived failure of previous reform movements, and the inability of the Informing America Schools Act of 1994 to fully enforce the development and implementation of standards-based assessments at the state level, President George W. Bush enacted the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB Act) of 2001. The NCLB Act was the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965, an extensive statute that funds primary and secondary education and was passed as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty platform. According to the U. S. Department of Education (2003), the primary purpose of NCLB was to ensure increased student achievement in America's public schools while creating safe classrooms led by highly qualified teachers. NCLB required schools to close academic gaps for economically disadvantaged students and students who are from different economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as students with disabilities (U. S. Department of Education, 2003). The *No Child Left Behind Act* and other education reform efforts are highly criticized. According to Fullan (2005), NCLB required all states to have a system in which annual yearly progress in student achievement is documented and reported; consequently, there are penalties for those schools and districts not improving. There is little investment in capacity building and people jump from one solution to the next in a desperate attempt to comply (Fullan, 2005). Ravitch (2010) contends that NCLB promised a new era of high standards and

high expectations; however, the reality was that testing could not replace good instruction. “Good education cannot be achieved by a strategy of testing children, shaming educators, and closing schools” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 111). Policy makers often propose reforms that recommend new teaching practice; however, the practices are not implemented with fidelity and may have very little impact on student achievement (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Tyack and Cuban (1995) suggest that reformers might focus on strategies to help improve instruction from the inside out rather than from the top down.

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, schools receiving Title II funding were required to prepare, train, and recruit high quality teachers (U. S. Department of Education, 2003). Although *NCLB* defined “highly-qualified” status in terms of teacher certification and credentials, administrators and teachers also needed to understand effective research-based instructional strategies and be able to evaluate student progress to make instructional decisions (Anthes, 2002). Research has substantiated that training and professional development, organization support, and critical self-reflection all work in concert to develop qualified teachers who can facilitate systemic change (Borko, 2004; Kent, 2004).

Professional Development: A Vehicle for Education Change

According to Desimone (2009), teachers experience a vast range of activities and interactions that may increase their knowledge and skills and improve their teaching practice. Professional development, as those activities are coined, includes activities that are intended to prepare education personnel for improved performance in present or future roles in school districts (Desimone, 2009). Traditional professional development includes activities such as workshops, local and national conferences, college courses,

and special institutes; however, a more comprehensive view of teacher professional development has emerged over the past decade. Newer forms of professional development might take the form of co-teaching, reflecting on lessons, and a self-examination of one's teaching practice (Desimone, 2009). Another teacher activity that falls under the professional development umbrella is designing or choosing curriculum (Guskey, 2000). Research studies reflect a consensus on the core features of professional development critical for increasing teacher learning, changing practice, and ultimately increasing student achievement: (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) duration, and (e) collective participation (Desimone, 2009; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007).

Similarly, education policy documents reflect critical features of professional development as well. For example, under the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, quality professional development activities improve and increase teacher knowledge of the academic subjects they teach (content focus) and are sustained and intensive (duration); they are aligned with and directly relate to state content standards, student achievement standards, and assessment (coherence) (Desimone, 2009). In addition, the Teaching Commission (2004) report *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action* emphasized that professional development should be aligned (coherence) with state and district goals and allow opportunities for teacher collaboration (collective participation). However, Desimone (2009) cautioned that despite the mention of the five core features of effective professional development, there is no central set of characteristics that researchers regularly measure in studies of professional development. Guskey (2003) supported Desimone's (2009) assessment of a lack of an agreed upon set of characteristics of

effective professional development; he concluded that these characteristics vary widely and the research that supports them is often inconsistent and contradictory. Guskey (2003) further discussed the failure of professional development research to investigate the relationship between these characteristics and improvements in instructional practices or student learning outcomes. The relationship between one of the most noted characteristics, the enhancement of teacher content and pedagogical knowledge, and improvements in student learning has been studied in the areas of mathematics and science. This reveals a gap in the literature, as this relationship has yet to be fully investigated in language arts, social studies, and other subject areas (Guskey, 2003).

Changes in instructional practices rely heavily on teacher development and will be difficult to make without quality research-based professional development (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Kent (2004) and Petersen and Young (2004) suggest that staff development should help teachers improve instructional practices by providing support and structures to help transfer theory into practice. The federal government and school districts spend millions of dollars on professional development (Borko, 2004), which ranges from short-term training with few opportunities for follow-up or monitoring to professional training that includes guided practice, coaching, feedback, and reflection (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Zmuda et al., 2004). However, information and strategies are frequently not implemented as designed and changes cannot be sustained over time (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). Borko (2004) surmised that professional development efforts are ineffective and do not bring about changes in institutional practices or improve student learning.

Teacher Transfer: An Obstacle to Education Reform

Influential research on staff development transferability indicates that few teachers actually transfer new learning into their classroom behavior (Showers, 1984). Furthermore, Knight (2007) revealed that only 10% of teachers transfer strategies learned in professional development sessions into instructional practice. According to Knight (2009), administrators and other education leaders should not concentrate on why teachers resist change, but rather, they should focus their efforts on how to help teachers implement new practices. How do we eliminate barriers that impede the implementation of strategies learned during staff development training? Knight (2009) suggests that leaders consider the following guiding questions to help facilitate change:

1. Is the strategy powerful? Does it yield positive results in student achievement, make content more accessible, or improve the quality of classroom discussion?

2. Are the new practices easy to implement? Is there a support system in place to help remove barriers? Is there a record of successful implementation of the strategy or practice?

3. How does a teacher's experience during the training contribute to his/her perception of the effectiveness of the professional development training and implementation?

4. Is the teacher's voice heard? Does the implementation of the new practice respect teacher autonomy?

Transfer is defined as "a period of practice of the skill in context until it is tuned to the same level of fluidity as the previously existing repertoire" (Joyce & Showers, 1982, p. 5). The transfer of strategies presented in professional development is key to

eliciting change in teachers. Those who construct plans for professional development programs should not discount issues of transfer (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Supports such as coaching, collaboration, modeling, and follow-up, all aspects of reflective practice, are elements necessary to achieve the transfer of instructional strategies into classrooms. The relationship between partner reflective practices, group reflective practices, both small and large, and teacher transfer of strategies and skills learned in professional development training has garnered a great deal of attention. For example, coaching, a partnered reflective practice, can enhance motivation and encourage teachers to implement strategies learned through training in classrooms (Joyce & Showers, 1982). This reveals a gap in the literature, as the relationship between individual reflective practices, such as teacher portfolios and reflective journals, and the transfer of instruction practices learned in staff development training to teaching practices has not been fully explored.

Reflective Practice

The concept of reflective practice has gained popularity as a means of facilitating organization change, as reflective practice is based on a belief that organization change begins with individuals (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). Particularly, reflective practice has proved beneficial in the development of teachers and the transfer of professional development into instruction (Osterman, 1990). Reflective practice supports the idea of the teacher as change agent. As teachers use a consistent practice of reflection to examine current practices and unexamined assumptions that shape habits, they are able to critically examine their practice, thereby improving their ability to create change, and ultimately improve student learning (Ferraro, 2000; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004).

Defining reflective practice. In one of the more recent studies to provide an overview of the concept of reflective practice, Beauchamp (2006) conducted an in-depth theoretical analysis covering 55 definitions of reflective practice. The diversity of meanings attributed to reflective practice does not lend itself to a conclusive definition of the concept; however, the study does make a distinction between several types of reflective processes (or actions), objects, and rationales (Beauchamp, 2006). Beauchamp (2006) identified various definitive aspects (processes, objects, rationales) and their elements of reflective practice. Reflective practice is conceived as an action (examining, thinking and understanding, problem solving, analyzing, evaluating and/or constructing, developing, and transforming), concerning a particular purpose (practice, social knowledge, experience, information, theories, meaning, beliefs, self, and/or issues of concern), in view of achieving a particular goal (think differently or more clearly, justify one's stance, think about actions or decisions, change thinking or knowledge, take or improve action, improve student learning, alter self or society) (Beauchamp, 2006).

Collin, Karsenti, and Komis (2013) added to Beauchamp's (2006) definition to include the grounded property of reflective practice. The grounded property of reflective practice refers directly to what Schon (1983) called the proximity between reflection and action. Accordingly, Collin et al. (2013) proposed that reflection is modeled from specific events and then reinvested into professional actions in order to respond to a particular situation. The grounded property of reflective practice therefore means that reflection can never be disconnected from the situation that produces it (Collin et al., 2013).

Reflective practice: A vague concept. Reflective practice is an ambiguous concept and this is one of the most frequently raised critiques. In 1990, just seven years

after Schon (1983) published *The Reflective Practitioner*, Grimmett, Erickson, MacKinnon, and Riecken (1990) concluded that the body of literature on reflective teaching revealed a diversity of meanings. Ecclestone (1996) commented that 'Completely different models of knowledge and learning can underpin ideas about reflective practice' (p. 153). According to Beauchamp (2006), the challenge is in the multiple ways in which reflection or reflective practice is perceived; this lack of clarity undermines the power of reflective practice. Fendler (2003) agrees with previous arguments,

> Today's discourse of reflection incorporates an array of meanings: a demonstration of self-consciousness, a scientific approach to planning for the future, a tacit and intuitive understanding of practice, a discipline to become more professional, a way to tap into one's authentic inner voice, a means to become a more effective teacher, and a strategy to redress injustices in society. It is no wonder then that current research and practices relating to reflection tend to embody mixed messages and confusing agendas (p. 20).

Collin et al. (2013) concluded that many authors use the same term but refer to considerably different concepts of reflective practice, and, to date, there is no consistent correspondence between the terms used and the meanings implied.

Teaching and Reflective Practice: Contributions and Thought

In reflective practice literature, John Dewey and Donald Schon are two of the most referenced authors (York-Barr et al., 2004). Reflective practice first surfaced in the education arena through the influential writings of John Dewey. According to Dewey (1910), as cited in Gomez (2005), reflective practice is not a coincidence; it is not a passive activity, but one that lead to action; it is a cyclical process that leads back to the original problem. Schon (1983) claimed that practitioners look to experiences and feelings to build new understandings. Schon (1983) further asserted that the action of

reflection occurs in two distinct ways: while in action, referred to as reflection-in-action, and after the activity, referred to as reflection-on-action. Schon (1983) stated, “When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context” (p. 68). Reflecting-in-action serves to reshape what one is doing while they are doing it. Reflection-on-action evolves from the limitations inherent in reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983). These limitations include time and disruption of the teaching process or activity. Collin et al. (2013) concurred with Moon (1999), who suggested that reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are part of a continuum. Killion and Todnem (1991) expanded on Schon’s work to include a third way of reflecting, reflection-for-action; they believed that examining past and present actions informs future actions.

Reflective Journals

Peery (2005) contends that Holly (1989), Progoff (1983), and Rainer (1978) popularized journal writing as a form of professional growth and development, particularly in the education arena. Peery (2005) referenced Progoff’s (1983) explanation of journaling as the recording of daily activities, dreams, and life events. Moreover, it is believed that this model could be used to process self-discovery using reflection, one of four diary or journaling devices. According to York-Barr et al. (2004), reflection brings about a means of metacognition or an awareness of one’s thought process; reflective journaling facilitates this process in that one is able to take a step back and make connections to what was not noticed before (Peery, 2005). Peery (2005) and Holly (1989) explored journaling as a reflective practice model to link teaching and professional development. This approach enables reflection to be a deliberative process; because a teacher has to pause to journal by responding to a given prompt or by writing freely, there

is some degree of analysis, which often leads to a change in belief or practice. Therefore, journaling is considered to be reflection-on-action, since the reflecting occurs after the training or teaching phase (Schon, 1983).

There are both subjective and objective dimensions to journal writing, encompassing personal opinions, interpretations, points of view, emotions, and judgments, as well as measureable and observable information (Moon, 1999; Rainer, 1978). Peery (2005) and Holly (1989) stated that the journal is a dialogue that documents what happened, feelings and facts surrounding an event, the steps involved, and plans for next steps. Through analysis and interpretation of the writings, patterns and themes emerge that assist with future planning. Overall, the journal is a tool for personal and professional growth (Cooper & Boyd, 1998; Peery, 2005; York-Barr et al., 2004).

Social Studies: Purpose and Meaning

The origins of social studies, as we know it today, began when the United States planted seeds of self-government. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and others saw the need for an educational system that would ensure the proper survival and functioning of the republic and develop in students a sense of nationalism (Hooper & Smith, 1993). According to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), the primary purpose of social studies is to help students develop the capacity to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992, p. 213). Pace (2007) acknowledged the view held by NCSS and contends that depth of historical, political, and cultural understanding is essential if democracy is to survive and thrive. Ross (2006) also described social studies as being the vehicle through which students acquire the

knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active participation in society; however, Ross (2006) also highlighted that while social studies educators justify the subject as the basis of citizenship development, there is no consensus on the meaning or implications of citizenship. Ross (2006) further discussed and extended the purpose of social studies to include three primary purposes: (1) socialization into society's norms, (2) transmission of facts, concepts, and generalizations from the academic disciplines, and (3) promotion of critical or reflective thinking.

In an effort to standardize education, the National Education Association created a committee on the social studies to reorganize the secondary school curriculum (Singer, 2009). In 1916, the committee issued a report defining social studies as a comprehensive secondary school subject including history and the social sciences (political science, sociology, economics, geography, anthropology, and psychology) (Singer, 2009). Furthermore, the committee described the social studies as subject matter that relates directly to the organization and development of human kind and man as a member of a social group and established that the preparation of citizens was the primary goal of the social studies (Singer, 2009). This is significant as the Progressive era was concerned with the assimilation of new Eastern and Southern European immigrants into the United States.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), the professional organization of social studies educators, outlined the following definition of social studies:

> Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law,

> philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992, p. 213).

Similarly, Pace (2007) contends that social studies helps students develop enduring understanding in the core content areas of civics, economics, geography, and history; this new learning leads to a well-informed and civic-minded citizenry that can sustain and build on democratic traditions.

The National Council of Social Studies definition is a good place to begin a discussion of effective teaching and learning of social studies. The NCSS definition states the topics covered in social studies and clarifies the purposes of social studies teaching and learning. However, Zarrillo (2013) provided a more concise definition of social studies:

> Social studies is the interdisciplinary integration of social science and humanities concepts for the purpose of practicing problem solving and decision making for developing citizenship skills on critical social issues (p. 5).

This is a practical definition as it emphasizes the ultimate goal of social studies teaching, to help students think critically and to use what they know to be active citizens. Teaching and learning in social studies classrooms should be meaningful, value-based, challenging, and active (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992; Pace, 2007; Zarrillo, 2013).

Creating Enlightened Citizens

"An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic. Self-government is not possible unless the citizens are educated sufficiently to enable them to exercise oversight" (Ellis, 1998, p. 253). The fundamental task of social studies educators is to prepare students to become citizens in a democracy. As such, the social studies disciplines are an appropriate means to accomplish this goal, as the content

engages students in a comprehensive process of confronting multiple dilemmas, and encourages students to ponder or hypothesize, think critically, and make personal and civic decisions based on information from multiple perspectives (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992; Ross, 2006; Singer, 2009). Zarrillo (2013) and Pace (2007) further contend that a rigorous social studies curriculum provides strategies that engage students with significant ideas, and encourages them to connect what they are learning to their prior knowledge and current issues, to develop 21st century skills such as critical thinking and creativity in order to acquire new learning, and to apply that learning to authentic situations. As such, teaching social studies through this lens begins with a deep knowledge and understanding of the subject and its unique goals (Singer, 2009).

Studies on Reflective Practice

The scope of theoretical and research literature on “reflective practice” is broad, encompassing contributions from Dewey, Brookfield, Mezirow, and Schon (Carlton, 2010). The scope shifts, however, when examining reflective practice in action among schools and teachers. This subset of literature highlights three principal approaches to reflective practice: 1) supervisor observation and follow-up as reflective practice; 2) coaching and conferencing as reflective practice; and 3) teacher self-directed reflection as reflective practice.

Supervisor observation and follow up is the least compelling form of reflective practice that this review examined. Surveys (Chapman, 2007; Skretta, 2008) and interviews (Chapman, 2007; Keruskin, 2005) highlight the efficacy of this form of reflective practice. This efficacy, however, focuses on teachers’ evolving, increasingly positive perceptions of school climate rather than growth as pedagogues. For example,

while teachers sometimes cite walk-throughs as a tool for improving instructional practice, more often, teachers point to increased visibility of administrators (Chapman, 2007) and stronger classroom management (Skretta, 2008) as the central benefits of walk-throughs—not growth as an effective educator *per se*. Furthermore, while this work examines attitudes among teachers (Gomez, 2005), it does not directly link supervisor observation and follow up to increased student achievement.

Given that some may view supervisor observation and follow up as merely transactional and disempowering, other literature examines the more dialogue-focused form of supervisor-teacher relations: coaching and conferencing. Moving beyond description and qualitative insight (DeLany, 1996), some quasi-experimental studies (Gomez, 2005) demonstrate that coaching, particularly cognitive coaching, can at least increase teachers' positive attitudes toward reflective practice. However, does such coaching allow a teacher to effectively implement a strategy introduced at a more traditional professional development session? It depends - in isolation, probably not. However, if coupled with other factors, such as increased time for practice, modeling, feedback, and collaboration, coaching holds significant promise (Isai, 2010). In particular, when coaching happens in the context of increased collegiality and collaboration among faculty members, it accelerates transfer and mastery of the skills introduced in professional development sessions (Isai, 2010).

Few studies have examined self-directed reflective practice, that is, what teachers do by themselves to think critically and systematically about their own practice and develop plans for increased efficacy moving forward. Teachers do report that this form of self-reflection is valuable and that it can yield increasingly effective teaching and

learning (Rayford, 2010). Administrators echo this idea, especially when self-reflection is coupled with a robust framework for professional learning communities (Rayford, 2010). Teachers do not necessarily agree with administrators on this point. Specifically, teachers place more value on self-directed reflection than on more campus-directed approaches to professional growth, such as professional learning communities (Carlton, 2010). Regardless, much of this research is anchored in qualitative analysis (Carlton, 2010), and most of it focuses on perceptions among teachers and administrators-not impact on professional growth and student achievement.

The dissertation study investigated several identified gaps in the literature. It appears that recent research on reflective practice uses quantitative research methods (Gomez, 2005) or a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Isai, 2010; Rayford, 2010). Studies that employ qualitative research are few (Carlton, 2010) and date well over ten years ago (DeLany, 1996). This inquiry filled a void in the research, employing qualitative research methods to examine reflective practice as a means of facilitating the transfer of strategies learned in professional development training into classroom practices. Most studies focus on large group or school-wide reflective practice models such as walk-throughs or collegial coaching (Chapman, 2007; Gomez, 2005; Keruskin, 2005; Skretta, 2008). Few recent studies (Isai, 2010) examine reflective practice as a means of facilitating teacher mastery and the transfer of skills and strategies learned in professional development training into instructional practices.

Research Questions

1. How do middle school social studies teachers describe and document their process of integrating strategies learned in professional development training into their

instructional approaches in a large urban school district in southeast Texas?

2. What are the perceptions of middle school social studies teachers regarding the concept of reflective practice as an element of professional development?

3. How does an individual reflective practice model, such as reflective journaling, help middle school social studies teachers document their process of self-reflection as they apply strategies learned in professional development training to instructional approaches?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Qualitative Research Approach

This dissertation investigation used the case study approach. To differentiate case studies from other qualitative methods of research, Yin (2009) defines case study in two parts. The first part states, "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (p. 18). The second part of the definition refers to the fact that case studies rely on obtaining data from several different sources in order to maintain validity and reliability of data analysis.

The researcher used a single instrumental case study approach to examine middle school social studies teachers' process of self-reflection as they integrate strategies learned in staff development training into their instructional approaches. According to Stake (1995), in a single instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on an issue of concern and selects a bounded case to illustrate this issue. This case study utilized qualitative research techniques including individual interviews, observations, reflective journals, and teacher lesson plans. Yin (2009) contends that case study methodology is best used to answer how and why questions. In addition, Yin (2009) states that case studies do not attempt to control behavioral events as in experimental research, and that the research occurs in the natural setting. Case study is used as a standard and suitable qualitative research method in the field of education because it can contribute to knowledge regarding individuals and related phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Since the study examined the perceptions of middle school social studies teachers as they documented their process of self-reflection while integrating strategies from professional development into instructional approaches, it was uniquely suited to this research methodology.

Participants

The researcher used purposeful sampling to invite eight middle school social studies teachers employed in a large urban school district in southeast Texas to participate in the purposed dissertation study. According to Creswell (2012), purposeful sampling enables researchers to intentionally select individuals and sites rich in information, in order to learn or understand a central phenomenon. The purposeful sampling strategy is appropriate as it permits the researcher to provide an in-depth description of individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that embodies defining characteristics (Creswell, 2012).

The researcher invited participants who had participated in the Teaching American History Grant Cohort for three or more years, had taught social studies for five or more years, and who currently taught social studies at the middle school level. Of the thirty middle school social studies teachers who have participated in the grant cohort over the last eight years, eight participants met the criteria described above. Furthermore, the fact that these eight middle school social studies teachers have all participated in the district's Teaching American History Grant Cohort at some time or another is significant, as the Teaching American History Grant provided professional development training that is strategies focused, content specific, and ongoing, three characteristics of a high quality professional development program (Knight, 2007). The researcher selected the first five participants who responded to the recruitment invitation

After the researcher received approval from Nova Southeastern University's Internal Review Board (IRB) and the school district's Research and Accountability department, the recruitment process began. The researcher received permission from the

district's Curriculum and Development department to access an excel spreadsheet that includes a master list of social studies teachers who have participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort. The researcher sorted and highlighted the list of names of middle school social studies teachers. From there, the researcher invited the eight middle school teachers who met the following criteria: three or more years in the Teaching American History Grant Cohort, five or more years of teaching experience in social studies, and a current teaching assignment in middle school social studies (See Table). Next, the researcher emailed selected participants a recruitment letter inviting participants to participate in the study. The letter also detailed the context and purpose of the study and outlined the timeline of the study; the inquiry will take place during a 6-week grading period of the 2015-2016 school year.

Table

Demographics

Interviewee	Current Teaching Assignment	Years of Service	Years of Participation in the Teaching American History Grant Cohort
Timothy Daily	Social Studies Grade 8	9 Years	3 Years
Henry Luke	Social Studies Grade 8	8 Years	4 Years
Charliss McClinton	Social Studies Grades 6 and 7	7 Years	5 Years
Kelly Stuart	Social Studies Grade 7	6 Years	4 Years
Natalie Washington	Social Studies Grade 6 and Grade 9—World Geography Studies	35 Years	6 Years

Note. Interviewee names have been changed to protect anonymity.

Most importantly, the letter listed the duties and responsibilities of the participants, as well as the researcher. Participants dedicated a total of seven hours to this study. One hour was designated for the pre interview and another hour was designated for

the post interview. Two hours were spent at professional development training and two hours were given to completing two sets of journal prompts (one hour each). In addition, participants set aside 60 minutes of class time to teach a lesson that integrated a strategy learned during the training into instructional approaches. The researcher provided a written overview of the study through the recruitment letter, conducted both the pre and post interviews, facilitated the professional development training, provided journal prompts for reflection, assisted with lesson planning, and provided classroom observations. Furthermore, the researcher ensured the confidentiality of participant responses. Participants needed to have accepted the invitation within one week of the initial email, the first week of a six-week grading cycle.

Data Collection Tools

To collect data for analysis for this case study, the researcher used pre- and post-interviews with individual teachers, classroom observations, and teacher lesson plans. The data collected from these sources was augmented by reflective journals that documented the participants' process of self-reflection as they integrated strategies learned in professional development into their classroom practices.

Individual interviews. The researcher adapted an interview protocol (Rayford, 2010) to guide conversations with individual teachers during the pre- and post-interviews, which addressed the study's research questions as well as teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the proposed intervention (See Appendices A and B). The researcher received permission to adapt and use the protocol; furthermore, the Director of Curriculum and Development reviewed and piloted the adapted protocol with two high school social studies teachers who have participated in the Teaching American History

Grant Cohort. Transcriptions of audio recordings of individual interviews added depth to the case study narrative. The researcher audiotaped and transcribed the pre- and post-interviews to ensure accuracy of responses. Fowler (1988) asserted, “When an open question is asked, interviewers are expected to record responses verbatim…” (p. 110). As cited in Rayford (2010), the interview allows two-way, conversational communication, allowing the researcher to collect more information and clarify the meaning of a response. It is possible to elicit a more accurate response since an interview can be less structured. Furthermore, the interview refines the data so that conclusions drawn are meaningful and representative (Rayford, 2010).

Observations. The researcher used another data collection tool, observations, to focus on human actions and real-world events (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). The researcher observed the degree of fidelity with which the participants implemented the structured conversation strategies learned during the professional development training into instruction. The researcher obtained permission to use the district’s lesson observation protocol and introduced this tool during the professional development training (See Appendix G). Observations contributed to data triangulation as it added to the varied sources of data (Yin, 2009). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), observations are one of the most distinctive features of implementing a case study; collecting observational data involves the researcher using the five senses, taking filed notes, and eventually creating a narrative based on what was seen, heard, or otherwise sensed. The researcher used mechanical devices, such as audio recorders, to help capture the data.

Documents. Documents, along with interviews and observations, are one of the main sources of data for interpretation and analysis in case study research (Creswell,

2012). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), documents encompass a variety of written, visual, and physical material, including any artifacts. Like observations, this data serves as evidence of human actions and provides a rich source of data pertaining to the real-world activities surrounding the case (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006).

The researcher collected documents, in the form of teacher lesson plans, as evidence that participants developed a plan of action that detailed how the strategy learned during training was integrated into social studies instruction. According to Yin (2009), the most important uses for documents such as teacher lesson plans are to augment and substantiate evidence from other sources, in the case of this research study, the individual post-interviews, observations, and reflective journals. For the purposes of this research study, teacher lesson plans served as primary documents; according to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), primary documents are those created by the people closest to the phenomenon under study, in this case, the middle school social studies teachers.

Reflective journals. Journaling is a useful data collection strategy that will help participants reflect on significant aspects of the training, lesson planning, and integration of instructional strategies into teaching practices (Moon, 1999; Van Manen, 1990). Since the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of its participants, middle school social studies teachers maintained a journal to reflect on their process of self-reflection as they implemented a new strategy or intervention. For example, teachers responded to the following prompt after the completion of the professional development training: "How will you incorporate the strategy learned during the training into your instructional plans?" (See Appendix D).

Through a series of journal prompts (Isai, 2010), teachers documented thoughts

and reflections regarding their perception of the intervention. The researcher transferred the entries to a password-protected personal computer. This data added depth to the description of teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of new instructional approaches (Giraud, 1999). Yin (2009) suggested that documents, such as journals, could serve as an additional source of data collection in qualitative research, but cautioned that documents should not be accepted as a literal recording of actual events.

Procedures

The researcher received approval from Nova Southeastern University's IRB. Next, the researcher received approval from the district's Research and Accountability Department to conduct the inquiry detailing how middle school social studies teachers use reflective practice to transfer strategies and skills learned in professional development training into instructional practices. Upon approval, the researcher sought permission from the district's Curriculum and Development department to access an excel spreadsheet that included a master list of social studies teachers who have participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort. Because elementary, middle, and high school teachers participated in the grant cohort, the researcher sorted the list and highlighted only the names of the middle school social studies teachers who have participated.

Week one. The researcher emailed a recruitment letter inviting eight middle school social studies teachers to participate in the purposed dissertation study. The letter also detailed the context and purpose of the study and outlined the timeline in which the inquiry would take place, a 6-week grading cycle during the 2015-2016 school year. Most importantly, the letter listed the duties and responsibilities of the participants, as

well as the researcher. Participants dedicated a total of seven hours to this study. One hour was designated for the pre-interview and another hour was designated for the post-interview. Two hours were spent participating in professional development training and two hours were spent completing two sets of journal prompts (one hour each). In addition, participants set aside 60 minutes of class time to teach a lesson that integrated a strategy learned during the training into instructional approaches.

The researcher provided a written overview of the study through the recruitment letter, conducted both the pre- and post-interviews, facilitated the professional development training, provided journal prompts for reflection, assisted with lesson planning, and performed classroom observations. Furthermore, the researcher worked to ensure the confidentiality of participant responses. After acceptance of the invitation, the researcher provided teachers a copy of Nova Southeastern University's IRB consent form via email. The informed consent form included the following information: procedures of the study, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of the study, compensations, confidentiality, and contact information. Of the eight participants invited, the researcher selected the first five participants who accepted the invitation and met the following criteria: three or more years in the Teaching American History Grant Cohort, five or more years of teaching experience in social studies, and a current teaching assignment in middle school social studies.

Week two. Next, the researcher scheduled an appointment with each of the five participants to conduct a pre-interview (See Appendix A). The researcher offered participants the option of a meeting via video conferencing applications such as Zoom. Video conferencing allowed the researcher to gain access to participants that were

geographically dispersed throughout the district (Creswell, 2012). The researcher adapted an interview protocol (Rayford, 2010) to include open-ended questions that would explore the study's research questions and completed each interview within one hour. After the pre-interview, the researcher independently transcribed the interviews, assigning a pseudonym to each participant. Next, the researcher emailed participants an invitation to the professional development training (See Appendix C). The invitation included the time, date, and location of the training, which took take place during week 3 of the 6-week grading cycle.

Week three. The researcher conducted a professional development training session that focused on the use of structured conversation in social studies instruction. The basis of the training was grounded in the belief that if students participate regularly in structured conversations, they are able to make better sense of new content while building academic language (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). Furthermore, structured conversations help students retrieve prior knowledge and connect it to new learning. These conversations serve as scaffolds for writing and whole-group discussion (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011).

The presenter, who is also the researcher, began the training by providing a rationale for the use of structured conversation in social studies classrooms (See Appendix E). Highlighting the research of Seidlitz and Perryman (2011) and Zwiers and Crawford (2011), the researcher facilitated a discussion on the relationship between student interaction through structured conversation and academic achievement. In addition, the facilitator brought to light the disservice we unknowingly provide to students of low Socio-Economic Status (SES), English Language Learner (ELL) students,

and students who are tracked in lower level courses. According to Seidlitz and Perryman (2011), teachers give low SES students fewer opportunities to talk about content than higher SES students, and ELL students spend only 4% of the day engaged in school talk and 2% in talk concerning content. Furthermore, in lower level 8th and 9th grade courses, there is almost no effective dialogue (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). The next phase of the training focused specifically on how to use the Question, Signal, Stem, Share, Assess (QSSSA) structured conversation strategy to teach social studies content (See Appendix E). During the training, participants had opportunities to engage with the strategy. The presenter began by using a History Scene Investigation strategy where teachers examined the painting American Progress, by John Gast. The History Scene Investigation strategy allowed participants to investigate historical questions using primary sources and other material (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011). As the presenter revealed each portion of the picture, participants listed what they saw. After two quadrants had been revealed, the presenter asked teachers to share what they believed the scene was about. Participants snapped their fingers if they agreed with the responses given by their peers. The trainer continued with the History Scene Investigation by revealing the last two quadrants; afterwards, the presenter provided additional details about the painting.

Next, the facilitator introduced and allowed participants to practice the QSSSA structured conversation strategy (See Appendix E). The presenter posed the following question: “What American belief about westward movement is shown in this picture?” The facilitator asked teachers to stand when they were able to answer the question. Then, the presenter had participants find a partner. The facilitator reminded participants to use

the stem "American's belief that ____________ was shown in this picture by…" when sharing. In addition, the trainer asked participants to share their partner's response with the entire group. Finally, the presenter assessed participants by randomly calling on the groups to share their responses.

Teachers had another opportunity to experience the QSSSA structured conversation strategy; this time, they practiced the strategy using bounce stems or sentence starters that provided supports for practicing academic discourse (See Appendix E). First, the presenter distributed the Relationship between Manifest Destiny and Westward Growth graphic organizer. Next, participants reviewed the information included as teachers used this to guide conversations with other participants. Then, the presenter posed the following question: "What was one motivation for moving west?" Again, the facilitator asked participants to stand when they were prepared to answer the question. The trainer reminded participants to use the stem "One political/social/economic cause of westward growth was _____ because…" when sharing. From there, the presenter placed participants in two rows facing one another (Line A and Line B) to facilitate discourse and share responses. The facilitator asked Teacher A to read one motivation for moving west from his/her graphic organizer using the sentence stem provided. Teacher B responded using one of the following bounce stems: "So what I hear you saying is…", "Can you tell me more about…", or "I agree with your idea that…". Finally, the presenter assessed participants by randomly calling on groups to share their responses.

Based on the content area for which they provide instruction, teachers accessed the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) of Texas Social Studies Standards for

an upcoming lesson based on their content area. Thinking about the lesson cycle, they planned for an opportunity to include the structured conversation QSSSA or QSSSA with bounce stems. During this time, participants had an opportunity to examine exemplar lesson plans that highlighted the QSSSA strategy (See Appendix F). Furthermore, the researcher introduced the observation protocol to participants, as the next step in the dissertation study was to implement a lesson that integrated the strategy learned during the two hour professional development training into instructional practices (See Appendix G).

Immediately following the workshop, the researcher forwarded participants an email detailing directions and guidelines that assisted with completing the first round of reflective journal prompts (See Appendix D). The two prompts included were intended to capture the participants' perceptions of the professional development training and are as follows: "How will you incorporate the strategy learned during the training into your instructional plans? Explain. What aspects of the training did you find most useful as you work to incorporate this strategy into your instructional practice? Was it the strategy itself? Were the resources useful? To what extent did you find the planning session helpful?" The researcher collected the responses through the Google Form application. This allowed the researcher to electronically capture and securely store teachers' perceptions of the training. The researcher requested that participants submit completed journal prompts within a week of receiving the initial link

Weeks four and five. The researcher worked with each participant to designate a time for classroom observations. The goal was to examine a lesson that included the QSSSA strategy learned during the professional development training. The researcher

informed participants that teacher lesson plans were due to the researcher one day prior to the scheduled observation. The lesson plan should reflect a plan of action detailing how the teacher will integrate the strategy learned during the staff development training into instruction. The research used the district's observation tool to collect data during the lesson. (See Appendix G).

The observation took place during a one-hour class period at the participant's assigned campus. The researcher observed the degree of fidelity with which the teacher implemented the QSSSA strategy into instruction. The researcher conducted a total of five observations, one per participant over a period of two weeks, to obtain knowledge of how middle school social studies teachers integrated the QSSSA strategy learned during professional development training into instruction practices.

After participants taught the lesson utilizing the intervention learned during the training, the researcher forwarded participants an email detailing directions and guidelines that assisted with completing a second set of reflective journal prompts (See Appendix D). The email included a link to a Google Form where participants addressed the assigned prompts. This allowed the researcher to electronically capture and securely store teachers' perceptions of the lesson. The following are examples of the journal prompts: "To what extent did the QSSSA strategy enhance the lesson? How did your students respond to the QSSSA strategy? Include any additional information you wish to add. What did you find most beneficial as you worked to integrate strategies learned during the professional development training into your lesson plans?" Again, the guidelines included the due date by which participants should have submitted completed journal prompts; the researcher requested that participants submit completed journal

prompts within a week of receiving the initial link.

Week six. Finally, the researcher scheduled an appointment with each of the five participants to conduct a post-interview (See Appendix B). The post-interview included a discussion of the observation and journals. The researcher offered participants the option of a meeting via video conferencing applications such as Zoom. Video conferencing allowed the researcher to gain access to participants that are geographically dispersed throughout the district (Creswell, 2012). During the interview, participants observed the researcher listening attentively and recording answers. The researcher completed each conversation within one hour and independently transcribed each interview.

Data Analysis

As suggested by Creswell (2012), this dissertation study followed analytic strategies necessary for qualitative research. The strategies included collecting and organizing data, analyzing data, coding, identifying categories, developing themes, and reporting findings. First, the researcher organized data in electronic files, categorized material according to the data source, i.e., transcripts of personal interviews, journal prompts, teacher lesson plans, and observation notes, and maintained backup copies of all data. The researcher identified all interview files using a pseudonym so as to protect participants' confidentiality. The researcher transcribed all interviews without the aid of transcription software. Both Creswell (2012) and Yin (2009) recommended this approach as it engages the researcher with the data.

To analyze the data, the researcher employed the cyclical data analysis process described by Creswell (2012) and Saldana (2013). First, the researcher began by reading and memoing the data; memoing is the act of recording reflective notes about what the

researcher is learning from the collected data. During the next phase of the data analysis process, the researcher began describing, classifying, interpreting, and coding. According to Saldana (2013), coding involves the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in data. After coding all documents and transcripts, the researcher identified categories and patterns in the data, and from categories, the researcher developed themes (Saldana, 2013). Next, the researcher illustrated the themes with exemplar quotes from participants' transcripts; this information was displayed in a matrix. Finally, the researcher created the report of findings, a narrative based on the matrix.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2012) and Glense (2011) contend that the nature and design of qualitative research inherently makes it vulnerable to several ethical issues that should be acknowledged prior to beginning a qualitative inquiry. This is due in part to the nature of the shared relationship between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2012).To reduce the possibility of ethical concerns and considerations, the researcher followed the guidelines set forth by Nova Southeastern University's IRB and the district of study's Research and Accountability Guidelines for Conducting Research Studies. Prior to the pre-interview, the researcher provided each participant an informed consent form. The form outlined the purpose of the study, procedures, time commitment, compensation, and the benefits and risks associated with the study. In addition, the researcher maintained confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study. The researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym and all identifying information was removed from participants' documents. The researcher used password protected applications such as Google Forms

to capture data from participants' journaling; in addition, the researcher stored all information on a password protected computer and external hard drive. Furthermore, the researcher will destroy all information after a three year period.

Trustworthiness. To establish trustworthiness, this research employed multiple verification procedures that are well documented in the qualitative research literature (Creswell, 2013; Glense, 2011; Stake, 1995). First, the researcher established the use of an audit process. The audit trail described the data collection and analysis processes from the beginning of the project until the reporting of the findings. Second, this research achieved triangulation with multiple sources of data. The researcher conducted pre- and post-interviews, solicited journal entries from participants, examined teacher lesson plans, and observed middle school social studies teachers in their natural settings while generating notes that detailed the process of teaching the strategy learned during the training. Triangulation allowed an exploration of the topic of study from different perspectives; furthermore, triangulation enhanced the credulity and accuracy of the research study (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, the researcher performed member checks to ensure that participant perspectives were correctly recorded and identified in this inquiry. The researcher individually provided each participant with copies of transcribed interviews via email and asked that they review the material for misconceptions or any edits they wanted to include.

Potential Research Bias

Previously, the researcher was a middle school teacher in the district of study and a member of the Teaching American History Grant cohort for a number or years. For the last seven years, the researcher was the Secondary Social Studies Curriculum Specialist.

Due to a retirement in the department, the researcher was promoted and is currently the Director of Curriculum and Development for Secondary Social Studies. In this role, the researcher is responsible for managing the writing and revision of Social Studies curriculum documents for Grade 6 Social Studies through the core high school courses, creating district-wide assessments, and providing curricula support and professional development. In addition, the researcher assisted in the planning and implementation of a variety of professional development workshops, seminars, and study-trips that were specific to the goals of the Teaching American History Grant. As such, the researcher brought personal knowledge of participants and various presuppositions to the study, as the researcher and the participants have a long-standing professional relationship.

The researcher believes that education reform begins with powerful teaching and learning; as such, teacher quality is the number one factor affecting student achievement and surpasses other classroom barriers such as previous achievement levels, class size, homogeneity of the class, and socio-economic factors (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). The researcher has conducted numerous staff development training sessions throughout the district of study and has led sessions at local, state, and national professional conferences. As a source of curriculum support, the researcher occasionally conducts observations and walk-throughs. The researcher is alarmed by the number of teachers who do not transfer information from staff development training into instructional practice. Grant cohort members were interviewed in preparation for a year-end report. The grant administrator wanted to find out if the cohort member felt that the training she received as a part of the Teaching American History Grant cohort was beneficial to her practice. The grant administrator asked the cohort member the

following: “Of all the strategies presented at the various training sessions, which did she find most beneficial to her instructional practice?” What was most disappointing was the cohort member’s inability to recall at least one strategy she found useful from the professional development sessions (C. Fairbanks, personal communication, March 23, 2011).

This is significant as the Teaching American History grant provided numerous professional development sessions and study trip opportunities to its members for a number of years. Through personal experiences, the researcher believes that in order to improve instructional practices in a way that leads to professional growth and student achievement, training must incorporate elements of reflective practice, as this will transform mindsets and initiate change. The researcher’s experiences and perceptions are a source of potential bias as the researcher might expect participants to value reflective practice models, such as reflective journaling, and to appreciate the value of staff development training to facilitate professional growth.

The researcher maintained a personal journal to acknowledge potential biases throughout various phases of the study. The researcher included thoughts on the impact of the study on participants and the researcher, as well as possible biases and ethical issues that could arise at any phase of the study (Glense, 2011). According to Yin (2009), reflective notes should be used to record the researcher's personal thoughts, biases, and impressions garnered throughout the pre- and post-interviews, professional development training, observations, documents, and analysis processes.

Limitations

The dissertation study was limited by a small sample size and by the examination

of only one district in one state. Furthermore, the inclusion of only social studies teachers, more specifically, middle school social studies teachers, is an additional limitation.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how middle school social studies teachers, in a large urban school district in Texas, document their process of self-reflection as they integrate instructional strategies learned in professional training into their social studies courses. An intervention, in the form of a training session, was included in the study as a lynchpin to analyze this process. The population sample consisted of three women and two men representing current middle school social studies teachers who have taught for more than five years and who have also participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort for three or more years. The goal of the program was to provide ongoing and intensive professional development that would improve teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of American History so as to positively impact student achievement. This sampling allowed the researcher to identify the most common themes amongst research participants. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, as well as other district personnel, and fictitious campus names were used. Such actions were taken to maintain confidentiality.

An analysis of data from middle school social studies teachers' transcribed interviews, documents, and reflective journals and the researcher's observations produced three themes: a) processes and routines as an impetus for instructional change, b) planning, teaching, and assessing for instructional change, and c) reflective practice as a vehicle for instructional change. Each theme is examined in depth and supported by evidence from the participants.

By agreeing to participate in the present study, five middle school social studies

teachers in a large district in southeast Texas have accepted an arduous task. As such, these teachers are change agents, as they will examine how they document their process of self-reflection as they integrate instructional strategies learned in professional training into their social studies courses in order to improve teaching practices and positively affect student learning in the district of study.

Teacher Change Agents

The following portraits provided an overview of the participants themselves and the campuses in which they serve. Pseudonyms, aliases, and fictitious campus names and data are used to preserve anonymity and to maintain confidentiality. Such information provides a context for the decisions made and actions taken by the middle school social studies teachers.

Timothy Daily. Mr. Daily has taught middle school social studies courses at Settlers Academy for nine years. He is currently a Social Studies Grade 8-United States History to 1877 teacher and he is the Social Studies Department Chairperson. Settlers Academy serves 1,110 students in grades K-8. Sixty-one percent of the students are English Language Learners, 4% are labeled Special Education, and 88% are economically disadvantaged. Timothy participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort for three years.

Henry Luke. Henry is a Social Studies Grade 8-United States History to 1877 teacher and is the Social Studies Department Chairperson at Samuel Adams Middle School. Although Mr. Luke has taught a total of eight years, this is his second year at Samuel Adams Middle School. Previously, Mr. Luke taught Social Studies Grade 7-Texas History, a non-tested area, at another campus in the district of study. Samuel

Adams Middle School serves 901 students in grades 6-8. Sixty-two percent of the students are English Language Learners, 13% are labeled Special Education, and 95% are economically disadvantaged. Samuel Adams Middle School is a Progress Required campus due to low student achievement. In fact, only 10% of students performed at the Level II Satisfactory level on the Social Studies Grade 8 STAAR exam. As a result, Adams Middle School receives targeted support in the form of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Content area instructional coaches are assigned to work with teachers at Samuel Adams Middle School regularly; one of the social studies instructional coaches, Ms. Yancy, supports Mr. Luke two days per week. Henry participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort for four years.

Charliss McClinton. Ms. McClinton has taught middle school social studies for seven years in the district of study. She currently teaches Social Studies Grade 6-World Cultures and Social Studies Grade 7-Texas History at Susan B. Anthony College Preparatory Academy; she has taught at this campus for two years. The campus serves 522 students grades 6-12. Eighteen percent of the students are English Language Learners, 9% are labeled Special Education, and 59% are economically disadvantaged. Susan B. Anthony College Preparatory Academy is an all-girls magnet campus servicing young women in grades 6-12. Furthermore, this campus is a one-to-one laptop campus. Ms. McClinton participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort for five years.

Kelly Stuart. Ms. Stuart has taught social studies for six years at a number of campuses in the district. She currently teaches Social Studies Grade 7-Texas History at Walter White Middle School. This is her first year at Walter White Middle School. The

school serves 907 students in grades 6-8. Twenty-seven percent of students are English Language Learners, 12% are labeled Special Education, and 60% are economically disadvantaged. Ms. Stuart participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort for four years.

Natalie Washington. Natalie Washington, a thirty-five year veteran social studies educator and department chairperson, currently teaches Social Studies Grades 6-World Cultures and 9th Grade World Geography Studies. Like Ms. McClinton, Ms. Washington teaches at the Susan B. Anthony College Preparatory Academy. Ms. Washington has taught at the Susan B. Anthony College Preparatory Academy for four years, after having taught at her previous school for twenty-one years; prior to that, she spent ten years at another school in the district of study. Ms. Washington participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort for six years.

Processes and Routines as an Impetus for Instructional Change

The first theme of this study was teacher processes and routines as an impetus for instructional change. An analysis of the data revealed that middle school social studies teachers utilized existing processes and routines to integrate strategies learned during professional development training into their instructional approaches. Before we explore each participant's individual process or routine for integration, we have to examine the professional development training in which middle school social studies teachers participate, as an analysis of the data revealed that each person's process began with the training itself. Bearing in mind previous training sessions hosted by the Secondary Social Studies Curriculum and Development Department in addition to the training included in the study as an intervention, all five participants affirmed that these learning

opportunities were "purposeful" and "relevant" to their work. According to participants, training incorporated a strong focus on the use of strategies to deliver social studies instruction, opportunities to practice and process the new strategies introduced, and supports such as resources, exemplars, and personnel to guide instructional planning.

Timothy Daily. As Mr. Daily described his process for integrating strategies, he exhibited a great deal of excitement as he recalled some advice given to him prior to his becoming a teacher. He stated,

> I am glad you asked this. I am particular about this because someone told me once, before I was even a teacher, they said if you learn something new in a training or anywhere else and you don't use it in the first three days you are probably not going to use it. I have always thought that.

He further elaborated on how the "tyranny of urgency" dictates the degree to which we incorporate information learned from training into our practice; he stated,

> You know I might do one go to professional development. We go through the exercise trying the strategy and I can see how that works for me…but the chaos of life especially a teacher's life…Everything is on everything is now…education has that urgency so for that reason there are good things that I've learned that I might not integrate. It was not I didn't like them; it is because somehow I did not quickly put them into the cycle of things and into my routines and try it out. You have to start using it right away. If you don't use it you lose it. You need to almost immediately do it…

Keeping this in mind, Mr. Daily's routine begins immediately upon his return from the learning experience. He described his process for integrating a new visualization strategy, See Think Wonder. First, he shared with peers and team members. Because he was the only social studies department member to attend the See Think Wonder training, he carved out time in a department meeting to share the new knowledge with colleagues. If they had attended the training as a team, Mr. Daily indicated that discussions would have become collaborative, as they would strategize how to integrate the approach into

their individual courses immediately, and that, according to Timothy, “gives the strategy life”. Next, Mr. Daily built templates or support materials that would facilitate the use of the strategy in any lesson; he described his process and the rationale for such.

> I used a new strategy this year called See Think Wonder…I really liked it and I implemented it right away. …anything I use like a strategy I build a template in my word doc so that I don’t have to recreate it every time. … I have a footprint; I can just grab it and paste it in a new activity in like two minutes. It is in my bag of tricks; call it your tool box. It is tailored by me. …honestly, think of this, anything we create means even more right? I guess I set up a system; creating the first one is big like it is immediately implementing.

An analysis of the data revealed that Timothy Daily employed the same process for integrating the Question, Signal, Stem, Share, Assess (QSSSA) strategy learned during the intervention training as he had before; his routine did not change. However, it is worth noting that, in addition to sharing and collaborating with peers, Timothy created instructional resources that supported the integration of new strategies such as “anchor charts, sentence strips, handouts, and student materials…things that will make the new strategy student friendly”. Moreover, he emphasized that his process could be made easier by having reference guides to facilitate such. He stated that he was inclined to look for training resources that would help summarize the big ideas of the strategy, something that might serve as a reference for both teachers and students. In addition, he challenged district personnel to include more examples of the strategies included in the training; he wants to see the strategy in action.

Henry Luke. According to Henry Luke, his process for integrating strategies learned during professional development training begins in the training itself. Mr. Luke mentioned that he “likes to take notes during trainings” and described himself as a “natural note-taker”, asserting that “…without writing it is just a thought-there is no

action." He recalled his process for integrating the PPETS (People, Places, Events, Time Period, and Summary) text analysis strategy he learned during a training hosted by a former social studies instructional coach, Mark Thibbadeaux, some time ago. Mr. Luke contends that, upon his return, he shared the information from the training with social studies teachers on his campus via email. As the department chairperson, he allotted time during the Professional Learning Community meeting to discuss the focus of the strategy, along with the pros and cons. Afterwards, each grade level team "used the lesson plan to determine where to use or if we can use the strategy for that lesson". According to Henry, the strategy was appropriate and each content team planned and practiced the lesson to "picture obstacles and predict misconceptions". After everyone had taught the lesson, the team reconvened to discuss "what worked and what didn't work".

An analysis of the data indicated that, as a result of participating in the intervention, Mr. Luke's process or routine for integrating newly learned strategies into his classroom practice shifted. Unlike before, he discussed a process that was more individualized; there was no mention of collaborating with peers regarding the integration of the QSSSA conversation strategy. As he integrated the QSSSA strategy, Mr. Luke cited that his first step involved thinking about the lesson cycle. He asked himself where the strategy fits. "Is it as a Do Now? Can I do it for an Independent Practice or Guided Practice; where does it fit?" Next he indicated that he looked at the standards, the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), and asked, "what is the objective asking?" Next, he reviewed the Master Courses to determine if the strategy already existed in one of the lessons provided by the district, and fortunately the strategy was present. Mr. Luke contends that consulting the district's Master Course lessons is now a part of his process

or routine, given that his school is a Progress Required campus.

Charliss McClinton. Regarding the integration of newly learned strategies, Ms. McClinton indicated that her practice begins in the training itself with note taking. She detailed how she created a collection of notes that will serve as a reference when she begins the planning process.

> …when I am in PD I find myself doing this all the time I write notes *ok we are studying this next week I could probably use it now*. I take notes… I'll get a sheet of paper out of my backpack or grab the first piece of paper I find or I have sticky notes all over. While the speaker is presenting, I just starting jotting down some ideas of ways in which I can incorporate the strategy…I am going to write it down…use it now so once I get into the planning stage which I usually plan on weekends I see where I can fit it in.

Ms. McClinton reported that the next step in her routine, after the completion of the training, included taking those informal notes and incorporating them into her professional development interactive notebook. She explained that this is important because,

> I document the things I have learned in hopes that I will put them into practice if not then soon It helps me to keep them there so that I will have them when I want to use them I can go back and say I can pull this or this didn't work perhaps I can use that… I don't always remember every single detail. I am one of those people I have to write it down and if I truly want to use something the way it is supposed to be used I have to go back to it no matter what…my PD interactive notebook helps me to organize all the information I get from PD…

Ms. McClinton reported that, realistically, the notebook is used to plan lessons; she stated, "I can't say that I go back to my PD notebook once I have taught the lesson, once the students learn or I use the strategy." Once she has organized the notes from the training, Ms. McClinton discerns which strategy is most appropriate for her students. Ms. McClinton discussed why this is such an important step in her process. Charliss emphatically stated that she recalled feeling overwhelmed early in her teaching career as

she attempted to incorporate every strategy learned into her instructional approach; she has since become more selective about what she integrates from professional development training.

> I tried to do too much if several strategies were introduced I tried to use them all in my lessons immediately. Whereas now, I've learned that if there was really one that caught my eye…sometimes a lot of it catches my eye but realistically it just doesn't make sense to try and focus on everything...if something just makes a light bulb go off in my head…one that I feel would really grab my kids then that's the one I am going to try and use as soon as I get to the classroom.

An analysis of the data revealed that Ms. McClinton added another step to her routine after participating in the intervention. She surmised that reflective journaling would provide a venue to reflect on what happened "during the lesson and even after the lesson". Charliss expressed that, other than incorporating journaling, nothing else had changed. She stated, "I am kind of like a robot so I cannot say that anything has changed."

Kelly Stuart. Ms. Stuart did not describe a very detailed process. She indicated that because she likes to use a lot of strategies she's learned in the professional development training hosted by the social studies department, she first determines where these strategies might already exist in the district curriculum documents, such as planning guides and exemplar lessons. She explained how she would incorporate a newly learned strategy if it was not included in an upcoming unit of study.

> "I remember learning about the OPTICS (Objects, People, Time Period or Theme, Inferences, Conclusions, Summary) visualization strategy in one of the trainings given by the Social Studies Department. I searched the planning guides to determine if a lesson was already created that used the strategy. There was none so I sat down looked at my unit and the objectives for the lessons to map out where I was going to use the OPTICS strategy. I figured out where it would fit. I searched the curriculum documents for graphic organizers to help teach students the strategy. I did find a generic graphic organizer to use and so I created my lesson".

An analysis of the data showed that Kelly's process changed somewhat after participating in the intervention. Ms. Stuart indicated that her process is the same as before; however, she discussed how she piloted the QSSSA conversation strategy by "testing it out on a few classes first to see how I would need to make adjustments or modifications". She also mentioned that she would "begin to take better notes during the trainings" so that she could have her own reference materials to use during planning.

Natalie Washington. Like Ms. Stuart, Natalie Washington's process for integrating strategies before participating in the intervention was not a detailed one. Like Kelly, Ms. Washington also "likes to see where it fits during the upcoming lesson". She described integrating the Scribe Messenger strategy into a lesson on the principles of government. Scribe Messenger is a collaborative strategy where one student serves as the scribe and the other serves as the messenger. Given a task in the form of a guiding question, the messenger seeks the information, usually from a short reading or image that either is posted in a certain area of the class or is included as a digital resource. When planning the lesson, Natalie consulted the planning guides and reviewed what she already had to see how to implement the strategy into her lesson on the seven principles of government. An analysis of the data indicated that Ms. Washington's process for integrating the QSSSA conversation strategy did not stray from her original routine, as the intervention did not affect her system for integrating new strategies. She stated, "I don't think anything has changed between when we first talked and today."

Planning, Teaching, and Assessing for Instructional Change

The second theme of the study was planning, teaching, and assessing for instructional change. An analysis of the data indicated that middle school social studies

teachers document their process for integrating newly learned strategies into their instructional approach by either planning lessons that facilitate the use of the newly learned strategy, implementing said lesson, or assessing student learning. As such, the second theme of the study was planning, teaching, and assessing for instructional change.

Timothy Daily. Timothy's lesson plan did not include a great deal of detail; acronyms, titles, and page numbers outlined the various phases of the lesson sequence. However, Mr. Daily included supporting resources for every segment of the lesson cycle. For example, he included the use of a graphic organizer implementing the previously learned See Think Wonder visualization strategy to introduce the lesson. He created three PowerPoint slides that guided students through the QSSSA conversation strategy. The first slide included the guiding question, "how did Hamilton's financial plan help to stabilize the economy of the young United States?" The second slide provided direction for the strategy itself, while the third slide allowed students to apply the strategy to the given content. Furthermore, Mr. Daily provided a half sheet of paper with the sentence starters and stems so that students could actually record their responses. Readings were included as well to augment the lesson plan. Mr. Daily stated,

> So I document my process. I mean like on the most basic level I mean in a very literal sense…my word docs, my templates, or my stuff on my PC…like I keep files of things I have implemented…and then I have the actual products that I make to use with students…as part of the lesson plan.

As he planned for the incorporation of the QSSSA strategy into his classroom practice, Mr. Daily indicated that he repeatedly referred back to the resources provided during the intervention in the form of PowerPoint slides and notes, as well as examples of implementation, as he worked to plan lessons.

Prior to participating in the intervention, Mr. Daily reported documenting his

process for applying new strategies into his instructional practice through the actual implementation of the lesson itself. Mr. Daily stated,

> I have actually videotaped a lesson with me implanting the strategy. We did a coffee hour and came together to help each other by discussing what we were doing and how we made it work.

Mr. Daily implemented an observed lesson that included the QSSSA strategy during his second period class. There were a total of ten students. The student behavior goals, as it relates to the QSSSA conversation strategy, were one hundred percent student participation, the use of provided stems to generate responses, and, if the teacher chose to extend student interactions, the use of bounce stems to reply to a partner's response. The teacher goals for the lesson were to engage students in work that develops higher level thinking skills, and to ensure that students actively participated in lesson activities.

Mr. Daily began the implementation of the new strategy by posting the following question: "in your opinion, how did Hamilton's financial plan help to stabilize the economy of the young United States". He asked students to think about this question and reply by completing the preprinted stem in writing. Mr. Daily instructed students to use their notes to respond to the following stem: "in my opinion, the best part of Hamilton's financial plan for the new country was __________ because __________". Timothy asked students to stand when they were able to answer the question. One hundred percent of students participated in the strategy and used the stem to respond to the question. Mr. Daily's lesson did not require the use of bounce stems. The following is an example of a student response: "In my opinion, the best part of Hamilton's financial plan for the new country was the creation of the national bank because people could get money from the national bank to start businesses."

With the exception of the QSSSA strategy, there was considerable teacher talk; for example, Timothy read the entire reading to his students. However, when the strategy was implemented, there was a noticeable shift in the energy level of the students. Prior to the guided practice phase of the lesson cycle where the strategy was implemented, you could barely hear the students respond to teacher generated questions and prompts. They barely spoke above a whisper. Mr. Daily summarized this notion best when he stated, "If I look at it from the overall lesson versus the implementation of the strategy…the lesson…I would have liked a little more involvement enthusiasm with the students; it was kind of an off day, the group dynamic." However, when students participated in the QSSSA conversation strategy, the noise level increased; Mr. Daily elaborated on this,

> Like the energy level shifted…earlier parts of the lesson were definitely more teacher-centered… I think when you step into that strategy, it puts the kids in the driver's seat; they are not just watching cars go by but they are in the traffic… They have to be aware; they have to be engaged.

Mr. Daily discussed how the strategy enhanced the lesson for his English Language Learner students. He stated,

> I would say a celebration is my ELLs I have a couple in that room…there was a girl in the front row…. I've watched her grow…she still struggles thought, bright girl. What was nice to see is that she was able to be successful with the strategy...I provide her the strategy and she understands what to do, she is able to answer the question and I think that made her feel good too.

Mr. Daily invited all students to share their responses; as such, his goal was to be able to monitor and assess student comprehension of specific content. Tim's focus was Andrew Hamilton and the stabilization of the economy of the newly formed United States. Mr. Daily celebrated the fact that even students who struggle with English were able to participate. Furthermore, he discussed the notion that although he was a little skeptical about using the strategy to assess comprehension, in the end, it went better than expected.

Mr. Luke. Mr. Luke is in a peculiar situation. Because he teaches at a Progress Required campus, he receives a great deal of assistance from his instructional coach, Ms. Yancy, in the form of planning and delivery. As such, his submitted lesson plan was essentially an adaptation or modification of the district's Master Course lesson on the ESP Roots of Manifest Destiny. For example, unlike the district's Master Course lesson, Mr. Luke's lesson highlighted important content and academic vocabulary for the given lesson. In addition, Mr. Luke's lesson plans specifically emphasized those strategies and activities that provided for writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading. His lesson proposal was also scripted and included step-by-step directions for the implementation of strategies and activities.

Mr. Luke used the strategy to assess student understanding of the origins of Manifest Destiny. The lesson observation took place during his seventh period class. There were 31 students. The observation was rescheduled by one week because, according to Mr. Luke, "we are shutting down for a week to do STAAR like testing." Like Timothy Daily, the student behavior goals, as they relate to the QSSSA conversation strategy, were one hundred percent student participation, the use of provided stems to generate responses, and, if the teacher chose to extend student interactions, the use of bounce stems to reply to a partner's response. The teacher goals for the lesson were to engage students in work that develops higher level thinking skills, and to ensure that students actively participated in lesson activities. During the New Learning phase of the lesson, students completed a graphic organizer by reviewing information from placards positioned around the class. After students completed their graphic organizers, Mr. Luke introduced the QSSSA strategy and students worked independently to draft a response to

the following question: "what was one motivation for moving west?" Mr. Luke encouraged students to use their completed ESP Roots of Manifest Destiny graphic organizers to complete the following stem: "one political/social/economic root of Manifest Destiny was _____ because _____". Mr. Luke asked students to stand to signal that they were prepared to contribute to the conversation. Students actually struggled with complying with the signal, and Mr. Luke indicated that students didn't like being singled out. He also detailed how he would address this concern:

> …instead of standing up to let me know that they are finished or something I could have them do the thinker's pose. I could have them do thumbs up and keep their thumbs up until we have 100%. I think it is the signal part that got them; that is what I would modify.

An analysis of the data indicated that transitioning to student pairs or groups took longer than the time allotted in the teacher lesson plan. Students struggled as they were asked to line up in two groups facing one another. Mr. Luke repeated this request several times. Students milled around the classroom, not really understanding who should stand in line A or line B. It is important to note that Mr. Luke included a detailed process for grouping students in his lesson procedures; the plan indicated that he would have students count off by ones and twos. Afterwards, the ones would stand in line A and the twos would stand in line B. Mr. Luke did not facilitate the grouping strategy as indicated in the submitted lesson plans. Mr. Luke described how he would modify his grouping strategy in the future:

> When you are lining your kids up, you know how you have the A Kids and the B Kids, what I decided to instead is to have them place their desks in groups of four…They are already paired.

Next, Mr. Luke modelled the response portion of the strategy using bounce stems with his instructional coach, Ms. Yancy. In addition, a student partner from group one

responded to the question, and then a student partner from group two responded using a bounce stem. Another round of modeling occurred before students were able to converse independently. Mr. Luke revealed that Ms. Yancy's feedback discussed the "excessive amount of modeling" he provided for the QSSSA conversation strategy; she felt that it was too much and took time away from the strategy itself. Mr. Luke shared his rationale for modeling the strategy a number of times; he noted that he recently received a review from administration stating that he needed to model more for class. Furthermore, Henry shared that he needs to "trust his students' abilities more." Students were observed using their written responses to share their thinking. Mr. Luke invited all student pairs to participate as he used their verbal responses as a formative assessment to check for understanding. Partner A read his sentence and then Partner B responded with one of the bounce stems. Partner A responded to the bounce stem. The following is an example of one of the student interactions. Partner A: "One social cause of westward growth was that people wanted religious freedom because people treated the Mormons bad." Partner B: "Can you tell me more about how the Mormon's were treated?" Partner A: "The card said that people made them move out of their homes." In retrospect, Mr. Luke shared how his students felt about participating in the strategy; they enjoyed that everyone had a voice. According to Mr. Luke, one of his students stated, "Yea it was pretty cool Mr.; we all got to talk." Mr. Luke proudly commented that his instructional coach, Ms. Yancy, noticed that even when he incorporated the strategy with other classes, one hundred percent of students participated.

Charliss McClinton. Although Ms. McClinton focused on King's *I Have a Dream* speech, a topic not included in the Social Studies Grade 6 curriculum, she aligned

the lesson with content and skills objective 6.18D, “identify examples of art, music, and literature that have transcended the boundaries of societies and convey universal themes such as religion, justice, and the passage of time”, and 6.21B, “analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions”. Ms. McClinton submitted a detailed lesson plan; the proposal was scripted and included step-by-step directions for each strategy, routine, or activity. Ms. McClinton provided additional resources such as bounce stem reference cards to aid this process. The cards included stems such as “I would add that…”, “Some might disagree with this because…”, and “Have you considered…?”.

Ms. McClinton employed the strategy at the beginning of the observed lesson during her fifth period class. There were 31 students. The student learning goals and teacher outcomes were the same as those used during previous observations for the present study. In addition, Ms. McClinton’s goal was to help students engage and connect with Martin Luther King’s *I have a Dream* speech. Because Charliss teaches at a one-to-one laptop campus, students proceeded through the lesson cycle by way of the district’s learning management platform. Ms. McClinton allowed students an opportunity to locate their lesson for the day. She stated, “Click on the I Have a Dream lesson.” She even reminded students to “look at your sister’s computer and make sure she is doing the right thing.” Ms. McClinton read aloud the following quote: “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” She asked students to think about the quote as she read the following question: “as a human being, what is one thing that you refuse to remain silent about?” Ms. McClinton asked students to use the following stem to generate

a written response: “One thing, as a human being, I refuse to remain silent about is __________, because __________.” To check for understanding, Ms. McClinton asked a student to do a “teach back”, in which the student repeated the directions given in her own words. Ms. McClinton allotted five minutes for her students to complete their responses; within that time, however, students began to stand up once they were able to respond to the question. Students were given two minutes to locate a partner to share their response with. The following is an example of a student response to the posed question: “One thing I refuse to remain silent about is my knowledge because I will no longer let fear be in the way of my questions or statements.” At this point, Charliss modeled the use of bounce stems to extend the student interactions with a student volunteer. She was able to assess student understanding of the content, and this was cause for celebration. She stated,

> One thing that really stuck out is when I used a student volunteer to model the strategy with me so that we could all be on one accord. …I said something along the lines of one thing I would not remain silent about is people not being able to receive a quality education because I believe that all students deserve a quality education. She said that some people would disagree with this because in some countries some people are not allowed to go to school…. She applied something that she learned previously, like in Middle Eastern countries people aren’t allowed to go to school. That kind of blew my mind because she was really listening to what I had to say.

Charliss found that the QSSSA strategy enhanced the lesson by providing guidelines for structured conversation. She reported that her students knew exactly what was expected of them during the lesson activity, and there were minimal issues encountered - particularly in relation to time management, student comprehension, and student engagement. Charliss observed that the majority of her students were engaged and highly interested in the subject matter. According to Ms. McClinton, “what was even

more meaningful, in my opinion, was that the majority of the students felt comfortable with process."

Kelly Stuart. Ms. Stuart's lesson plan only referenced Social Studies Grade 7 content objectives; there was no reference to the social studies skills objective. According to Ms. Stuart, the PowerPoint from the training was beneficial because it referenced the rules necessary for the strategy to work. Ms. Stuart further elaborated, "Because I had to change my lesson from what was previously planned, it helped me to see that I could implement this strategy in more than just a few places in the lesson."

Ms. Stuart implemented the observed lesson during her third period class; there were 13 students. The student learning goals and teacher outcomes were the same as those used during previous observations for the present study. Ms. Stuart incorporated the strategy to monitor student understanding of specific content in Texas history. She used a Learning Target Self-Assessment form to allow students to pre-assess their learning prior to the lesson. According to Ms. Stuart, this is an example of how assessments are used to document the transfer of a strategy into practice. Ms. Stuart described this process in detail. At the start of class, each student assessed their knowledge of problems facing the new Republic of Texas. Students rated themselves between a 1 and a 4; a rating of 1 indicated that the student knew a lot about the problems facing the new Republic and a rating of 4 meant that the student did not know the information at all. According to Ms. Stuart, all students rated themselves a 4. After the completion of the lesson, students reassessed themselves. Ten students in the observed class rated themselves a 1, while three felt that they were a 2. Furthermore, students indicated that they used the QSSSA strategy to process the information learned. This is found in the evidence column of the

Learning Target Self-Assessment Form.

Kelly concentrated on the problems facing the newly formed Texas Republic. This was a guided practice activity that occurred in the middle of the lesson. Students used the Texas History textbook to complete the Problems Facing the Republic graphic organizer. The graphic organizer included seven spokes to represent the seven problems. The title, Problems Facing the Republic, was in the center of the graphic. The researcher observed that the textbook used was not the newly adopted textbook. According to the lesson plan, Ms. Stuart allotted thirty minutes for this part of the lesson cycle, the new learning. Students worked independently. Kelly monitored the class and assisted students when needed. After twenty-three minutes, Ms. Stuart informed students that they would move into the next phase of the lesson, the guided practice. Kelly walked students thought the components of the strategy. Using a document camera, Ms. Stuart displayed a hand-written sheet of notebook paper with the following question: “what is one of the problems the Republic of Texas faced as an independent country?” She included the following stem as well: “one problem Texas faced as an independent country was __________ because __________”.

It took students fifteen minutes to generate responses to the posed question; the participant had only allocated five minutes in her lesson plan for this part of the strategy. Once students completed their responses, they were asked to stand to signal that they were ready to share their responses. Students found partners in less than three minutes, and there was one group of three. The following is an example of a student interaction. Student A: “One problem Texas faced as an independent country was that they did not have money because the Revolution made them owe money.” Student B: “I agree with

your idea that fighting the revolution left them with no money." During the post-interview, Ms. Stuart indicated that she should have hand-picked the students who would share their responses with the class rather than asking for volunteers:

> I wish I had not let him stand up but I did. He was going off on something different rather than what he put on his paper…he was not following the script. He did use the sentence stem and he did write it down, but he was trying to do something different.

One hundred percent of the students participated in the strategy, used the stem provided, and extended the conversation using bounce stems.

Natalie Washington. Ms. Washington included student-friendly objectives and she acknowledged that "they were constructed to address the topic of the lesson, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's *I Have a Dream* speech, rather than the Social Studies Grade 6 content or skills standards". Ms. Washington indicated that she found herself referring back to the PowerPoint slides provided during the training as she worked to plan lessons. Still further, Ms. Washington found that being able to talk through the strategy with the trainer actually enhanced her planning process.

The lesson was observed during Natalie's seventh period class. There were 33 students. The student learning goals and teacher outcomes were the same as those used during previous observations for the present study. As Ms. McClinton and Ms. Washington are at the same campus, they both facilitated a lesson that focused on Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech. Ms. Washington implemented the strategy during the beginning of the lesson to engage and connect students to the principles that embody the *I Have a Dream* speech. As Susan B. Anthony is a one-to-one laptop campus, the lesson was totally facilitated via the district's learning management platform system. Students recorded homework and a warm up activity digitally; a warm up is a short

independent activity that usually allows a student to review information from previous lessons. Once the warm up was completed, students immediately emailed their work to Ms. Washington. After the beginning of class routines were complete, Ms. Washington asked students to name a superpower they would like to possess. One student indicated that she would like to have "future vision" because "I would like to use it for good to stop crime before it happens." Next, students completed a word cloud activity using Dr. King's speech. Students read the speech and digitally copied it into the word cloud application. The digital tool produces a graphic that emphasizes the words that appear most frequently in the source. After completing the word cloud, students were asked to respond to the following prompt: "the word in the speech that stands out for me is __________because __________". A review of Ms. Washington's lesson plan indicated that the students would "go through the QSSSR strategy". The researcher also observed that Ms. Washington referenced this strategy as the "QSSSR" strategy during the lesson. Students recorded their responses on an index card before sharing with others in the class. The following is an example of a student response:

> The word in the speech that stands out for me is freedom because he wanted to make it clear to everyone that he wants freedom from being judged, he wants freedom from being segregated, and he wanted freedom from hate and descriminiation (discrimination).

Student pairs actually shared their partner's response to the question; according to Ms. Washington, this reinforced listening skills as well. Student written responses were used as a formative assessment. Ms. Washington did not incorporate the use of bounce stems to extend student interactions during the lesson.

According to Ms. Washington, the QSSSA strategy enhanced the lesson because all students participated. Ms. Washington detailed that she waited for 100% participation

as instructed during the training session. She said, “This caused my students to know that they had to participate.” Furthermore, Ms. Washington reported that her students responded well to the strategy as she allowed them to work with students outside their usual grouping assignments; she indicated that students appreciated this. Ms. Washington did a quick poll of her students about the strategy and she stated the following, “My students agreed that having a sentence stem helped them to start answering the question quickly; in addition, they did not have to think about how to start their response.” Ms. Washington also stated that her students liked having to repeat what their partner said as this caused students to really listen. According to Ms. Washington, students did not mind repeating themselves as this made them cognizant of the fact that they speak too lightly or too fast.

Reflective Practice as a Vehicle for Instructional Change

The third and final theme of the study was reflective practice as a vehicle for instructional change. An analysis of the data showed that participants found reflective practice to be valuable for the professional growth of teachers. All five participants had been a part of the district’s Teaching American History grant cohort before the conclusion of the program in June 2014, and because of their participation in the grant cohort, four of the teachers viewed reflective practice as an element of professional development through the lens of reflective practice models such as lesson study, action research, professional learning communities, and instructional coaching. Mr. Daily reflected on the benefit of action research; he stated, “Action research it is a great opportunity to test drive a strategy…you have to try it; it holds you to see it through the long haul. I am going to do it again; I am going to measure it and do it again.”

Participants indicated that the ability to dialogue was an important aspect of the reflective process. Furthermore, after participating in the intervention, middle school social studies teachers recognized the value of an individual reflective model, such a journaling, to assist with reflecting on action.

Timothy Daily. "It is invaluable; it is like that piece that was probably missing before when I wasn't as involved in the social studies group." This is Timothy Daily's perspective on reflective practice as an element of professional development. Tim discussed that, prior to becoming a department chairperson, he did not attend a great deal of professional development training, and this affected his practice. Becoming a member of the Teaching American History Grant cohort, which is a professional learning community in itself, allowed him to expand his frame of reference so that, ultimately, his point of view was changed. He reported,

> The district promotes PLCs…when I became involved in the grant's professional learning community, it took me away from staring at right was in front of me…and helped me to zoom out so I could see what other people were doing… Oh you have that problem? I do too! What do you do? Oh I do this!

Timothy emphatically discussed the idea that "there is accountability in reflection if you are communicating with others." "There are instances when I do things in isolation, like implementing a new strategy, and if I don't collaborate and report back to someone else, dialogue about the integration of the strategy with colleague, then I might not implement it." He provided an example to support his rationale:

> I also touched base with cohort member, Henry Luke, who emphasized that I should try to be thorough and provide an overview when going over the different parts of QSSSA. I did, and I think that helped, as well.

Mr. Daily indicated that reflection is valuable because "as teacher we rarely…we don't always have the time or make the time to reflect as deeply as we would like." Tim

concluded that collaborative reflection leads to greater personal reflection.

Mr. Daily described his experience with journaling before teaching the lesson that integrated the QSSSA strategy and also after teaching the lesson. He stated that the first journaling opportunity provided him the opportunity to think deeply about what he was planning. However, he expressed a sense of “nervousness” because he was not sure if he was “doing everything right”. He admitted that journaling with provided prompts was a new process and he wasn’t sure if there was a “wrong or right” response. However, after teaching the lesson and participating in the second journaling opportunity, Mr. Daily revealed that he felt more confident because he knew the process; he liked the strategy and had worked through it. Furthermore, he knew exactly how he felt about the strategy itself. He stated, “After working through it I had clear opinions and perceptions, I had experience…my descriptions came together pretty quickly; writing about experience is a lot easier to do than trying to predict and project and plan and hope.” Furthermore, Timothy indicated that providing prompts helped teachers to “focus and actually convey their thoughts.”

Henry Luke. Interestingly, an analysis of the data revealed that, although Henry Luke participated in the Teaching American History grant cohort for a number of years, he indicated that he was “not familiar with models used by the district”. Mr. Luke did not connect instructional coaching and professional learning communities with professional development as other participants had. Mr. Luke recounted how he used reflective practice during his seven years in the military. He indicated that he used this process “to develop next steps or a plan of action regarding maneuvers”. Somberly, Henry shared that reflective practice is more of a necessity this year than ever before, given the status

of his campus. He reported that, had he taken the time to reflect more last year, he might not have yielded the test results he had. He hesitantly shared that he has lost himself as a teacher; he stated, "I was a good social studies teacher, one of the best". Mr. Luke discussed how life circumstances overrode his common sense to think about his practice. He shared that a family member was the victim of an act of violence and the outcome was not positive.

Like Mr. Daily, Henry found that the collaborative environment afforded by a professional learning community was valuable because "…when you plan with someone with the same goals or the same visions it is much smoother." Mr. Luke mentioned that, as a result of participating in this qualitative study, a professional learning community was developed among some of the participants. Mr. Luke shared an example of this:

> Yes with Daily, we had a lengthy conversation the other day. When he called me I was just thinking about what I could have done better. I had isolated myself at the house and he called. We talked about how we can do it better? What recommendations we can make for the future? Can we do this strategy in the Guided Practice or does it have to be included in the independent practice.

He also reflected on his time in the grant cohort and discussed why this was such an important part of his growth as an educator: "…you had people giving up their summers….for me, rubbing elbows with people who had such a wealth of experience in the profession was valuable."

Mr. Luke indicated that reflective practice was a necessary part of professional development, particularly journaling. Henry indicated that reflective journaling was a "meaningful and necessary process", and, surprisingly, this process should begin with discussion and dialogue as "verbalizing" leads to "internalizing". From there, according to Mr. Luke, it was essential to proceed with journaling, to include prompts provided by

the training facilitators. Henry proclaimed that a lot of individuals reflect or "think about their practice in their heads", but how do people record their thoughts? According to Mr. Luke, this is not only a crucial part of the planning, instructing, and assessing process, but everything we do in this profession. He provided an explanation to support his assertion:

> Take for example Time Management, I had an issue with Time Management. The bell would catch me in the middle of a lesson and catch me off guard. The next thing you know, kids are running out of the classroom. I went to a workshop where we examined the lesson cycle and in a way we were reflecting, in a sense we were reflecting. We read a piece and we took notes and as you are reading and taking notes you are thinking about your own practice.

Mr. Luke indicated that having a record of our thoughts allows an individual to reference previously written material and make changes or additions. He credits journaling with helping him to integrate the QSSSA conversation strategy. He stated, "Taking time to write things down, particularly information from the training, assisted my thinking about how and where I would integrate the strategy; I was able to keep up with my own thoughts and my process for integrating this new strategy."

Charliss McClinton. Charliss reported that the conversations generated as a result of participating in the study have focused her attention on just how important it is to think reflectively about one's practice. She stated, "This conversation has opened my eyes to how much I am reflecting. Am I implementing the strategies the correct way? Are students learning?" An analysis of the data revealed that, like Mr. Daily and Mr. Luke, Charliss contends that "life" or the "tyranny of urgency" supersedes those processes and routines we know will lead to changes in practice, and something as abstract as reflective practice is certainly a victim. She provided a rationale for her conclusion:

> … I guess sometimes we are rather very programmed and robotic where we just (pause) I think we do what we are supposed to do but at the same time you have to go back and say even though this is was successful there is more to it. This

> conversation has opened my eyes to how much I am reflecting. Am I using strategies the correct way? Are students learning?

Charliss indicated that including lesson study as an element of professional development would provide the ongoing collaborative component that is missing from training sessions:

> …not trying to steal anyone's idea but I think something like lesson study would be perfect…you create those lessons using one to two strong strategies and delivering the lesson then accepting that it may or may not go well…saying this is what happened this is what my data looks like where can we go from there I think that would be the perfect PD.

She was very transparent about her revelation concerning the benefit of including reflective journaling as a part of her routine:

> It may sound bad sometime as a teacher but you just don't think about it. It is like I know my kids; I know which ones will do and which ones won't. When you are writing it down it changes your perspective even more and you are focusing on what is going to happen later.

Ms. McClinton recognized that including reflective journaling in her process or routine helped her to focus on individual student outcomes. She explained that she had journaled before "within my career but it was like personal things…now the focus is on the student." Ms. McClinton stated that journaling helped her to break down what occurred in the classroom when integrating the QSSSA conversation strategy. She explained, "when we ask what went well we think about students as a whole; journaling allowed me to look at students individually…it created a comparison between students when I write down things during the lesson". Furthermore, through journaling, Charliss discovered that she wanted to extend student interaction beyond the bounce stem; she wants students to engage in "real" discourse. She stated, "I want to move beyond one stem; to me, academic conversations should drive the lesson."

Kelly Stuart. Ms. Stuart was able to describe her experiences with reflective practice models, lesson study, and action research. Often confusing two of the models in which she participated, she was unable to name the models described. She stated,

> I can't think of what is called I think I am putting two together. Like I remember us doing thesis statement and going through setting a timeline for implementation and the goals we wanted students to accomplish. My project was on reading comprehension and using graphic organizers in social studies, so finding out how graphic organizers were used in my classroom so yes that was two separate occasions.

Ms. Stuart posits that, due to the size of our district, it is hard for trainers to observe the implementation of strategies: "Smaller groups with the same interest, like a professional learning community such as the grant, are better for observing implementation." Like other participants in the present study, Ms. Stuart felt that a collaborative component is needed to alleviate feelings of isolation. She explained that some teachers do not have a partner or grade level colleague to work with; collaborating with someone who "teaches the same subject or with the same students" is helpful. Ms. Stuart indicated that more "dialoging and discussion" was needed. She stated, "So maybe something like that where you are sitting down and talking with other teachers or educators about what works in classroom, what works for certain populations." Ms. Stuart discussed journaling as a means of tracking one's teaching patterns and growth over time. She further explained, "…it shows how you felt about the situation, lesson, or whatever strategy you learned. It helps you see what strategies you use most and maybe why."

Natalie Washington. Regarding reflective practice as an element of professional development, Natalie discussed the long-term merits of practices such as action research. Ms. Washington stated, "We did the action research project. That was really a lot of reflective practice for me and it is something I do now even if I don't write it all down

like we had to do for that particular project…" Ms. Washington shared how reflecting through the channels of a professional learning community, such as the Teaching American History Grant cohort, has affected her teaching:

> …the grant's been gone for two years and I am still doing it. I would say in the last eight years it has changed my teaching I am more reflective. I am not just willing to just do something and move on and do something again that really didn't work…I sit down and think about how can I do this better. I really sit and think about it now; it is not just a process of doing stuff, it is about refining my craft as a teacher.

Ms. Washington mentioned the merits of a reflective practice model such as instructional coaching. She asserts that having access to an instructional coach is beneficial to those who lack a teaching partner; this is akin to the sentiment posed by other participants. Like Mr. Daily and Mr. Luke, Natalie mentioned collaborating with a fellow teacher who was involved in the present study. She maintained, "bouncing ideas around with her helped me to focus as to how I was going to use the strategy". Ms. Washington discussed the value of journaling to help with the retention of new information. She stated, "Well journaling…anytime your write something down it makes it stick more and it gives you that quiet time to really think and process so I believe that journaling is an important part of professional practice as a teacher." Ms. Washington stated, "Without a written document, it is just rolling around in my head. I was going to journal starting in 2016 but life got in the way, in the form of a kidney stone…it is not a part of my usual practice to have a written document."

Conclusion

An analysis of the data from this study produced three themes: a) processes and routines as an impetus for instructional change, b) planning, teaching, and assessing for instructional change, and c) reflective practice as a vehicle for instructional change.

Because the present study examined how middle school social studies teachers document their process of integrating strategies learned during professional development training into social studies courses, it was necessary that we examine current professional development offerings in the district of study and include training, in the form of an intervention, to analyze the process of teacher transfer. Middle school social studies teachers described training sessions offered by the Secondary Social Studies Curriculum and Development Department as “purposeful” and “relevant “to their work. This is due in part to a strong focus on strategies that facilitate the teaching of social studies content. Furthermore, opportunities to practice and process the newly learned strategy are included in the training itself, and resources are provided that help support the lesson planning process. Participants integrate newly learned instructional strategies into their instructional practices by way of their existing processes and routines, be it creating resources or sharing or collaborating with peers. Most teachers experienced a shift in their current routine after participating in the intervention, with the exception of one teacher. Prior to participating in the intervention, only one participant documented integrating strategies into their practices by way of implementing lessons. However, after participating in the intervention, all participants reported integrating their newly learned strategies by way of planning, lesson implementation, and assessing for student learning. An analysis of the data revealed that participants found that both collaborative and individual reflective practice models, such as professional learning communities and journaling, lead to instructional change.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This case study chronicled how five middle school social studies teachers documented their process of self-reflection as they integrated instructional strategies learned in professional training into their social studies courses. The sample population consisted of three women and two men, who are current middle school social studies teachers, have taught for more than five years, and have participated in the Teaching American History Grant cohort for three or more years. An analysis of data from the middle school social studies teachers' transcribed interviews, documents, and reflective journals and the researcher's observations produced three themes: a) processes and routines as an impetus for instructional change, b) planning, teaching, and assessing for instructional change, and c) reflective practice as a vehicle for instructional change.

First, the results of this study indicated that, in order to implement strategies learned during professional development training, middle school social studies teachers incorporated newly learned practices into their existing processes and routines. These processes or routines included creating resources in addition to sharing and collaborating with peers. Rather than failing to integrate new practices, or implementing new strategies with poor fidelity, social studies teachers incorporated the QSSSA conversation strategy into existing routines on their own accord. This allowed participants to take ownership of the new strategy in order to facilitate changes in classroom practices. Next, the study revealed that as middle school social studies teachers planned lessons, provided instruction, and assessed student learning, they documented their process of integrating new strategies into instructional practices. Although teachers documented the integration of strategies learned during training into classroom practices, through the creation of

lesson plans and the implementation of a taught lesson, many factors affected the extent to which they integrated the new strategy into instructional approaches. In addition, the integration of new approaches through formative assessment was not documented for the purpose of demonstrating how or whether participants used the new strategy; rather, documentation was used to demonstrate the strategy's effect on student achievement. Finally, the results of the study indicated that professional learning experiences that include elements of reflective practice, such as professional learning communities and reflective journaling, provided middle school teachers with a greater sense of self-efficacy. As such, establishing a professional development training program that provided opportunities for reflective practice allowed the new learning to extend beyond the training itself.

Turning Points in Education

The marginalization of social studies continues with the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965. President Barack Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* in December 2015 to replace the *No Child Left Behind* law. As with the Common Core Standards Initiative and *NCLB*, there are no standards specific to social studies, and the new statute fails to assess the knowledge and skills of the discipline. How do the decisions of national, state, and local officials influence teacher perceptions of social studies instruction and professional development training when laws are repeatedly proposed that eliminate social studies assessments and sacrifice social studies instruction in favor of extended time for math and reading (Ereckson, 2012; Misco, 2005)?

Under the *ESSA*, the definition of professional development was updated to

ensure that learning experiences are personalized, ongoing, job-embedded activities that are data driven, respect teacher autonomy, and are regularly evaluated (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). This is a departure from *NCLB,* in which professional development activities were defined as those that improve teachers' content knowledge and understanding of instructional strategies (U. S. Department of Education, 2003). The new provisions under the *ESSA* support the recommendations of Knight (2009) and Yoon et al. (2007), who state that respect of teacher autonomy and job-embedded coaching are necessary to achieve the transfer of instructional strategies into classroom practices. Although this is no longer the case under the new *ESSA*, participants in the present study found that professional development programs that were strategy focused, provided time for practice and process, and provided support for instructional planning were "purposeful" and "relevant" to their work. As such, teachers were able to successfully transfer new learning into their instructional approaches.

Furthermore, the *ESSA* requires that professional development programs are evidence-based rather than research-based (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). This contradicts Wilson and Berne's (1999) assertion that changes in instructional practices are difficult to make without quality research-based professional development. However, the shift from research-based to evidence-based professional development is supported by the findings of the present study, in which middle school social studies teachers documented the integration of the strategies learned during the intervention through formative assessments. In so doing, participants were able to meet the learning needs of individual students.

Processes and Routines as an Impetus for Instructional Change

The first theme of this study was the use of processes and routines as an impetus for instructional change. In order to facilitate the change needed to positively impact student achievement, educators as a whole have to internalize and take ownership of high yield strategies that bring about changes in teaching practices. As the study's findings confirmed, middle school social studies teachers utilized existing processes and routines to integrate strategies learned during professional development training into their instructional approaches. The processes and routines of middle school social studies teachers included creating resources and sharing and collaborating with peers. To elaborate, during the training or intervention, teachers recorded notes and created resources to use when planning for instruction. Furthermore, upon completion of the training, teachers collaborated with other social studies professionals on their campuses, as well as with other participants in the study, to determine how to best integrate the strategy. Finally, the teachers included in the present study implemented the strategy by utilizing teacher-created resources and scaffolds that supported learning.

As school districts and educational service centers develop professional development programs, the training and resources provided must honor the knowledge and expertise of the audience. One way to accomplish this goal is by developing a cohort of teacher leaders who would help create and facilitate training, develop resources, and support other teachers as they work to embed strategies into their instructional approaches. These teacher leaders would work under the guidance of content directors and/or instructional coaches. This would require that districts create budgets and allocate funding for this endeavor, to compensate cohort members for work done beyond the

scope of their actual job duties or responsibilities. One suggestion is to repurpose professional development budgets so that less money is allocated for outside vendors or consultants and more money is allocated towards the actual development of human capital.

The question then becomes, “how do we accomplish this goal when participants lack the expertise or capacity to recreate or reimagine training experiences?” This is of great concern, as current education reforms have eliminated the “highly qualified” provision of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Currently, 70% of teachers in the region of the present study are enrolled in an alternative certification program (D. Behling, personal communication, February 10, 2016). As a result, should professional development training programs first help teachers develop and/or recognize their own professional practices, routines, or habits?

Another point to consider is that educators may lack an awareness of their own professional practices and habits. The researcher observed this phenomenon with two participants in the present study. Prior to the intervention, both Ms. Stuart and Ms. Washington described their process for integrating new strategies at the most basic level, through the creation of lesson plans. Ms. Washington’s processes and routines remained unchanged after participating in the study. However, the researcher observed that Ms. Washington integrated the QSSSA strategy into her instructional practice through the Word Cloud application. This digital tool produces a graphic that emphasizes the words that appear most frequently in the source. This is significant because the Susan B. Anthony College Preparatory Academy is a one-to-one laptop campus, and infusing technology into her lessons is a part of Ms. Washington’s professional practices and/or

routines. In contrast, Ms. Stuart became more aware of her processes and routines after participating in the intervention. She explained how her routine changed and she indicated that she would pilot new strategies to see whether adjustments or modifications were necessary. Furthermore, she also indicated that she would take notes during training to use during lesson planning.

Integrating strategies into existing practices allowed social studies teachers to form their own constructs for learning. This is expected of students in social studies classrooms across the nation, as social studies curricula provide strategies that engage students with significant ideas and encourage them to connect what they are learning to their prior knowledge and current issues (Pace, 2007; Zarrillo, 2013). Shouldn't the same ideologies apply to teachers as they embark on new learning? Receiving the new information during the intervention was not enough; participants in the present study and educators as a whole need time to interpret the new learning and connect it to prior knowledge (DeLany, 1996). When middle school social studies teachers are able to select their own evidence of mastery and incorporate that evidence into existing routines, they are better able to internalize the concepts under study (Marzano & Pickering, 2001). Rather than failing to integrate new practices, or implementing the strategies with poor fidelity, middle school social studies teachers internalized the new learning by incorporating the QSSSA conversation strategy into existing processes and routines on their own accord. This indicated that participants agreed that the strategy was valuable to their teaching practice and that they felt capable of integrating the new strategy (Knight, 2007).

Participants tailored resources provided during the intervention to meet the

learning needs of their students, as well as their individual teaching styles (Parks, 2008). Timothy Daily created sentence stems that allowed students to draft their responses prior to sharing with others in the class. Similarly, Charliss McClinton created laminated bounce stem cards so that students would have the support necessary to extend their structured conversations. Because middle school social studies teachers were given the latitude to rethink and recreate resources to ensure that the materials and lessons addressed the needs of their students, the integration of the new practice did not discount the prior knowledge and opinions of participants, nor disregard teacher autonomy (Knight, 2009).

Bounce stems were intended to serve as a scaffold or support; despite this, some students struggled to give opinions or connect their individual responses to previous experiences or learning. In response to this unexpected result, Mr. Daily, Mr. Luke, and Ms. McClinton specifically indicated that they would adjust their processes or routines by creating resources and changing their instructional approaches to support students as they generate opinions and make connections to prior knowledge (Argyris & Schon, 1996). The actions of these participants suggest that monitoring student behaviors, identifying irregularities, and modifying instruction is an iterative process that leads to action (Dewey, 1910; Gomez, 2005). As middle school social studies teachers integrated the QSSSA strategy, they were able to observe inconsistencies in student learning; as a result, they refined their existing processes and routines.

Planning, Teaching, and Assessing for Instructional Change

The second theme of the study was planning, teaching, and assessing for instructional change. In order to integrate new practices that will lead to sustainable

reform, the education community can no longer consider planning, instruction, and assessment as three separate entities; they are each part of a greater whole and work in tandem to ensure an aligned instructional program. The study's findings established that middle school social studies teachers documented their process for integrating the QSSSA conversation strategy into their instructional approach by planning lessons that facilitated the use of the newly learned strategy, implementing said lessons, and assessing student learning.

Planning and teaching for change. Many factors can hinder the integration of new strategies into instructional approaches. During the present study, there were two instances in which lessons that were well planned on paper did not result in the strategy being implemented as planned during the lesson itself. For example, Mr. Luke abandoned the process included in his lesson plan for grouping students; instead, he did not implement a process at all, and this resulted in a chaotic transition. After teaching the lesson and reflecting on areas of growth, Mr. Luke indicated that he was dissatisfied with this phase of the lesson, and he intended to implement a grouping strategy in order to implement the QSSSA strategy effectively in future lessons (DeLany, 1996; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). On another occasion, Ms. Stuart allotted five minutes in her lesson plan for students to draft a response to the posed question: "what is one of the problems the Republic of Texas faced as an independent country?" She included the following stem: "one problem Texas faced as an independent country was __________ because __________." Students were allowed to use the Problems Facing the Republic graphic organizer completed earlier during the lesson. Because of the scaffolds and supports provided, the necessary time frame for this phase of the strategy should not have

extended beyond five minutes. However, during the implementation of the lesson itself, the researcher observed a discrepancy between the planned and taught lesson. Without rationale, Ms. Stuart allowed students fifteen minutes to generate a response to the posed question.

This speaks to the importance of how planning and instruction work in tandem. Prescribing to the belief that lesson plans are an adequate source of evidence for teacher transfer can lead to a number of misconceptions, as a lesson that is well planned on paper still might not result in newly learned strategies being implemented with fidelity during the lesson itself. As campus and district leaders work to help all teachers document the integration of new strategies into their classroom practices, a check and balance approach is necessary to ensure that there are not inconsistencies between the planned and taught lesson.

These incidents also shed light on a bigger issue; educators lack a critical awareness of their own professional practices (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). The knowledge of master teachers is grounded in their professional experiences; they are unable to identify the components of their work that lead to successful outcomes. Moreover, educators who wish to improve their performance are unable to recognize how their current actions prevent their professional growth (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). The training and development industry, including staff development departments in school districts and education service centers, has to move beyond training programs that focus primarily on content and pedagogy. As professional development programs are reformed to help teachers cultivate an awareness of their professional practices, facilitators might develop training sessions that address the idea of wittiness. Although

usually associated with classroom management, wittiness requires that teachers develop an awareness of when expected instructional and assessment outcomes differ from actual results; in addition, wittiness also challenges teachers to be proactive and anticipate issues that might surface during instruction. What might professional development training look like for such an abstract notion? The following scenario provides an example of one possibility. There are six social studies teachers who represent a social studies department on any given campus in the district of study. A training designed for these teachers will mimic a Socratic seminar model, where the facilitator poses open-ended questions to engage the social studies teachers in a discussion about a strategy, resource, upcoming lesson, or lesson the teachers have already taught. In thinking about an upcoming lesson, the facilitator and teachers might examine a resource to assess the degree to which students might struggle with a given reading. The facilitator will pose the following question: “how will your students process the information included in the reading?” Such a question will generate a discussion of the appropriate strategies that might yield the desired result. Once a strategy is agreed upon, the facilitator will then take the social studies teachers through the process or strategy. In so doing, teachers can anticipate where students might struggle and whether the strategy is indeed the most appropriate for the given task. Killion and Todnem (1991) would liken this process to reflection-for-action, as they believed that a process such as the one described would work to inform future actions. The responsibility for the creation of professional development training will shift from district personnel to instructional coaches and campus leaders. As such, these individuals will create learning experiences that are tailored to meet the immediate needs of individual teachers and campuses. As the six

social studies teachers work to incorporate this practice into their existing processes and routines, they will begin to take ownership of their new learning.

When teachers as a whole consistently engage in a reflective practice model such as reflective journaling, they become critically aware of their current practices (Ferraro, 2000; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). For example, in thinking about the six social studies teachers who represent a social studies department for any given campus, a facilitator might edit the question “how will your students process the information included in the reading?” to read “to what extent were your students able to process the information included in the reading?” and provide teachers an opportunity to draft a written response, as the journaling process will bring about a means of metacognition or an awareness of one’s thought process (York-Barr et al., 2004). The journaling approach enables the six teachers to deliberatively pause to reflect on their students’ experiences with the reading. By responding to a given prompt, some degree of analysis occurs, and this can lead to a change in practice. This is what Schon (1983) termed reflection-on-action, or reflecting after the completion of the taught lesson.

Middle school social studies teachers also documented their process of integrating the QSSSA conversation strategy into their social studies courses through the implementation of the lesson itself. Borrowing from the tenets of the lesson study protocol, the present study employed a lesson observation procedure, focusing more on monitoring student behaviors than the actions of teachers (Lenski & Caskey, 2009). Focusing on student behaviors will allow district officials to ascertain and document that middle school social studies teachers are implementing strategies learned during professional development training. For example, Mr. Luke teaches at a Progress Required

campus, and his instructional practices and student outcomes are observed with greater scrutiny than the other middle school teachers who participated in the present study.

This is a particularly relevant example as professional development models are rethought to focus on job-embedded training and coaching. During professional development training, facilitators must help teachers understand why they are using a certain strategy. Understanding the value of the strategy will help teachers move beyond compliance or integration of strategies because campus and district leaders mandated them. The question then becomes, "how will my students benefit from using a specific strategy?" In thinking about the education community as a whole, once teachers have attended professional development training, instructional coaches and campus leaders will help teachers determine the desired student outcomes during the lesson planning process. Furthermore, instructional coaches will have to shift mindsets, as they no longer will observe teacher behaviors to determine if they are embedding the strategy correctly. They will review student outcomes and engage in a dialogue to help teachers realize that their actions directly impact student learning. For example, if students fail to respond using a provided sentence stem, then the conversation will focus on whether the teacher actually provided a stem for use and whether the teacher reinforced this expectation by reminding students to use the stem. Although middle school teachers documented the integration of strategies learned during professional development training into classroom practices through the creation of lesson plans and the implementation of a taught lesson, many factors affected the extent to which the new strategy was integrated into instructional approaches

Assessing for change. The focus of education reform efforts such as *Goals 2000:*

Educate America Act and the highly controversial *No Child Left Behind Act* was to create a culture where student progress drove instructional decision-making (Anthes, 2002; Heise, 1994). Because social studies teachers documented the integration of the QSSSA conversation strategy through formative assessment procedures, we are able to answer the following question: how do students exhibit what they know and are able to do? According to Marzano and Pickering (2001), formative assessments allowed middle school social studies teachers to conduct an in progress evaluation of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic development during a lesson, unit, or course of study to improve student attainment. This aligns with what Argyris and Schon (1996) call single loop learning, in that instruction is modified or changed in response to the unexpected results as evidenced by the formative assessment. As participants implemented the strategy, they recounted various opportunities to gauge if the strategy helped to identify student learning needs, both during and after the lesson.

A learning targets self-assessment process is a means of documenting the integration of new strategies. According to Moss and Brookhart (2012), learning targets are student-friendly descriptions of what the teacher expects a student to learn or accomplish in a given lesson. For example, with the QSSSA strategy, student responses served as concrete evidence of student learning. Although the learning target self-assessment process was used as a formative assessment to help students self-monitor new learning, we have yet to determine how to assess student acquisition of soft skills such as communication, which is purported as a benefit using the QSSSA conversation strategy. Documenting the integration of newly learned strategies through formative assessment was not done for the purpose of demonstrating how or whether the teacher used the new

strategy; rather, documentation was used to demonstrate the strategy's effect on student achievement.

Reflective Practice as a Vehicle for Instructional Change

The third and final theme of the study was reflective practice as a vehicle for instructional change. The study's findings confirmed that professional learning experiences that include elements of reflective practices, such as professional learning communities, provided middle school teachers a greater sense of self-efficacy. As the five middle school social studies teachers collaboratively worked to accomplish the task of integrating the QSSSA strategy, they were confident in their capacity to accomplish this task. Furthermore, a reflective practice model such as journaling provided middle school teachers an avenue to consider their own practice and the individual needs of their students.

All five participants were members of the Teaching American History Grant cohort for three or more years. As such, their perceptions of reflective practice as an element of professional development were constructed through this lens. Interestingly the five teachers struggled to make connections between their participation in the grant's learning opportunities and an abstract notion such as reflective practice. During conversations, participants would actually stare into the air and cautiously recall the various experiences and activities afforded by the grant. Permitting long silences in the conversation allowed individuals to uncover a great deal of insight; all but one participant, Mr. Luke, realized that the reflective practice models, such as lesson study, action research, and professional learning communities, were indeed elements of their professional development experience. This upholds both Ecclestone's (1996) assertion

that many models of knowledge support ideas about reflective practice and Beauchamp's (2006) argument that because reflective practice is perceived in multiple ways, lack of clarity undermines the power of reflective practice.

Professional learning communities are a powerful element of a professional development program. This reflective practice model is evidence of how a group of individuals with the same interests and goals can facilitate instructional change. How is this possible? The collaborative nature of a professional learning community eliminates feelings of isolation and helps develop a shared purpose. This idea supports Rayford's (2010) findings that as district leaders promoted reflective practice through professional learning communities, teachers developed a mutual purpose for instructional change.

As participants worked to incorporate the QSSSA conversation strategy, they sought out other participants in the study to dialogue and exchange ideas concerning implementation of the strategy and to determine next steps for the inclusion of the strategy in subsequent lessons. For example, because Ms. McClinton and Ms. Washington both teach at the same school, they shared resources and ideas about how to best integrate the newly learned strategy into their lessons on Dr. King's *I Have a Dream* speech. Although both teachers approached the lesson differently, they felt empowered to integrate the strategy into their individual processes and routines. Furthermore, Mr. Daily and Mr. Luke discussed "next steps" for the integration of the QSSSA conversation strategy. While Mr. Daily highlighted the notion that there is accountability in collaboration prior to participating in the intervention, Mr. Luke seemed to have discovered this idea after his participation in the study.

> Mr. Daily and I had a lengthy conversation the other day…we talked about how we can do it better…what recommendations can we make for the future…can we

move it to another part of the lesson cycle…

Because teachers worked collaboratively to determine next steps for the inclusion of the strategy into subsequent lessons, we can confirm that the professional development model included as an intervention in the present study will contribute to the sustainability of this powerful teaching practice. This corroborates the thinking of Petersen and Young (2004), that staff developments that provide supports and structures, such as a professional learning community, will help transfer theory into practice. This also supports findings from Isai's (2010) study, which indicated that collaboration in the form of a professional learning community accelerated transfer and mastery of the skills introduced in professional development sessions. However, Carlton (2010) asserted that teachers place more value on self-directed reflection than on more district- or campus-directed approaches to professional growth, such as professional learning communities.

Often the focus has been on the development of campus-based professional learning communities, and we fail to realize the value of those cohorts that overcome the physical boundaries of a large urban school district such as the district of study. Instructional coaches who support multiple campuses are at a greater advantage because, through their work, they can build a sense of community among the teachers whom they serve. Particularly, as professional training programs are rethought to provide for more job-embedded coaching, instructional coaches can tailor training for teachers to address the needs of each community. In addition, coaches may pair teachers within the community to help develop a sense of collegiality, in which teachers feel that they are all working toward the same goal and that they have the support of not only the coach, but also each other, to accomplish the shared goal. Most importantly, it alleviates a sense of

isolation, as a teacher might be the only Grade 7 Texas History teacher on a campus or even the only social studies teacher on a campus.

While professional learning communities primarily aided participants with lesson planning and implementing the QSSSA strategy into instruction, as an element of the professional development program included in the present study, a self-directed model such as journaling allowed participants to examine their own practices as well as the individual needs of students before, during, and after instruction. According to Holly (1989) and Peery (2005), this very notion links professional development and teaching, as practitioners pause to take notes during lessons and later analyze those notes for practice. It is almost impossible to journal about a taught lesson if some reflection does not take place during the lesson itself. For example, Charliss McClinton reflected on how she was more conscious of "jotting down notes" as she observed student responses during the lesson and how those notes contributed to her journaling process after the lesson was taught. She shared how she "zoomed in" on two reluctant students; she had always noticed their reluctance, but in writing about it she noticed that they "tried a little harder" during implementation of the QSSSA strategy and that she needed to "focus a little harder on how to get them on board." Schon (1983) contends that when the middle school social studies teacher reflects during the lesson, he or she becomes an investigator in the context of the lesson itself. Because there are limitations to reflecting-in-action, such as time and disruption of the teaching process, reflection-on-action is integral to the reflection-in-action process. Furthermore, this underpins Collin et al.'s (2013) suggestion that reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are part of a continuum.

As middle school social studies teachers engaged in a journaling process during

the present study, findings indicated that participants examined their teaching practices and determined the individual needs of their students given a focused set of journal prompts. The question then becomes, “who should provide the prompts for reflection?” Should professional development facilitators and trainers provide such prompts for reflection or should teachers develop these prompts based on the individual needs and interests of both teachers and students? Perhaps as professional learning communities set goals at the beginning of the school year, they might develop reflective questions to use throughout the year as journal prompts. These prompts should address the goals set forth at the beginning of the year. Marzano and Pickering (2001) stressed that one of the most effective strategies for students requires them to develop critical questions related to their new learning. We have to question whether the same principle applies to teachers, as we consider teacher-developed journal prompts.

The following is a review of a prompt included in the present study: “how did the QSSSA strategy enhance the lesson?” This prompt generated responses that discussed student engagement during the lesson, such as “students knew the process” or “everyone participated”, but it did not address student learning or teacher practice. We are better able to identify the individual needs of students if we include the following question: “to what extent did the share or the assess portion of the strategy allow you to measure student mastery of the learning targets?” Ms. McClinton’s reflection illustrated this best: “You begin to see your class as a group of individual students and not just an amorphous whole.” This very thinking marries reflective journaling and formative assessment.

As districts rethink professional development programs to marry the collaborative nature of professional learning communities and the self-directed elements of reflective

journaling, they might use discussion board platforms included in learning management systems to facilitate this process. Using teacher-generated prompts or journal prompts provided by professional development trainers, teachers might first respond to the question and, from there, others might provide a response to the post, state and defend an opinion, and make connections to prior knowledge. Districts might archive discussion posts to allow teachers to revisit topics as the need arises.

In addition, through the journaling process, teachers are able to examine teaching patterns and bring to the forefront those patterns and practices that are not beneficial to student learning and professional growth. Do I rely on the same strategy time and time again? Do I allow students who are English Language Learners opportunities to verbally interact with other students? In the case of the QSSSA strategy, participants found that, while the strategy was an excellent way to introduce students to the concept of structured academic conversations, it would not facilitate student interactions to exemplify a deeper understanding of content knowledge. This revelation affirmed Peery's (2005) thinking that, through journaling, we record patterns that help get to the root cause of the behavior instead of focusing on the behavior itself. Furthermore, Peery (2005) believed that, through an analysis of journal prompts, patterns emerge that assist with future planning. Establishing a professional development training program that includes reflective practice models, such as small professional learning communities and reflective journaling, allowed the new learning to extend beyond the training itself.

Suggestions for Future Research

In thinking about suggestions for future research, we have to consider the integration of the QSSSA strategy itself as well as the use of a process to include

professional development training, journaling, and classroom observations to gauge the integration of newly learned strategies into instructional practices. A future study might consider the effect of the QSSSA strategy on a special population of students, such as English Language Learners. The study might assess the extent to which a student is comfortable verbally interacting with other learners both before the integration of the QSSSA strategy into their classroom routines and after the strategy had been implemented over a period of time. This would generate a greater understanding of the effects of the strategy on student learning, particularly for special populations such as English Language Learners, the very group for which it is supposed to have the greatest effect (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011). Another suggestion for further research would be to use the procedures implemented in the present study to examine the integration of strategies learned during professional development training that is specifically targeted to schools with student achievement data that is consistently below local, state, and national standards. This would allow district and school officials to measure the effectiveness of professional development programs. Furthermore, using the same research questions and process included in the present study, a future research investigation might include participants who have never partaken in a sustained professional development opportunity such as the Teaching American History Grant, who have taught high school social studies courses, or who have taught social studies for two years or less. As a result, another point of view would be gained on the use of reflective practices to apply strategies learned through professional development to social studies instruction.

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Appendix A

Pre Interview Template

Pre Interview Template
Adapted (Rayford, 2010)

Name ____________________________ Gender_________ Date______________

1. What is your current teaching assignment?

2. How many years have you taught?

3. How many years did you participate in the Teaching American History Grant cohort?

4. Describe a typical professional development training offered by the district?

5. How do you describe your process of integrating strategies learned in professional development training into your instructional approach?

6. How do you document your process of integrating strategies learned in professional development training into your instructional approach?

7. What reflective practice models have the social studies department or the district offered as professional development?

8. What is your perception of reflective practice as an element of professional development?

Appendix B

Post Interview Template

Post Interview Template
Adapted (Rayford, 2010)

Name ____________________________ Gender_________ Date______________

1. How do you think the lesson went? What are some celebrations you'd like to highlight and what do you see are areas for growth?

2. How do you describe your process of integrating strategies learned in professional development training into your instructional approach?

3. How do you document your process of integrating strategies learned in professional development training into your instructional approach?

4. What is your perception of reflective practice as an element of professional development?

5. What is the value of journaling in incorporating strategies learned during professional development training into your teaching practices?

Appendix C

Invitation to PD

December 26, 2015

Dear Middle Social Studies Teacher

You have agreed to participate in a qualitative study examining how middle school social studies teachers document their process of self-reflection as they integrate instructional strategies learned in professional training into their social studies courses. Initially, you were informed of a commitment of seven hours to this study, two of which you will spend participating in professional development training. As such, we will conduct a staff development training highlighting structured conversation strategies during the third week of the six week grading period in which the study will take place.

The training details how to facilitate structured conversations. Structured academic conversations helps students make better sense of new content while building academic language (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). Furthermore, structured conversations help students retrieve prior knowledge and connect it to new learning. These conversations serve as scaffolds for writing and whole-group discussion (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011).

Please join us on January 2, 2015 11:30 a.m. at the Hattie Mae White Education Support Center in Room 2C10. You will need to bring your laptop as well as your scope and sequence document for your content area. I will provide a number of texts to support this process.

Contact me at mrogersw@houstonisd.org or by phone 713-556-6883 (work) or 281-703-1535 (cell) if you have questions or concerns.

Montra L. Rogers
Director Secondary Curriculum & Development—Social Studies

Appendix D

Reflective Journal Prompts

Reflective Journal Prompts
(Peery, 2005)

Journal Prompts Round 1
After the Professional Development Training:

- How will you incorporated the QSSSA strategy into your instructional plans? Explain.
- What aspects of the training did you find most useful as you work to incorporate this strategy into your instructional practice? Was it the strategy itself? Were the resources useful? To what extent did you find the planning session helpful?

Journal Prompts Round 2
After the Integration of Strategies Learned During Professional Development Training into Instructional Practices

- To what extend did the QSSSA strategy enhance the lesson? How did your students respond to the QSSSA strategy? Include any additional information you wish to add.
- What did you find most beneficial as you worked to integrate strategies learned during the professional development training into your lesson plans?

Appendix E

Professional Development Facilitation Guide and Supporting Material

Expected Outcomes:

By the end of the training teachers will:

- Experience a sampling of a lesson that includes the structured conversation strategy, QSSSA.
- Develop a lesson that includes the QSSSA strategy to allow students to engage in structured academic conversations.

BEFORE SESSION:		
Structured Conversations in Social Studies		
Activity Detail	**Resources**	**Notes**
Two Hours		
Introduce yourself and go over the objectives/outcomes for this session. **Setting the Context of our Work (5 minutes)** ❖ **Ask:** Before cell phones, when you asked someone their phone number, how did you remember it if you didn't have pencil/paper? ❖ **Say:** Most people would say, they repeated the number back to you. Let's look at what the research says about having students "speak" – in a structured way – and how it will impact learning. ❖ Student-to-student interaction focused on lesson concepts has been shown to have a significant effect on student achievement (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). ❖ Students who participated in discussions with other students about a topic showed a percentile gain of nineteen points over students who do not participate in discussions (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). ❖ Teachers tend to give low SES students fewer opportunities to talk about content than teachers of higher SES students. (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011). ❖ ELL students spend only 4% of day engaged in school talk and 2% in talk concerning content. (Seidlitz & Perryman,		

2011). ❖ In low track 8th and 9th grade classes, there is almost no effective dialogue. (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2011). **Talking without Depth** ❖ **Say:** In many classrooms, student talk is usually limited to checking learning of facts or procedures rather than to teach or deepen understandings. There are many strategies that offer large amounts of interaction and talking but they don't take students to deeper levels of thinking. Here are a few – see if these resonate: **Think-pair-share:** Usually this is requires quick, surface level answers and one turn apiece. They are also known as turn and talks. These aren't "bad" and are useful when you need to break up activities, direct instructions, etc. But they usually aren't utilized to create depth. **Small groups:** Don't let small groups fool you – are you asking students to build on another's ideas or are you just having them help each other to fill in a chart or are they just sharing their own answers? Many small group activities allow one student to dominate and do all the work. **Process Standards –** ❖ **Say:** Every content area has this same standard: Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to: analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing and contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations, making predictions, drawing inferences, and		

drawing conclusions; ❖ **Say:** We see these terms and understand that they are thinking skills. We submit that these skills are often best developed in conversation. **Say:** What are the advantages of conversations? **1)** They build academic language: People, especially children, internalize and develop language when they use it for real purposes. **2)** They build vocabulary: Using new words in authentic discourse is vital for lasting learning. When used in conversation and writing, a word becomes a familiar tool used to build ideas rather than just one more thing to memorize. **3)** They build communication skills: Many communication skills are not automatic to all students. Skills that we take for granted are often "hidden" until we make them visible and teach them. These skills can include: looking at the person you are talking to, leaning in, use gestures or expressions to signal understanding (or not), and taking turns speaking. These skills develop through practice. ❖ Argumentation skills, for example. Students can learn how to compare what they hear with a partner and how to formulate a response. They learn how to respectfully challenge another's ideas and respectfully respond to challenges to their own ideas. They learn how to come to agreement and synthesize ideas. ❖ Listening skills: conversation improves the ability to listen to academic messages. When expected to listen to a partner and respond and construct ideas, listening skills improve. They learn to interpret tone, expression, silence, and other conversation clues. ❖ Valuing talk and clarity: Students learn to		

value the process of talking with someone else about serious issues. They learn talk is powerful – it allows connection with others and understanding of their world. Students learn to strive to be clear. ❖ They build these critical thinking skills: understanding point of view, fostering creativity, developing focus on a topic, understanding content, cultivating connections, and finally, it helps teachers and students assess learning. **Structured Conversations (45 minutes)** ❖ **Say:** Look at the three questions displayed. How do I get my reluctant students talking? How can I make sure students are talking on task? How do I get students to use academic language? ❖ Take a moment and select a question that resonates most with you. What are your frustrations and successes with students? ❖ Discuss with a partner. **Manifest Destiny Lesson** ❖ **Say:** You will participate in part of a lesson on Manifest Destiny We aren't going through the entire lesson, because it is not about the lesson. You are going to go through two ways to use one strategy to have students engage in a structured conversation. ❖ **Say:** Take a minute to look at our learning targets for this lesson. **History Scene Investigation (Engage/Connect)** ❖ HSI – As you reveal each portion of the picture, have participants list what they see. (you may model if you like). The key is to keep it moving. After two quadrants have been revealed, stop and **Ask:** What do you think this scene is? Call on someone at random. Have participants snap if they agree. Then continue with the		

HSI – revealing the last two quadrants. **Say:** This painting is “American Progress” by John Gast, painted in 1872 for a travel brochure. **Say:** Look at this question: What American belief about westward movement is shown in this picture? Stand when you can answer this question. ❖ Have participants pair/stand back to back and then share, making sure they use the entire stem. **Give this instruction**: “Partners – be prepared to share your partner’s connection – listen and paraphrase back if need be.” Assess by cold-calling on a few to share responses. **Debrief** ❖ **Say:** Look back at the “Let’s Talk” routine. How did this activity incorporate “let’s talk?” ❖ Handout a completed graphic organizer. ❖ **Say:** We have completed a graphic organizer as students would have done in this lesson on Manifest Destiny. In the lesson, we incorporated two structured conversations using QSSSA. You already participated in the first one to model how to create a QSSSA as a hook or the engage/connect in the lesson cycle. ❖ **Say:** Take a moment and look at the organizer. Students would have circulated the room in a gallery walk and reviewed various pictures and text that give causes for westward expansion. You have an example of what they would have filled in. **Practice: Structured Conversation #2** ❖ **Say:** This structured conversation uses the new information students have gathered. This would be in the guided practice portion of the lesson cycle. This time, you are going speak using bounce stems. (Hand out the bounce stem cards).		

❖ If there is room, have participants stand in two rows, if not, have them talk to a partner. Model how to conduct this conversation. ❖ **Say:** You will have to model this with your students the first time, too. **Debrief** ❖ **Say:** What did we add to this conversation that helps facilitates structured conversation **Collaboration, Cooperation** ❖ **Say:** One of the biggest skills we need to teach students when having conversations is the skill building on a partner's idea and/or appropriately challenging it. ❖ **Say:** Students often "popcorn" out ideas without connecting to ideas of anyone else. In a conversation, the "next idea" should build on, connect to, or logically challenge what a partner has just said. It is not just a random ideas tossed out. It is the difference between "brick piling" and "building". ❖ **Say:** Many students (and us, too) simply throw out the first idea that comes to them and they defend it with all their might. What we need to EXPLICITLY teach, then, is the mind set of building, not competing. **Post these "rules"** ❖ **Say:** If we just plan a structured conversation without teaching students how to have them, we are going to be met with varying degrees of success. And what happens is, that we tend to allow the "good kids" opportunities to have conversations and not allow the "disruptive classes" to speak at all! Instead, I would like to offer this – let's teach the rules first! ❖ **#1 –** As you listen, listen for a point that best relates or focuses on the topic you		

are talking about. You can then agree or disagree with that point with your own idea/example. **#2 –** As you listen, link your partner's idea to your thoughts, what you have talked about in class, your own experiences, the text you have read, and examples. **#3 –** As you listen/talk, ask yourself this question: Is this idea relevant to the topic/question we are talking about? If you are not sure if it is relevant – say this: "I don't know if this fits, but what about…" or to a partner, "I'm not sure that fits, let's put that aside for now." **#4 –** You must be respectful and productive when challenging a partner's idea. (Use your bounce stems card) **#5 –** Be flexible. Build on each other's ideas! Keep the conversation going using "keep talking" tactics (Uh huh, Wow, Interesting, Hmm, Yes, Ok, I see, Go on, Really? Seriously?) **Frequently Asked Questions** ❖ **Say:** Here are some frequently asked questions concerning this strategy: ❖ I already conduct discussions by calling on students randomly in my class. Isn't that just as effective? Answer: This activity is more engaging because it requires 100% participation. When we select single students to answer – the rest of the class is passive, perhaps trying NOT to be noticed. This activity provides enough structure and support that all students can be successful. ❖ I have students that simply won't do anything! There may be some students that will try and resist at first. But again, by showing students that there is support so that they can be successful, we have found that students really enjoy the activity! With this kind of support and		

encouragement, even the most curmudgeonly of students will participate. ❖ I can't let my kids get up – they will be out of control. If this is an issue – place students in groups at the beginning. Put the visuals in a folder. Pass around the folders as each group completes a portion of the organizer. If you do not want students to get up for the structured conversation, have them share with a shoulder or face partner. You can tape down the bounce stem cards on each desk. ❖ I don't have technology in my room. The good news is, you don't need any. You need copies of the visuals or students can use a textbook. That's it. Show the district definition of rigor: ❖ Creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, is supported so he/she can learn at high levels, and demonstrates learning at high levels. **Ask:** How does this lesson meet the criteria for increasing rigor in the classroom? Show the IP rubric (I4 and I8) and ask: Look at the level 3 and 4 teacher – how does this lesson meet the indicators listed? Call on a few to share with concrete examples from the modeled activity. **Planning** ❖ Have teachers access the standards for an upcoming lesson based on their content area. ❖ **Say:** You task is to actually create a lesson that includes one structured conversation. You may use QSSSA, or QSSSA with bounce stems. ❖ **Revisit today's targets** **End Product/Closing** Teachers will implement a lesson that includes opportunities for students to engage in academic		

discourse through structured conversation.		

Structured Conversations in Social Studies

Welcome!

In today's session, we will:

- experience a part of a lesson that includes the structured conversation strategy, QSSSA.
- develop a lesson that includes the QSSSA strategy to allow for structured structured academic conversations.

Setting the Context: The Importance of Structured Conversations

- Student-to-student interaction focused on lesson concepts has been shown to have a significant effect on student achievement
- Students who participated in discussions with other students about a topic showed a percentile gain of nineteen points over students who do not participate in discussions

- Seidlitz, J., & Perryman, B. (2011). *7 Steps to a Language-Rich Interactive Classroom* (1st ed.). San Antonio, Texas: Canter Press.

Importance of Conversations, continued

- Teachers tend to give low SES students fewer opportunities to talk about content than teachers of higher SES students.
- ELL students spend only 4% of day engaged in school talk and 2% in talk concerning content.
- In low track 8th and 9th grade classes, there is almost no effective dialogue.

Zwiers, J., & Crawford, M. (2011). *Academic conversations: Classroom talk that fosters critical thinking and content understandings*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse.

Talking without Depth

- Does this resonate?

Is talk limited to checking learning of facts or procedures rather than to teach or deepen understandings?

During a Think-Pair-Share – are the students giving a quick, surface level answer with one turn per student? (This is a good strategy but not one that is utilized to create depth of understanding.)

Are small groups utilized by having students help each other "fill in" a chart, by sharing answers with each other and students fill in, or allowing one student to dominate?

Every Content has this same standard:

Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

- analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing and contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations, making predictions, drawing inferences, and drawing conclusions;

Advantages of Structured Conversations

1) they build academic language.

2) they build vocabulary.

3) they build communication skills including:

- argumentation skills
- Listening skills
- Valuing talk and clarity

4) they build these critical thinking skills: understanding point of view, fostering creativity, developing focus on a topic, understanding content, cultivating connections, and finally, it helps teachers and students assess learning.

Structured Conversations

- How do I get my reluctant students talking?
- How can I make sure students are talking on task?
- How do I get students to use academic language?

Learning Targets

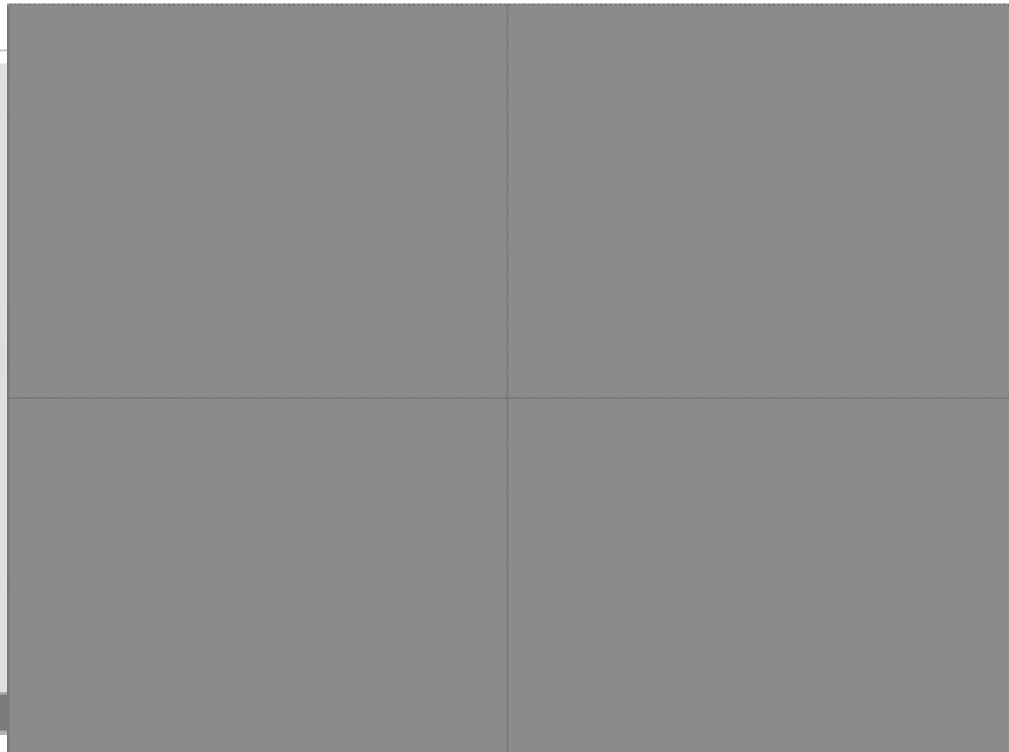
I can explain the political, economic, and social roots of Manifest Destiny. (8.6B)

I can analyze the relationship between the concept of Manifest Destiny and the westward growth of the nation. (8.6C)

History Scene Investigation-Engage/Connect

You have been called to a history scene investigation – an hsi in progress! As each portion of the scene is revealed, list what you see.

HSI – What do you think this scene is? Why?



Structured Conversation – QSSSA

Question: What American belief about westward movement is shown in this picture?

Stem: American's belief that _______________ was shown in this picture by...

Signal: Stand up when you can answer this question.

Share: Find a partner and stand back-to-back. Share with each other.

Assess: Call on random pairs to share their statements.

Check for Understanding

-]Where and/or how did this activity provide for structured conversation?”

Relationship Between Manifest Destiny and Westward Growth

Political	Describe the visual: *A map of the new state of Texas.* One political cause of westward growth was *the annexation of Texas* because *Americans felt that adding Texas to the U.S. would bring peace.*
	Describe the visual: *map of US before and after Mexican War* One political cause of westward growth was __*expansion of slavery*__ because... *the South wanted more slave states.*
Social	Describe the visual: *Mormons leaving Missouri* One social cause of westward growth was _*religious persecution*_ because... *the Mormons were forced to leave Missouri and move to Utah.*
	Describe the visual: One social cause of westward growth was ________________________ because...
Economic	Describe the visual: *A gold miner* One economic cause of westward growth was __*The Gold Rush*__ because... *everyone quit their jobs to get rich in the West.*
	Describe the visual: *wagon trains* One economic cause of westward growth was __*cheap farmland*__ because... *the government gave away land.*

Practice: Structured Conversation – Bounce Stems

Refer to the Relationship between Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion graphic organizer.

Q – What was one motivation for moving west?

S – Stand up when you can answer this question.

S – One political/social/economic cause of westward growth was ______ because…

S - Place students in rows facing one another. (line A and line B)

Teacher A reads one motivation for moving west from his/her graphic organizer using the sentence stem provided.

Teacher B responds using one of these stems:

"So what I hear you saying is…"

"Can you tell me more about…"

"I agree with your idea that…"

A – call on random pairs to share responses.

Debrief

- How did the activities we experienced help facilitate structured conversation?

Don't create a pile of bricks – Build!

Teach the Rules First!

#1 – As you listen, listen for a point that best relates or focuses on the topic you are talking about. You can then agree or disagree with that point with your own idea/example.

#2 – As you listen, link your partner's idea to your thoughts, what you have talked about in class, your own experiences, the text you have read, and examples.

#3 – As you listen/talk, ask yourself this question: Is this idea relevant to the topic/question we are talking about? If you are not sure if it is relevant – say this: "I don't know if this fits, but what about..." or to a partner, "I'm not sure if that fits, let's put that aside for now."

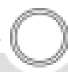
#4 – You must be respectful and productive when challenging a partner's idea. (Use your bounce stems card)

#5 – Be flexible. Build on each other's ideas! Keep the conversation going using "keep talking" tactics (Uh huh, Wow, Interesting, Hmm, Yes, Ok, I see, Go on, Really? Seriously?)

FAQs

- What's the difference between this strategy and my own classroom "discussion"?
- What if students won't participate?
- What about classroom management?
- What if I don't have technology in my classroom?

Connections to Rigor



Rigor is creating an environment in which each student

- is expected to learn at high levels,
- is supported so he/she can learn at high levels,
- demonstrates learning at high levels.

How does this lesson meet the criteria for increasing rigor in the classroom?

Connections to IP Rubric

I-4 Engages students in work that develops higher-level thinking skills			
The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 1 in this criterion:	*The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 2 in this criterion:*	*The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 3 in this criterion:*	*The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 4 in this criterion:*
• Teacher provides limited or no opportunities for students to engage in work that requires higher-level thinking skills. • Students do not employ higher-level thinking skills during the lesson.	• Teacher uses instructional tasks that require students to use higher-level thinking skills. • Teacher provides limited guidance and support to students in employing higher-level thinking skills. • Students employ higher-level thinking skills during the lesson but may not do so in a way substantially connected with the mastery of the lesson objectives.	• Teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies and questioning techniques to develop students' higher-level thinking skills.[1] • Teacher provides students the support and guidance (e.g., scaffolding) needed to exercise higher-level thinking skills. • Teacher embeds higher-level thinking skills into the lesson objective so that mastery of the objective requires students to meaningfully employ higher-level thinking skills. • Students employ higher-level thinking skills to engage with lesson concepts, questions, and tasks and [illegible]	*All indicators for Level 3 are met, and some or all of the following evidence is demonstrated:* • Students synthesize diverse perspectives or points of view during the lesson. • Students communicate their thinking and reasoning processes, and encourage their peers to do the same when appropriate.

How does this lesson meet the Indicators listed in I-4 and I-8?

I-8 Students actively participating in lesson activities			
The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 1 in this criterion:	*The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 2 in this criterion:*	*The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 3 in this criterion:*	*The following best describes a teacher performing at Level 4 in this criterion:*
• A significant percentage of students are disengaged or do not comply with teacher directions during direct instruction, independent practice, or group work.	• Students passively comply with the teacher's directions by completing the minimum requirements necessary to avoid redirection or other negative consequences from the teacher. • Students complete the minimum requirements during independent practice or group work.	• Students demonstrate engagement during direct instruction by participating in and completing instructional tasks, volunteering responses to questions, following teacher directions, and asking appropriate questions. • Students display active effort in learning activities during independent and group work.	*All indicators for Level 3 are met, and some or all of the following evidence is demonstrated:* • Students connect mastery of lesson objectives to their long-term academic and personal goals and interests.[1]

Possible sources of evidence for this criterion include, but are not limited to: classroom observations, reviews of student work products, and direct questioning of students during an observation.

Planning

Task: Plan at least ONE structured conversation for an upcoming lesson. You may use:

1. QSSSA
2. QSSSA with bounce stems

Revisiting Learning Targets

In today's session, we will:

- experience a part of a lesson that includes the structured conversation strategy, QSSSA.
- develop a lesson that includes the QSSSA strategy to allow for structured academic conversations.

Evaluation

I used to think ____________ about structured conversations but now I think _______________.

Appendix F

Lesson Planning Template and Exemplar

Essential Understanding:

Standards: **What will students know, understand, and be able to do?**

TEKS **ELPS**

21st Century Skills – Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Critical Thinking
Which skill(s) will students focus on in this lesson?

Key Vocabulary:

LESSON CYCLE (I-1, I-4, I-5, I-6, I-8)

WHAT WILL STUDENTS KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO?	HOW WILL I HELP STUDENTS?
1 Engage and Connect **(Describe in detail your plan to engage students in the lesson)**	**(Literacy Routine, Strategy, and digital tool(s) used)**
2 Introduce New Learning **(Describe in detail your plan to make sure students understand direct instruction content. Be specific)**	
3 Lead Guided and Independent Practice (I do, We do, You do) **(Describe in detail how you will lead students in practicing what they should know and be able to do at the end of this lesson. Be specific.)**	
4 Close the Lesson and Assess Mastery **(Describe in detail how you will check for understanding at the end of the lesson. What product will you assess?)**	

Lexington and Concord

TEKS:
8.4C Explain the issues surrounding important events of the American Revolution, including declaring independence, writing the Articles of Confederation, **fighting the battles of Lexington, Concord,** Saratoga, and Yorktown, enduring the winter at Valley Forge, and signing the Treaty of Paris of 1783.
8.29B Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause and-effect relationships, comparing and contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations, making predictions, drawing inferences, and drawing conclusions
8.30A Use social studies terminology correctly

ELPS:
C.3C Speak using a variety of grammatical structures, sentence lengths, sentence types and connecting words with increasing accuracy and ease as more English is acquired.
C.4D Use pre-reading supports such as graphic organizers, illustrations, and pre-taught topic-related vocabulary and other pre-reading activities to enhance comprehension of written text.
C.4G Demonstrate comprehension of increasingly complex English by participating in shared reading, retelling or summarizing material, responding to questions, and taking notes commensurate with content area and grade level needs.

CCRS:
1.B3 Analyze causes and effects of major political, economic, and social changes in U.S. and world history.
2.A2 Evaluate the experiences and contributions of diverse groups to multicultural societies.
4.A1 Identify and analyze the main idea(s) and point(s)-of-view in sources.

21st Century Skill: critical thinking

Learning Targets:
I can explain why the battles of Lexington and Concord were important to the American Revolution.
Language Objectives:
I will speak using sentence stems about the American Revolution.
I will use pre-reading supports such as Three Column Notes to understand the battles of Lexington and Concord.
I will show comprehension of text about the battles of Lexington and Concord be responding to questions.

Guiding Question and Essential Understanding:
Escalating protests often lead to conflict and violent outbreaks.
Why were the battles on Lexington and Concord critical in the American Revolution?

LESSON CYCLE (I-1, I-4, I-5, I-6, I-8)

How will I engage my students in learning? How will I lead my students to mastery?

	CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING (I-2)
Engage and Connect (__ min): **Do Now: Students will complete the Learning Targets Self-Assessment** Open Lexington and Concord PPT. Project **Slide 2** and explain that they have been called to a HSI in progress Project **Slide 3**. The image will be completely covered. As you reveal each portion of the picture, have participants list what they see (you may model if you like). The key is to keep it moving. After two quadrants have been revealed, stop and **Ask:** What do you think this scene is? Call on someone at random. Have participants snap if they agree. Then continue with the HSI – revealing the last two quadrants. **Ask:** What do you think this scene is? **Say:** This painting is "The Battle of Lexington" by Amos Doolittle. **QSSSA (Slide 4):** • **Say:** Look at this question: When fighting a war, does it matter who wins the first battle? Why or why not? • **Say**: Stand when you can answer this question using this stem: When fighting a war, it does/does not matter who wins the first battle because… • Direct students to write down their sentences and stand when they are finished. Wait for 100%. • Have participants pair/stand back to back and then **share**, making sure they use the entire stem. • **Give this instruction**: "Partners – be prepared to share your partner's connection – listen and paraphrase back if need be." • **Assess** by cold-calling on a few to share responses. **Introduce New Learning (__ min):** Explain that in today's lesson, students will be learning more about the first battles of the American Revolution.	

Have students download or distribute copies of Lexington and Concord Reading and Lexington and Concord Three Column Notes.

Procedure:

1. Direct students to the “Big Question” at the top of the Three Column Notes.
2. **Say**: Before we begin reading, we are going to complete a pre-reading activity.
3. Direct students to read the section titles from the reading. Point out that these are also found in the first column of the Three Column Notes handout.
4. **Say:** The first step is to turn the section titles into questions that we want to answer with the reading.
5. Model, using a Think Aloud, with first section title for the class.
6. **Say:** The first section title is “The King Responds to the Continental Congress.” Hmm… I can turn this into a question like: How did the king respond to the Continental Congress?”
7. Write the question underneath the section title.
8. As a class, turn the remaining three section titles into questions and write them in this first column.

Direct students to the images on Page 2 of the Three Column Notes.

Say: Look at these two images and list three things you see in the images in the middle column of your notes. Try to find one you think others won’t find.

Call on a few students to share.

Lead Guided and Independent Practice (__ min):

Guided Practice (__ min):

Say: Now we are going to begin reading the text about Lexington and Concord. We will be going section by section. As we read, keep the question you want to be able to answer in mind. For example, for this section, we wanted to be able to answer the question: How did the king respond to the Continental Congress?

Begin to read the first section aloud. Stopping after each paragraph to model your thinking (ex. “Hmm… I didn’t read anything that will help me answer my question, I better keep reading”, “Aha! That will help me answer my question”, etc.)

As a class, write the answer to the first question in the third column (ex. The king ignore the colonists' complaints and said the colonies were rebelling.)

Have students work in pairs to read and answer the question for section two of the reading.

Have students read the two remaining sections of the text and answer the questions that they created based on the reading individually.

Independent Practice (__ min):
Historical Marker
Students will create a historical markers commemorating the battles of Lexington and Concord. Markers will include:

- a summary of the battles
- an explanation of significance of the battles (Why are these battles important?)
- illustrations that support your writing

Provide sentence stems to scaffold student writing. Some possible stems include:

- The battles of Lexington and Concord began…
- The Patriots and the British were fighting because…
- The Patriots in Boston wanted ____ but the British wanted _______ so _______.

The British Army at Lexington/Concord wanted _____ but
the Patriot Militia wanted ____ so ___.

The battles of Lexington and Concord are important because…

Close the Lesson and Assess Mastery (10 min):

1. Exit Ticket: Why were the battles of Lexington and Concord critical in the American Revolution?
Stem: The battles of Lexington and Concord were critical in the American Revolution because…

2. Have students revisit the Learning Targets Self-Assessment and complete the post-assessment.

Appendix G

Secondary Social Studies Observation Tool

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">Secondary Social Studies Observation Tool</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Teacher</td><td colspan="3">Campus</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time Period</td><td colspan="2">Date of Lesson</td><td colspan="2">Date of /Debrief</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Goal</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Possible Strategies to Address Goal/Outcome</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Alignment to IP Rubric</td><td colspan="3">Criterion (From IP Rubric)</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="6">Lesson Observation</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Student Behavior #1</td><td colspan="2">Student Behavior #2</td><td colspan="2">Student Behavior #3</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="6">Lesson Debrief</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Commitment From Teacher (Try new strategy, Refine existing strategy, Evidence of Strategy in Lesson Plan, View Video, Reflective Journal, Reorganize):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Notes from Debrief/Next Step</td></tr>
</table>