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Teaching Content Methods in a High School PDS: Navigating Curricular Tensions

Richard Chant
University of North Florida, rchant@unf.edu

Brian P. Zoellner
University of North Florida, b.p.zoellner@unf.edu

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Abstract

As secondary methods instructors, we seek to integrate our courses within the context of our partner high school *and* to engage its staff in helping prepare our students. State and district mandates, however, often conflict with the pedagogy and content that guides our methods courses. In short, these mandates, whose ultimate goals are to increase student scores on high-stakes tests (especially at Title I schools), frequently do not align with the best practices described in contemporary educational research. In this article, we examine a highly rated unit plan developed by one teacher education candidate within a PDS-based methods course in regards to four theoretical frameworks: The National Council for the Social Studies *A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies* position statement, Frey and Fisher's *Gradual Release of Learning* model, the school district's curriculum guide, and the PDS site principal's explicit instructional messaging). The unit plan well supported assumptions posited by the NCSS position statement and the gradual release model, but offered less support for those required in the district curriculum guide or the principal's message. Our findings illustrate a marked tension between the conflicting frameworks emphasized in our partner PDS site with that offered in our site-based methods courses.

Keywords

professional development school (PDS), secondary content methods, school-university partnerships

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Introduction

Bayard High School (BHS) (pseudonym) and the University of North Florida formally initiated a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership in Spring 2018. Generally, PDS partnerships have four broad goals: preparing pre-service teachers in field-based contexts, supporting in-service teachers in partner schools, reforming teacher education, and improving student achievement (Adair Breault, 2013). These goals were evident in our early discussions and were shared by faculty and staff from both sites. Within the first semester, the partnership focused on planning for our interactions and placed a limited number of interns at BHS to conduct their student teaching. In the following year, the partnership activities expanded with the assignment of a professor-in-residence at BHS along with the instruction of site-based special methods courses that serve undergraduate education majors and professional education minors.

Embedding Methods Courses in Clinical Contexts

Shifting course delivery from the university campus to the field has demonstrated a number of benefits and provides a context for university students to implement theory into practice (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Teitel, 2003). Instructing field-based methods courses, however, does include challenges for university instructors, including the need to reconceptualize the curriculum to match the needs of the PDS partner and still offer methods courses grounded in research and professional literature. Often, content and methods courses are taught by faculty with vastly different pedagogical training and assumptions about teaching when compared to their PDS counterparts (Martin & Mulvihill, 2020). Snow-Gerono, Yendol-Silva, and Nolan (2002) identified four themes important to negotiating tensions when instructing methods in a PDS: learning how to create participatory culture; risk-taking and vulnerability; threads that unite; and tensions between theory and practice.

Although we faced challenges related to all four themes, this paper focuses on the tensions between theory (as examined in the methods courses) into practice (as manifested in the PDS site). In essence, we were interested in determining if, what we espouse as part of our on-site methods courses, was aligned to the instruction evidenced by the PDS teachers. We were also curious to determine if key effects of high-stakes testing were evident in our examination. These effects include the narrowing of curricular content to that being tested, the fragmentation of the subject area into test-related pieces, and the increased use of teacher-centered pedagogies (Au, 2007). Our findings suggest these effects were clearly evident in our experiences.

For our analysis we focused on the examination of a district level curriculum guide provided to all world history teachers within BHS. The curriculum guide (Figure 1) is a document generated by the district via administrator-charged teacher committee to identify units of study, connections to state-approved standards and benchmarks, learning objectives, questioning, vocabulary, and suggestions regarding instructional strategies and differentiation.

Figure 1

DCPS Curriculum Guide: The Columbian Exchange

Unit 4: The Global Age **Lesson C: The Columbian Exchange** **Class Periods: 3**	**Standards/Benchmarks:** **SS.912.W.4.12** Evaluate the impact of the Columbian Exchange on Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. **SS.912.W.4.13** Examine the various economic and political systems of Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, and England in the Americas.
Objectives: • Explain how European exploration led to the Columbian Exchange. • Identify and understand the impact that mercantilism had on European and colonial economies.	**Essential Questions:** • How did European exploration lead to the Columbian Exchange? • What impact did mercantilism have on European and colonial economies? • What were the consequences of Triangular Trade?
Higher Order Questions: • How did the Columbian Exchange transform the world? • How did the economic changes that resulted from the Columbian Exchange impact the different European countries? • How were natives affected by the Columbian Exchange? (Positive and Negative)	**Vocabulary** • Columbian Exchange • Inflation • Price revolution • Capitalism • Entrepreneur • Mercantilism • Triangular trade
Instructional Strategy Ideas: **Bell Ringer:** Students could make a list of things that they like and where they think they originated. Students could complete this as a Think-Pair-Share activity **"I Do"**: Teachers could model how to complete part of the Graphic Organizer below showing the students how to identify the important details of how the Columbian Exchange impacted the world using a variety of texts. **"We Do"**: Using a collaborative strategy such as "Read and Say Something" students could read Section 5 of Chapter 15 about the effects of global contact. Students could analyze how global contact impacted both the Americas and Europe. The teacher could need to model one of the categories to ensure student success. Then students could work together to complete the graphic organizer. (Additional sources of information may be necessary to complete the graphic organizer.) **"You Do"**: Students will answer the essential questions in their interactive notebook: How did the world change because of the Columbian Exchange? What is the significance of the Columbian Exchange?	**Differentiation Ideas:** Students could create a collage of all the things that changed because of the contact between different countries and summarize how the Columbian Exchange caused change in the world as a whole. Students could research the consequences of the Columbian Exchange politically, socially, and economically. After gathering data students could create a YouTube video entry describing how the Columbian Exchange impacted the world.

We used an Analysis Framework Table (Figure 2) to guide our examination of the curriculum guide. We developed the table as a method to see how the curriculum guide reflected the tenets of the quality social studies elements put for by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and Fisher and Frey's Gradual Release of Responsibility and Instructional Framework,

which is referenced in the curriculum guide as a suggested instructional framework to use when using the curriculum guide.

Figure 2

Analysis Framework Table

NCSS Elements of Powerful Social Studies Teaching and Learning (2016)				
Meaningful	**Integrative**	**Value-based**	**Challenging**	**Active**
Engaging, connects students with real-world situations	Draws on more than one discipline, subject, or skill set	Strengthens students' sense of democratic values and social responsibility	Incorporates different perspectives and draws on students' critical thinking skills	Participatory, requires high order processing and thinking about learning, leads to conclusion and both hands-on and minds-on.
Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework (Frey and Fisher, 2013)				
Focus Lessons	**Guided Instruction**		**Productive Group Work**	**Independent Learning**
Teacher establishes the purpose of the lesson	Teacher uses questions, prompts, and cues to facilitate student understanding (prefer small group based on instructional needs, but whole group can work)		Students work in collaborative groups to produce something related to the topic	Students apply what they have learned in and/or outside of class
Models his/her thinking	Teacher releases responsibility to students while providing scaffolds to ensure student success		Group work must involve students using academic language	Independent learning tasks are used as formative assessments to check for understanding and to identify needs for re-teaching
Purpose based on the expected learning outcomes (e.g., standards) & be clearly communicated to students			Students are individually accountable for their contribution to the effort	
Teacher modeling provides students with examples of the thinking and language required to be successful			Students have opportunity to consolidate their understanding	
Duval County Public Schools Curriculum Guide Constructs (DCPS, 2018)				
Essential Question	**Bell Ringer**		**Higher Order Questioning**	**Differentiation**
How did European exploration lead to the Columbian Exchange?	Students could make a list of things they like and where they originated.		How did the Columbian Exchange transform the world?	Students could create a collage of all the things that changed because of the contact between different countries and summarize how the Columbian Exchange caused change in the world as a whole.
What impact did mercantilism have on European and colonial economies?			How did the economic changes that resulted from the Columbian Exchange impact the different European countries?	Students could research the consequences of the Columbian Exchange politically, socially, and economically. After gathering data students could create a YouTube video entry describing how the Columbian Exchange impacted the world.
What were the consequences of triangular trade?			How were natives affected by the Columbian Exchange?	
			Students have opportunity to consolidate their understanding	
PDS Site Administrative Instructional Guidance (Summarized from Weekly Faculty Email Bulletins)				
Instructional Framework	**Pacing**		**Agenda**	**Student Centered**
Based on Gradual Release, but emphasizes order from "I do" to "we do" to "you do."	Gradual release pacing is quick in regards to releasing responsibility from teacher to students.		Daily agenda, minute by minute, to communicate the structure of the lesson to students.	Dialogue and classroom activity should be focused more on students and less on teacher.

We found that the curriculum guides served more than just as tools to help facilitate planning. Instead, PDS teachers, through their professional learning communities (PLCs), often employed the guides to identify the content to instruct and to determine how it should be implemented and assessed in the classroom. This practice limited what students had the opportunity to learn by emphasizing tested content over broader, more integrative topics. Lastly,

we often struggled with the more direct, teacher-centered pedagogies suggested by the guides and reinforced by district-based recommendations. Often, these pedagogies countered holistic, student-centered learning based on inquiry and engagement.

Although PDS partnerships are based on collaboration, teaching within the PDS site and that of the university are often isolated endeavors (Drago-Severson, 2006; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Martin & Mulvihill, 2020). This isolation notwithstanding, many teachers in PDS partnerships are suspicious towards theory and this can be manifested in the interactions between teachers and university faculty as well as between clinical and tenure-line faculty within teacher education programs (Adair Breault, 2013). This tension is not new by any means and was summarized by Stoddard (1993), who noted, "[…] we have a wisdom of theory that has not been widely accepted in practice and wisdom of practice constructed in an environment that has in many cases discouraged innovation and experimentation" (p. 8). Breault and Adair Breault (2012) identified succinct bias against university faculty within PDS sites. They suggested that teachers view university faculty as a relationship that is tolerated to one that is dismissed due to irrelevancy. Perhaps even more troubling, they conclude that site-based faculty often view their role in the partnership is to communicate the "real world" of schooling and to maintain control of the PDS curriculum to ensure that pre-service teachers obtained the right preparation for that world.

Campoy (2000) examined research regarding the type and quality of instructional methods found in PDS sites and concluded that teachers, with few exceptions, exhibit a transmission orientation to teaching. Although university faculty exhibited a larger range of instructional methods, the majority would be described as transactional. As Campoy noted:

> Herein would lie one of the greatest educational dilemmas of the PDS, because the university faculty wanted the students to observe and work with teachers who ascribed to their own transactional style of instruction. The faculty were frustrated when teachers did not exhibit, or quickly embrace, their transactional methods. (p. 84)

Campoy further illustrated that university faculty expressed that the PDS teachers' use of traditional pedagogy was an issue and questioned the benefit of placing university students within these contexts. University faculty wanted the teachers to limit their more transmission orientation and to adopt the transactional approaches that better align with those of the university faculty.

Complicating our instructional tension was the fact that BHS is a majority minority/high poverty school. According to Vasquez Heilig and Darling-Hammond (2008), these schools often bear the brunt of the accountability measures grounded in a high-stakes testing environment. There is growing evidence that suggests high stakes testing has led to a narrowed curriculum, increased teacher-centered instruction, and preoccupation with test preparation (Mueller & Colley, 2014). Furthermore, testing also influences teacher agency and how teachers are shaped by reform contexts and discourses, as well as how they resist and negotiate in order to create a place for themselves in both their schools and the reform climate (Buchanan, 2015). Perhaps most striking is changed teaching behavior as a result of accountability measures. These pressures have changed pedagogical processes from more student-centered, higher-level engagement to a teacher-centered pedagogy reflecting low cognitive levels and are highly managerial by design, where students have fewer opportunities to question or examine new ideas (Galton, 2007). Srikantaiah, Zhang, and Swayhoover (2008) found that teachers employed in

schools that were targeted for improvement were found to ask more closed-response questions than schools not under similar pressures and teachers in the latter environments were engaging students in significantly higher amounts of hands-on learning. Lipman (2004) collectively refers to these responses as an apartheid curriculum as they lead to significant amounts of social inequity between schools with explicit testing pressures versus those without such pressures. White students and those from middle class communities who possess the cultural capital valued by schools are more likely to gain access to college and earn higher status through higher paying careers. Conversely, minorities and students from lower SES communities will obtain lower-skill and lower paying careers (Berliner, 2011). Berliner further argues that this differential access to curriculum reinforces the current unequal social structures so prevalent in the United States.

Our Experiences

As noted, we were certainly experiencing three common attributes related to high-stakes testing: the narrowing of curricular content to that being tested, the fragmentation of the subject area into test-related pieces, and the increased use of teacher-centered pedagogies. We found that this message was most prevalent in the district curriculum guides and, in part, supported by the communication from the PDS administrative team to faculty. The curriculum guides identify various units of instruction by topic (that are aligned to state mandated standards and benchmarks) and indicate the amount of instructional time that is allocated for teaching the selected content (for example, teachers are directed to use three 90-minute blocks for the unit). In addition, learning objectives are identified that are to be used for the instruction and two sets of questioning domains are specified for inclusion. The first domain refers to the essential questions (questions often aligned to the concepts included in the required tests) and the second refers to the required higher-order questions (generally these are broadly focused and skill-oriented rather than essential questions). The curriculum guide also includes required vocabulary, again aligned to the terminology that students will likely encounter during testing. The final two categories outline instructional processes and are suggested as "ideas" versus mandates or requirements. The first of these centers on suggested instructional procedures, including ideas for bell ringers and suggestions for incorporating Frey and Fisher's (2009) Gradual Release of Learning model by identifying suggestions for the "I do, we do, you do" components. The second instructional category illustrates differentiation strategies that may be used by the instructor.

The messages received from the administration team appear through different contexts, however, they are often conveyed during departmental and PLC meetings and within the weekly email communications. The latter included an instructional focus providing reminders and recommendations regarding the implementation of instructional supports. Although these varied in content, there was a focus on the instructional framework (the Gradual Release of Learning Model), pacing of lessons, posting of instructional agendas, and the importance of student-centered activities.

We instructed four secondary-level special methods courses during the fall semester at BHS, including English/ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. During the planning stages, teams from both partners met and discussed a range of possibilities regarding methods inclusion within the PDS. Although no definitive model of interactions was adopted, it was assumed that each methods instructor would engage with BHS faculty in ways that benefited both site-based teachers as well as the university methods students. We supported this model as this was a new partnership and a more organic, emergent process would be appropriate to the

developing nature of our interactions. Implementing this model proved more challenging than anticipated. A large factor reducing our interactions was the instructional schedule employed by the district, which uses an A/B 90-minute block schedule offering four blocks of instruction each day. This schedule proved difficult in that we instructed the methods courses mid-day and finding time to meet as teams was difficult given that teachers were often instructing when we were available and we were teaching our methods courses when they were available. The A/B schedule added more complexity in that A days offered different interaction opportunities than B days, meaning that who we interacted with and when in one week would be different in the second week and vice versa. This proved challenging in that the time required for building connective relationships, for teachers as well as for students, was difficult to find.

As a result, how each methods instructor interacted with partner faculty varied. However, we can say that any interactions across all four subject areas with PDS site teachers and their students were limited in scope and depth – from no formal interactions to varied efforts to engage university students with the PDS curriculum representing their respective programs. This article illustrates the latter in regard to the social studies methods course. The course is guided by the following description:

> This course is designed for the quality teaching of social studies at the secondary level. As such, the course will enable you to understand, examine, and utilize both traditional and contemporary theory of social studies instruction. These processes support the candidate disposition to value complex thinking grounded in research, practice-centered teaching and learning. The course is also constructed to support your efforts at designing and developing appropriate instructional practices grounded in the aforementioned theory that can be applied in diverse settings and with students with diverse backgrounds, interests, and abilities.

The course included 17 students with eight being social studies education majors and the remaining nine being professional education minors – students who majored in content disciplines across the social sciences and completed 18-credit hours in education courses, including the methods course. The eight education majors were completing a second 50-hour field component simultaneously along with the methods courses, with some students placed at BHS and others at a second high school location in a neighboring school district.

The university social studies methods instructor had two former program students employed at BHS and had already established previous relationships with each – including using both individuals as mentor teachers for interns the previous semester. This connection served as an entrée with the social studies department (and department chairperson) for the fall 2018 semester. As this was a new partnership, an effort was made to expand faculty capacity to involve PDS teachers not previously engaged with university faculty and who were not charged with supervising the education majors during their current field experiences. In conjunction with the departmental faculty, it was decided that the nine professional education minors would individually develop a unit of instruction applicable to the standard world history course (majors developed instruction appropriate for their field classroom). The world history course used a district-based assessment in lieu of the state-required test found in other social studies courses, allowing for more planning flexibility that might counter the more narrowed curriculum found in state-tested and advanced placement courses – important in regard to the goals of the social studies methods course.

The unit selected was based on the Columbian Exchange (a topic that examines the positive and negative effects of European exploration and colonization of the Americas) and would not be instructed until early the following semester. This was intentional as it was hoped that the unit plans would be provided to the world history teachers to use as a resource in their own teaching of that unit. The district curriculum guide and the corresponding textbook chapter on the exchange served as the initial planning elements for the university students. However, the constructs established in the course would serve as the primary guidance for developing the instructional unit and would also provide the framework for assessing students' efforts – this was a non-negotiable established by the methods course instructor and was the first indication of the curricular tensions that would develop that semester.

As methods instructors, we strive to engage students with the professional constructs that support quality teaching and learning. In the social studies methods course, these are established by both the professional literature as well as the theory established by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). As our programs are state-approved licensure programs, we are also obligated to ensure state-level mandates are met within program experiences. Although we often question a number of state mandates in regard to appropriateness, we still have an obligation to ensure our students meet them. This is not the case with district or even site-based requirements and raises interesting tensions between what we deem as important versus what our partners deem important – and these are not always congruent.

Illustrating the Tensions

We began developing an impression in the early weeks of the semester that suggested there existed a disconnect between the goals of the methods courses and what was occurring in the PDS classrooms. This gap seemed to emerge from what we knew about schools under pressures related to high stakes testing: a narrowed curriculum and more teacher-centered processes. This impression was prompted by a couple of sources. University students conducted fieldwork at BHS and formally reflected on their experiences as part of the methods courses and a number of these insights supported our concerns. Additionally, as the university faculty became more intertwined with BHS, we had opportunities to observe and participate in various meetings. These meetings, at times including district administrators, consistently targeted messages about student academic performance, learning gains, and increasing test scores and to remain consistent in using district models. The importance of the latter was evident, as we saw the influence that the district curriculum guides had on teachers' instructional planning and procedures. This was true with the world history course and the guide, along with the associated textbook, served as the two main resources for planning and instruction – contradicting more comprehensive planning models emphasized in the social studies methods course.

As our concerns grew, we raised an interesting question: Is what our students are charged to do in their methods courses compatible or even applicable in the classrooms at BHS? Understanding that question became the impetus for this project. To help answer that question, the social studies instructor used the unit plan project as evidence to determine the congruence between the products constructed by the methods students and the curricular frameworks that guided instruction (both professionally and within the district/PDS site).

Included in our analyses were four frameworks (see Analysis Framework Table). The first framework analyzed served as a key foundation for instructional planning within the methods course: A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies (2016) – a

position statement generated by the NCSS. This statement identifies five elements represented in authentic and powerful social studies teaching and learning: meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active.

We were also aware of the role that Frey and Fisher's (2009) Gradual Release of Learning model played in the district's curriculum frameworks and wanted to include this model within the analysis of the unit plans as we noted that the "I do, we do, you do" processes are promoted in the district's curricular framework. We included the model's four main constructs as well as eight additional subsets of the model identified by Frey and Fisher (2013). Interestingly, how the district interprets the gradual release model (and how that interpretation gets manifested at the site level) differs from the original framework, particularly in the way the district supports a linear view of the components. The district emphasizes that instruction should begin with a focus lesson that illustrates the purpose of the instruction for the students, followed by the release of responsibility from the teacher, to the whole group of students, and then to the individual. The timing of the release components is also stressed: the teacher (I do) does less than the whole group (we do), which does less than the individual (you do). The district's interpretation is often conflicting with our planning components in methods courses. For example, the use of inquiry to pique a sense of curiosity among students about the topic under study would counter the district's interpretation, despite it being a strategy that aligns with certain subject areas and can support learning. Frey and Fisher (2009) caution against the district's error, when stating, "[…] we also want to emphasize that this is not a linear process and that teachers can implement the components in ways that are effective for their own outcomes." (p. 20).

The district curriculum guide for the Columbian Exchange was included as another framework. This was important as it serves as the initiation point for teacher planning at BHS and was provided to the methods students as a curricular resource. Finally, we included our interpretation of the main instructional messages provided by the weekly email sent to BHS faculty. These included an emphasis on the instructional framework (the Gradual Release of Learning Model), pacing of lessons, posting of instructional agendas, and the importance of student-centered activities.

For our analysis we used the highest rated unit plan from the course. Methods students used the planning model within the social studies methods course, which incorporates a divergent planning model and requires rationale building and conceptual mapping to generate objectives and subsequent procedures for the lessons. In addition, the five NCSS authentic and powerful elements for teaching and learning were used as planning constructs and served to guide the evaluation of the unit plan. The district curriculum guide for the Columbian Exchange provided the standards and benchmarks for the instruction as well as the timing of the plan (three 90-minute block lessons) – but the guide provided no other requirements and only served as a planning resource. Methods students were not provided the PDS administration's instructional messaging found in the weekly email sent to BHS faculty.

Our Findings

The frameworks (the NCSS A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies position statement, the Gradual Release of Learning model, the district curriculum guide, and the PDS site principal's instructional messaging) were examined through the Analysis Framework Table to determine how the high scoring unit plan reflected the contents of each

document. We employed a document analysis process (see Bowen, 2009) to categorize and code information in a manner that supported our conclusions (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

As expected, the NCSS elements were the most represented of the four frameworks, given its emphasis in class as a planning tool and its use, in part, to evaluate the unit plan. Each of the three lessons in the sample unit evidenced instructional practices representing all five NCSS elements, with two of the elements (meaningful and integrative) having three procedural steps within a single lesson and three of the elements (meaningful, challenging, and active) having two procedural steps within a single lesson. The objectives (and related procedures) in the sample unit are extensive, blending numerous knowledge and skill-oriented objectives. Whereas the objectives in the district curriculum guide are limited to one knowledge and one skill-oriented objective (see Table 1 for all objectives found in both the unit plan and the district guide).

Table 1

Lesson Objectives Comparison: Sample Unit Plan Versus District Curriculum Guide

Sample Unit	District Curriculum Guide
Knowledge Objectives:	Knowledge Objectives:
1. Students will identify the motives for European expansion, conquest, and exploration.	1. Explain how European exploration led to the Columbian Exchange.
2. Students will recognize the consequences of the Triangle trade with a direct emphasis on flora and fauna.	
3. Students will identify the impact of the Columbian exchange on Native Americans and Africans.	
4. Students will recognize the effects of the Columbian exchange on Native Americans and Africans.	
5. Students will explain how war and disease contributed to the demise of Native American populations.	
6. Students will explain the history of the First Coast's contact with Europeans.	
7. Students will distinguish the differences between pre-Columbian and modern Florida.	
8. Students will illustrate the Timucua natives' complicated history with Europeans.	

Skill Objectives:

1. Students will evaluate the European perspective on expansion and exploration.
2. Students will analyze primary sources and use them to draw conclusions about the intentions and impacts of the Columbian Exchange.
3. Students will analyze primary sources and use them to draw conclusions about the impacts of the Columbian exchange on non-Europeans.
4. Students will be able to distinguish how multiple perspectives illustrate the same event differently.
5. Students will apply secondary sources to supplement the content within primary sources.
6. Students will construct a catalogue the First Coast's history with the Columbian Exchange.

Skill Objectives:

1. Identify and understand the impact that mercantilism had on European and colonial economies.

Meaningfulness was established in Lesson 1 of the unit plan and acts as a mechanism to gain interest of students without indicating the purpose of the lesson (supporting inquiry and contracting the district guide and administration messaging). Students were able to personalize the lesson by conducting a product survey of their own refrigerators in an attempt to link the modern-day food impacts of the exchange. This analysis extends to an examination of food that Americans (misleadingly) portray as part of traditional Thanksgiving celebrations as well as an actual dinner consumed by students. The level of meaningfulness and related analysis is deep and contrasts to that found in the district guide: "Students could make a list of things that they like and where they think they originated." This district guide failed to require the personalization that was demonstrated in the lesson.

Although value-oriented objectives were not identified in the sample, it is evident that the university student is targeting the controversial aspects of the interactions that occurred as a result of the exchange and doing so through higher-order processing. For example, learners identify how the Europeans implied a superiority and sophistication above the indigenous natives by completing a comparison analysis of primary source drawings of Columbus versus those of natives completed at the time of the exchange. Learners are challenged to determine how these depictions reflect the conquistador narrative of personal glory and fame. This complexity is not captured in the curriculum guide, where explorer impact on the native population is guided within the higher order questions section that includes the following: "How were natives affected by the Columbian Exchange (positive and negative)?" These contrasts continued throughout the analysis of the NCSS elements and are, perhaps, most striking when considering the challenging element. Here the sample uses a series of primary and secondary sources for greater student

engagement. Although not guided in a structured manner, the learners are still challenged to expand their understanding of the broad impacts of the exchange on the people of the Americas – both then and now. Sources included texts from the early 1900s on the importance of the potato; journals from the 1500s ridiculing indigenous languages; narratives illustrating the cultural differences between explorers and indigenous peoples regarding the role of nature in the human experience; and photographs form the 1800s of natives using horses to illustrate how they adapted a European animal to benefit their existence. The sample unit reflects a sense of purpose and includes varied and rich resources to support that purpose, these resources are not identifiable in the district curriculum guide.

An interesting finding of our analysis relates to the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. As this model is not examined within the methods course, it was expected that the sample unit plan would not fully, if at all, support its components. However, this was not the case when using Frey and Fisher's description of the model. All three lessons included the model's four components: Focus Lessons, Guided Instruction, Productive Group Work, and Independent Learning – although the latter was the most limited of the four. A key emphasis of the model is ensuring that teachers release their support from high to low levels and, eventually, no support. That assumption may be simplistic, but Frey and Fisher include that suggestion to counter how learner support is often manifested in classrooms: The teacher provides/transmits information and the students are expected to master that content. The gradual release model suggests modeling by the teacher and practice by the students, but as noted, not in any linear order. It is up to teachers to determine how to model and when to release based on learner needs and the nature of the subject. In our analysis, the non-linear emphasis enabled the sample unit to strongly reflect the model's four main components. The lessons' purposes are always examined, but often arrive at a later point in the instruction, usually in a manner that links with an inquiry process to engage students. Guided instruction in the sample unit is limited, but each lesson does provide aspects of teacher modeling that guides students when they are interacting with their peers. The latter, defined as productive group work in the model, is highly evident in the sample plan and by all accounts, is the most used of the model's four components. The last, independent work, is the least represented as only two of the lessons emphasize independent student work. Two of the eight subsets we included in the analysis, students were held individually accountable for their peer contributions and independent tasks were used as formative assessments, were not evident at all within the unit sample. Otherwise, the sample unit plan met all of the other components of the model.

We have alluded to the role of the curriculum guide as a comparison to the NCSS elements, above. However, a more detailed analysis illustrates some lack of alignment between the unit plan and district guide. The essential and higher order questions are included in the sample unit plan lessons. A bell ringer, a five to ten-minute activity that opens a lesson, was required, however, it is not used in any of the lessons of the sample unit. This was expected as the social studies methods instructor stressed that initial engagement of learners is critical, but does not need to be prescribed as a short, contrived pre-lesson activity. Instead, lessons should immediately reflect meaningfulness, engagement, and purpose to personally connect students to the content under study. The district's suggestion for differentiation of instruction is also not evident within the sample unit and no reference to differentiation is made in the sample. Of the eight vocabulary terms/phrases identified in the district guide, only triangular trade is referenced in the unit plan, although at multiple points.

Of the four PDS administration instructional foci, only two of the four were evident in the sample plan. The requirement that the gradual release framework be a linear process of "I do, we do, you do" was not used within the sample. Although all three aspects of the release were evident in all lessons, the order varied based on the instructional and content needs. Two of the three lessons did include quick release of responsibility, but a third did not and instead sectioning the lesson into three main 20 to 25-minute sections not including introduction and closing processes. The third instructional message related to a daily agenda and it was emphasized that a minute-by-minute agenda be used for all instruction. This was not evident and the sample unit did not share or illustrate any agendas for the learners. Student-centered strategies, however, were highly evident, with two of the three lessons allocating more time for student-centered activity than teacher-centered instruction.

What We Have Learned

The instructional alignment gap between the PDS context and what we emphasize in methods courses is noteworthy when examining the frameworks that guide instruction. This clearly was a one-way analysis in that we measured a university student's product against the frameworks and did not conduct a similar analysis with existing BHS unit plans. The latter would likely illustrate additional findings but would add a teacher-oriented evaluative context to this work – something we want to avoid.

The professional framework established by the NCSS (and well supported throughout the literature) is difficult to manifest in the PDS site given the extent of pressures from the district on BHS, its administration, and teachers. Courses at BHS seem to share two of the attributes of those found in schools under increased testing pressures: narrowing of the curriculum into test-related areas and the increase of the use of teacher-centered pedagogies as a result of time and pacing concerns. The NCSS elements guide the teaching and learning of social studies in a resource rich, high-engagement manner. This type of teaching is deliberative, designed for students based on their interests and needs, and is time intensive. Sizer (1992) warned of this when using the phrase, "less is more," when considering the purpose and scope of the knowledge taught in schools. Our feeling is that this is exactly the kind of approach that a high-need, turn-around school should embrace as opposed to increased academic structure, reduced curricular freedom, faster pacing, and teacher-centered pedagogy – although we suspect our thinking is not widely embraced by those charged with improving school and learner performance when the measures used are standardized tests.

We were surprised by the high degree of alignment between Frey and Fisher's gradual release model and the sample unit plan. Too often, it seems, the model is misinterpreted as a linear process that begins with the teacher and ends with the individual learner. At times, that approach may make sense given the learning objectives and the nature of the content. Mandating a linear requirement, however, is antithetical to the model's design and by having such requirements, exacerbates the tension with well-adopted frameworks such as the NCSS. In our case, the meaningful and value-based attributes associated with good social studies teaching and learning is stifled if the model limits inquiry and student curiosity – the case with the district-based guide and, in part, the administration's message. Flexing here might allow the two sides of the partnership to find some common ground. The Gradual Release of Responsibility model is part of the explicit district curriculum, is used to structure curriculum guides, and is emphasized within the district's professional development activities. Clearly, it is an important resource.

However, the district's interpretation does not reflect the intent of the model's designers and that is risky as the benefits of the model are mitigated and, perhaps worse, counter good pedagogy. It does, however, provide a space for negotiating a revised interpretation of the model. Our sample plan illustrated that teaching embracing NCSS theory can also support the gradual release model – they are not exclusive – but it is going to take dialogue to help enact that change and we're not confident that can occur at the PDS-site level given the school's need to follow district guidelines and stay on the plan. We have room to move, too, as university partners. The gradual release model is not emphasized in our programs as we've been cautious of its implementation within the district and feel it is inappropriate based on their interpretation. Our work in the fall semester, though, suggests there may be a shared interest with the model. If the district can reexamine the model's intent and support a revision on its implementation, we are more likely to include the model explicitly in our curriculum.

Although we may be able to bring light on these issues, the heavy discussions and related negotiations will likely need to be addressed at a higher level in the district and in our college. In the end, we have to do what is right by our students and those they serve. Our PDS partner has their students and learning as their top priority, it is commendable and expected. The tensions illustrated in our experiences are not uncommon to PDS partnerships. Doing right by our students means that we may counter the actions of our partner, and vice versa. "Doing right" is an interesting construct in that it is more absolute than relative and finding compromise is made more difficult when beliefs and resultant practices are absolute, there is just less room for negotiation. Hopefully, we can overcome these challenges so that doing right by our students is a shared mantra with a shared practice.

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