Teachers’ beliefs and implementation of historical literacy pedagogy in three Advanced Placement United States History classrooms.

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One paradigm of history instruction is teaching students discipline-specific literacy practices in the social studies classroom. Being historically literate helps prepare students to be informed citizens. This paper examines what three Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH) teachers believe about historical literacy and how their beliefs influenced their implementation of historical literacy pedagogy in the history classroom.

In the current high-stakes, accountability-focused curriculum, the idea of teaching discipline-specific practices in social studies classrooms continues to be one of the prevalent pedagogies in preparing students to function in the world and be productive, active citizens (Goldberg, 2011). Unlike the “memoriz[ation of] facts and birth-date deaths without learning about the time period, the people themselves, and the challenges they faced [which] dumbs down history [and] limits young people’s understanding of their role as citizens in a democratic society” (Goudvis & Harvey, 2012, p. 52), being historically literate helps prepare students to be “critical patriots and informed voters” (Nokes, 2013, p. 12). The National Council for History Education (2006) posited:

History education must be a vital and integral component of every citizen’s school experience. Historical literacy represents an important link between the language arts skills mandated by state examinations and the kind of active civic engagement that has been demanded by our political leaders. (n.p.)

Thus, historical literacy helps students understand their roles in democratic society in our interdependent global society (Duncan, 2011; Goldberg, 2011).

Nokes (2010a) defined historical literacy as “the ability to negotiate and create interpretations and understandings of the past using documents and artifacts as evidence” (p. 66). History is interpretative and there are multiple accounts of one historical event (Monte-Santo, 2011; Nokes, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013; VanSledright, 2002a, 2002b). The historian examines different perspectives and events and constructs an understanding of the past using the primary and secondary sources available. Students in a classroom, which values historical literacy, become part of a community of practice, where they learn how to negotiate various texts valued by historians (e.g., primary source documents, secondary source documents) and come to their own conclusions about what happened (Nokes, 2010a, 2010b, 2013).

Historical literacy involves not only the learning of historical events but also the use of interpretative reasoning (Perfetti, Britt, Rouet, Georgi, & Mason, 1994) in classroom instruction. Bruner (1960) and Schwab (1962) addressed the structure of the discipline, another component of historical literacy. Bruner (1960) noted education serves as a means of training well-balanced citizens, and the goal of education is the understanding of the structure of the discipline. Teachers
teach a discipline not to produce little libraries on the discipline but to get students to think like a historian, to take part in the process of knowledge getting (Bruner, 1960).

Being historically literate is also evident in the tenants of democratic education. Bennis (n.d.) noted “Democratic education sees young people not as passive recipients of knowledge, but rather as active co-creators of their own learning” (n.p). The Ontario Ministry of Education (as cited in Lévesque, 2010) noted, literacy is an “essential tool for personal growth and active participation in a democratic society” (p. 42). A historically literate person is also a reflective thinker—one who actively constructs knowledge after giving the subject serious and considerable thought (Dewey, 1933). Thus, a historically literate individual simply does not accept someone else’s interpretation of history rather a historically literate person actively uses evidence from multiple sources to construct a personal understanding of what occurred. VanSledright (2011) concluded that teaching historical investigation to students is a way to foster citizenship.

Allowing students to take an active role in their learning can also contribute to understanding. In exploratory learning, otherwise known as inquiry-based learning or discovery learning (Barnes, 1992a, 1992b; Thornton, 2005), knowledge is rich and multidimensional and students do not passively accept what the teacher is saying, instead they come to their own conclusions using the evidence in front of them. In exploratory or discovery learning, there is interaction and talk in class, students are engaged in a discipline, students are able to voice their opinions, strategic thinking occurs, and students serve as the knowledge creator as opposed to knowledge consumer (Harvey & Daniels, 2009).

Thornton (2005) noted, “The most effective learning of content stems from engaging methods” (p. 82). In an inquiry or discussion-driven lesson, the role of the teacher is not to lecture rather, the role is to “stimulate and direct student curiosity” (Thornton, 2005, p. 84). However, this discussion method is not frequently used in the social studies classroom. Nystrand, Gamoran, and Carbonara (1998) found “discussion averaged only half a minute per class period” in 48 social studies classes (as cited in Hess, 2002, p. 10). In addition, the American Historical Association’s Statement on Excellent Classroom Teaching of History (2008) specified students “be given frequent opportunities for discussion and writing in order to learn to practice the art of interpretation and to see the implications of their own analysis” (n.p).

Effective history teachers also acknowledge the uniqueness of the skills needed to conduct historical inquiry and thus, strive to understand them (Roberts, 2010). This distinctiveness is evident in the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and the Technical Subjects. Major components of the standards include the emphasis on complex text, informational text, and using information as evidence in writing (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). For example, under “Key Ideas and Details” in the Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, eleventh and twelfth grade students must be able to “cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole” [emphasis added] (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 61) whereas ninth and tenth grade students must be able to “cite textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information” [emphasis added] (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p.61). Sixth through eighth grade students must be able to “cite specific textual evidence to support analysis or of primary and secondary sources” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a, p. 61). Therefore, in the grades 6-12 standards, the focus is on disciplinary literacy, specifically the different ways to read and write in various disciplines (International Reading Association Common Core State Standards [CCSS] Committee, 2012; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

With the adoption of the CCSS across most of the United States, it is important to examine in-service teachers beliefs regarding discipline-specific practices and how those practices are enacted in the school curriculum. Moje (2008) argued literacy research in the secondary schools should be revamped to focus on literacy practices in different disciplines, as opposed to content-
area literacy strategies. In particular, she posed the question, "What does it mean to engage in literate practices in disciplines or subject areas?" (p. 99). Therefore, she posited that literacy instruction in secondary classrooms should be reconceptualized where students are taught proper discourses, have access to authentic texts, and are taught the practices found in disciplinary study.

As noted by Seixas (2006), "Primary sources may reveal information about the (conscious) purposes of the author as well as the (unconscious) values and worldview of the author" (p. 5). Historical literacy, as explained by the National History Education Clearinghouse (2012) involves "learning how to read, question, contextualize, and analyze these [primary] sources" (n.p.) in order to construct a historical narrative. Historical narratives cannot be called historical narratives unless they are supported by evidence from primary and secondary source documents. Without evidence, historical narratives simply become stories, works of fiction about a particular event, person, or time-period.

Anthony and Miller (2013) postulated one way to make "social studies instruction more rigorous, more student focused, and more authentic" is to develop students' historical thinking capabilities (n.p.) by incorporating primary sources into classroom instruction. This enables teachers to teach the detailed study of a historical event. Thus, as Wineburg (2005) proclaimed, "Historical thinking is a powerful form of literacy that has the potential to teach us about text in ways that no other area of school curriculum can offer" (p. 662).

As such, the purpose of this descriptive case study was to look at three high school Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH) teachers' beliefs about historical literacy pedagogy and to learn in what ways their beliefs about historical literacy influenced their historical literacy pedagogical practices in the APUSH classroom.

Theoretical Framework

This research was informed by literature on teacher beliefs and how beliefs can influence teacher practice. Beliefs are described as a "messy construct" (Pajares, 1992) and while this might be the case, researchers have noted that teacher beliefs influence classroom instruction (Aguirre & Speer, 2000; Chin & Barber, 2010; Chiodo & Brown, 2007; Clark, 1988). Pajares (1992) posited, "All teachers hold beliefs [...] about their work, their students, their subject matter, and their roles and responsibilities..." (p. 314). Teachers construct their own theories on how to teach through their own reflection on their teaching experience (Borg, 2003; Fang, 1996; Richards, 1998). Kagan (1992) found that teachers’ beliefs "tend to be associated with a congruent style of teaching that is often evident across different classes and grade levels" (p. 66). Teachers’ beliefs about pedagogical practice are influenced by their own educational experiences (Lortie, 1975).

Some researchers have found that beliefs and practices do not always align (see Fang, 1996; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Raymond, 1997; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996). In addition, while beliefs may change, practice may remain the same. Powers, Zippay and Butler (2006) asserted that teacher beliefs and practice can be inconsistent due to factors such as school philosophy and governmental mandates. Khader (2012) posited a mandated curriculum, lack of professional development and administrative support, and school board directives also can account for a lack of alignment between practice and beliefs. Further, Hostetler (2012) found that various intercede factors mediated the belief-practice dialectic. Above all, he determined “structural and institutional pressures, image and identity, and knowing students” play a role in teacher curricular decision-making (p. 178). In addition, Anthony, Smith, and Miller (in press) discovered that lack of confidence in a content-area can serve as a barrier between a required curriculum and classroom practice.

Larrivee (2000) noted, "Beliefs are self-generating, and often untested, based on conclusions inferred from our selected observations" (p. 295). Beliefs change over time as teachers continue to refine and reflect on their own pedagogical practices (Buelh & Fives, 2009; Olafson &
Schraw, 2006). Aguirre and Speer (2000) found that teacher beliefs influence moment-to-moment occurrences in the classroom. Pajares (1992), when describing the relationship between beliefs and practices, noted, “Few would argue that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom....” (p. 307). Thus, teachers’ beliefs mediate their instructional choices in the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

**Research Methods**

I conducted a descriptive case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). This intent of this study was to provide teachers and teacher educators with a better understanding of the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice. Specifically, I aimed to add to the knowledge base on the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice, specifically in regards to historical literacy instruction. In this inquiry, I addressed the following research questions:

1. What do three Advanced Placement United States History teachers believe about teaching historical literacy in the history classroom?
2. In what ways do the teachers’ beliefs about historical literacy influence their history instruction?

**Participants**

The data reported in this paper were collected from three Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH) teachers in a large school district in the southeastern United States. I utilized convenience sampling to choose the three Advanced Placement United States History teachers. Convenience sampling signifies the participants were accessible and willing to participate in the study (Merriam, 2009) and is a type of nonprobability sampling (Battaglia, 2008). Because of this, generalization to the larger population of Advanced Placement United Stated History teachers is limited (Glass & Hopkins, 1996).

I assigned all participants and schools a pseudonym. Shay was in his fifth year of teaching APUSH and sixth year as a teacher. He held a bachelor’s degree in secondary education with a focus in social studies education. He taught at West High School. Michelle was in her 10th year of teaching APUSH and 16th year as a high school social studies teacher. She had a bachelor’s and master’s degree in social science education. Her minor in graduate school was history. She taught at South High School.

George was a first year APUSH teacher at East High School. He had taught at other schools in the district and served as a district administrator. He had a bachelor’s degree in social studies education and a master’s degree in history with specialization in Latin American History and Modern United State History. George also had a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction in Interdisciplinary Education.

**Context**

I conducted this research in three high schools in a large school district in a state in the southeastern part of the United States. All three high schools are comprehensive schools serving grades 9-12. East High School is a magnet school and has a pre-collegiate academy for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) on site. The majority of the students in George’s APUSH class at East High were struggling readers and writers. South High School has an International Baccalaureate program. Michelle’s class was composed of both on-grade level students and struggling readers and writers though she did not have as many struggling students as George. West High School is considered one of the top 100 schools in America and has been
honored by *U.S. News and World Report* and *The Washington Post* as one of the top high schools in the nation. Shay's APUSH class was composed of on-grade level and above-grade level students.

**Data Sources and Analysis**

My data sources included two interviews per participant, classroom documents/artifacts, a conceptual map of a historical literacy teacher, three weeks of classroom observations per teacher for one class period a day, five days a week, and a researcher reflexive journal. I used descriptive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009) for each within-case analysis. Once I coded the data using descriptive coding, I transferred the descriptive codes to a word processing document and grouped the codes according to similar descriptive topic. Through reflection on the descriptive codes, I was able to create a pattern code, or theme for the grouped descriptive codes. Therefore, during cross-case analysis, I utilized pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). The within-case and cross-case analysis allowed me to provide a rich description of the case and the themes that emerge from the data (Creswell, 2003, 2007).

I employed a number of strategies for maximizing validity and the overall trustworthiness of the interpretation of the results. Cross-examination of multiple sources of data including interview transcripts, observations, concept maps of a historical literacy teacher, classroom documents and artifacts, and a researcher reflexive journal strengthened the validity of the analysis. An outside peer reviewer also reviewed parts of the transcripts and coded a segment of each interview transcript for all three participants.

**Findings**

In this section, I present one within-case theme for each participant describing what they believe about historical literacy and how their beliefs influence their instruction. I also present two cross-case themes that represent how their beliefs influenced their historical literacy instruction in the classroom.

**Case One: Shay**

Shay encouraged the use of primary sources as evidence, and contextualized historical documents in his classroom instruction. Shay addressed various historical thinking skills and strategies in his classroom on a regular basis. On his concept map, Shay identified various skills he believed students need to be able to do in an APUSH class; those skills included the “analysis of primary sources and using the analysis with their outside information to support a thesis.” He defined historical literacy as “teaching the students how to better read a history book” and Shay implemented reading strategies such as teaching his students note taking skill, specifically narrowing in on key pieces of information, as opposed to copying the entire page into their notebooks. Shay believed that students needed to be historically literate, and two skills that he thought were crucial to developing that form of literacy were: 1) to be able to analyze primary sources and use them in writing and 2) to properly contextualize sources.

Within this theme, Shay had his students write quite frequently in class either composing Free-Response Questions (FRQ) Essays or Document-Based Question (DBQ) Essays. Each time he assigned an essay in class, he reminded his class to “use primary sources as evidence” in their essay response. In his first interview, Shay said he enjoyed synthesizing information gleaned from multiple sources and constructing an assertion. Shay equated this task to one of a “detective,” something that he felt was “exciting” because he was able to “pull information from each source and then put it into a paper.” Shay explained his thoughts about document analysis, synthesizing information from multiple sources, and using those documents to write a DBQ. He said:
It’s kind of like you’ve got a mixing bowl. What’s the document telling me, you throw that into the mixing bowl. What can I add to it to mix it up and then kind of put that into a coherent thought on paper.

Shay also acknowledged the importance of putting the documents in their particular context and reminded the students, through activating their prior knowledge, about the importance of contextualization. Often times when he introduced primary source documents in class, he would briefly contextualize the documents for the students. Shay believed one of the best ways to get the students to analyze primary sources was through group work where students investigated historical events. He said, “[I] let them work in groups, let them discuss readings, let them you know, give them, give the group a set of questions and let them debate about what is the author trying to say.” This practice was evident during two of my observations where the students were examining multiple primary source documents. During these observations, Shay had his student examine two primary sources that dealt with monopolies (Ida Tarbell’s (1904) *The History of the Standard Oil Company* and Henry De Marest Lloyd’s (1881) *Monopoly on the March*). Shay instructed the students to complete a SOP (subject, occasion, purpose) on each of the documents and corroborate across them, completing a document analysis on each source. While they worked, Shay encouraged them to discuss their findings with each other in small groups.

**Case Two: Michelle**

**Michelle prioritized questioning and manipulating of evidence.** Michelle defined historical literacy as “being able to read about a time-period and being able to read primary source documents within the context of that time-period and applying it.” She further explained:

They’re [students] literate in historical terms. They can read a history book. It’s okay to be able to read a math book, but they can read a history book and do something with it; they can still read that textbook and have an intellectual conversation at whatever level they are at and be able to do something with the information.

To help her students become historically literate, Michelle emphasized two strategies in her class to help her students become historically literate—“questioning and manipulation of evidence.” These were also apparent in her observations. When asked about her specific reading and writing strategies, she said:

It’s more questioning. They read and then I question what do they get out of it. What about this? What about this? Sometimes they do it together and I’ll have kids questions other kids. They’ll be in groups to talk about the material themselves. The more they talk the more they learn.

For each unit, her discipline-specific goals were for her students to “analyze the social, political, and economic factors” of whatever time-period they were currently studying and to continue to develop her students critical thinking skills through the use of questioning and manipulating evidence.

Michelle wanted her students to be able to defend their answer by providing evidence to support what they are saying, may it be writing a thesis statement or answering a multiple choice question. This historical thinking concept was evident in her class on multiple occasions. ‘You need to be able to defend it’ was a key phrase she said to her students. She also utilized questioning techniques where she had the students focused on eliminating answers to multiple choice questions that were not feasible by recalling prior information learned about the topic.
Michelle constantly pushed her students to use evidence in their responses and to provide an answer they can back up as opposed to one that is general. This was evident in how she prepared her students to write a Free-Response Question (FRQ) Essay. Michelle noted:

I say [to my students] 'Good historians ask questions; great ones answer them.' I think if they can start asking those questions, they can question themselves into a right answer or into a thesis, into an essay.

Michelle also implemented her questioning technique with her students when they went over an assessment in class. She wanted the students to talk through their answers and justify why they arrived at a particular answer on their unit assessment. Her teaching style was also reflected in the classroom activities she thought were essential to keep students interested in history. Michelle believed students needed to be able to really think about the topic and be able to do something with the material they are learning either through a class discussion, debate, or paper.

**Case Three: George**

George emphasized cause and consequence, using primary sources as evidence, and sourcing in his classroom instruction. George believed historical literacy was "the foundation of being an informed participant.” Within this notion of being an informed citizen, George believed students should learn how to analyze history and use primary sources as evidence in their discussions and writings. He noted, “I probably focus more on cause and consequence just because I can incorporate the other ones into that and I really want the students to make the connections.” A central idea in George’s teaching was that his students recognized how individuals and groups changed history over time. He noted,

I’m really looking for the larger connections [when I construct lessons for students]. [I’m] really going for the connections to modern politics, modern foreign politics, and then what they are reading has an impact on that time to today and how it impacts stuff. That’s what I’m really going for.

He wanted his students to be able to discuss the economic, social, and political effects stemming from a particular event in history. George also posed counterfactuals in his classroom discussion. George also incorporated primary and secondary sources as evidence in his classroom instruction. He noted,

I put some modern sources in there just so they can identify secondary and primary sources but also pictures, maps, things they have to analyze as documents and if it’s not an official DBQ, I'll even intersperse film that way they can analyze that as well.

George had his students “analyze every document because every document is technically a primary source and each one has an author and voice.” On a weekly basis, the class dissected a primary or secondary source by engaging in document analysis. George also had his students examine the source of the document or documents during class discussion. He explained,

One of the things I have them look for is voice. They have to identify the author’s voice and their perspective so that’s looking for time-period, gender, race, the whole gamut of things they have to look for. I also use the textbooks in the same way. I have them do that for each
one [each source] that way they can pick out what’s being said, how it’s being said, and analyze it from that context.

When the students completed a textual analysis, on topics such as the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Movement, George had the students examine the source of the document, the year it was written and who wrote it. He specifically wanted them to pay attention to the voice of the author because he believed if they focused on voice “they can get a better understanding of how it [the document] was written.”

Cross-Case Analysis

In the section below, I detail two cross-case themes from the participants regarding their implementation of historical literacy pedagogy in the history classroom.

**Theme one: All three teachers utilized document analysis in the history classroom.**

One of the goals for all the teachers was to teach document or textual analysis. While each teacher taught document analysis using his/her own particular methods, they had their students analyzing documents to prepare for the AP Exam and as a way to dig deeper into the documents. For example, Shay used the Subject, Occasion, Purpose/Point of View (SOP) test. He noted,

So for me it’s the subject, occasion, and the purpose and so that’s for when students are reading they can see what is the subject of this, what is author trying to achieve, or what promoted the author to write this piece and that way kind of gives them understanding of what’s going on.

Both Michelle and George noted on their concept map that one of the activities they do with their students is textual or document analysis. Michelle’s students broke apart the First and Second New Deals and analyzed the programs in each New Deal as reform, recovery, or relief. The students worked in groups and created a graphic organizer on chart paper classifying each program as relief, recovery, or reform. George’s students studied documents from the Cold War and completed a textual analysis with questions in class. After they finished the questions, George went over the questions with the class and had the students discuss the answers, as well as argue their opinion, backed with evidence from the text, for the last question.

**Theme two: All three teachers apprenticed their students in the argumentative genre.**

Michelle, George, and Shay apprenticed their students in the writing process, particularly when constructing a DBQ and FRQ Essay. During our first interview, Shay explained, “They [the students] approach how they write everything the same way. [...] So my entire year is me breaking the habits of writing (another AP style essay).” For Shay, the literacy tasks in his classroom partly involved changing the habits drilled into his students in previous Advanced Placement classes such as Advanced Placement Language. He noted:

You’ll see some essays where you’ll get a paragraph where it almost reads like a checklist— covered that, covered that, covered that. But they’re not making it flow; they are not telling me a story. I can just tell how they write that for the most part they are taking the same approach. One essay is this way so they’re all this way.

Because his students approached their writing the same way for each class, he modeled and apprenticed them through the writing process in class.
George explained starting in the fall semester, he has his students practice writing thesis statements and continues to “build and continue to build until they’re writing essays on their own.” Michelle also provided one-on-one support for her students, providing feedback and guiding her students through the thesis writing and essay crafting process.

All three teachers believed writing should be used as a mediating strategy to translate text into one’s own dialogue, specifically when composing an essay. When the teachers taught their students to write a DBQ, they encouraged their students to use outside information, from their head, as well as information from the documents to answer the question. Essentially, they taught their students to craft their own interpretation of the historical event using their background knowledge and specific evidence from the various texts. Crafting an interpretation of a historical event or person is a discipline-specific writing task.

Discussion

Two research questions were considered for this study: First, what do three APUSH teachers believe about historical literacy pedagogy? Second, how do their beliefs influence their implementation of historical literacy pedagogy in the classroom? The discoveries of this study—the answers to those questions—will be considered in light of what the social studies education literature says on effective history teaching and how teacher educators and teachers can apply this information to their own practice.

First, all three teachers focused on document analysis in their classroom practice. In particular, they prioritized analyzing primary, secondary, and tertiary sources in their classrooms. They did this through a variety of teaching methods and each focused on different skills to achieve this goal—including contextualization, SOAPS, graphic organizers, questioning, tracing cause and consequence, and sourcing. Wineburg (1991a, 1991b) found that contextualization and sourcing were two of the key historical methods historians used when analyzing a source. Researchers have noted these two skills are components of “good” history pedagogy (see Malory & LaRoche, 2010; VanSledright, 2002a, 2002b; Wineburg, Martin, & Monte-Sano, 2011). Primary source evidence—texts from the past (e.g., letters, books, records, photographs, audio recordings, newspaper accounts, drawings, etc.) are considered treasures to those who study the past. Shay, Michelle, and George all believed their students should know how to effectively make sense of such documents.

Teacher educators and teachers may take the strategies used in each classroom and implement them into their own practice. For example, a classroom teacher or teacher educator might teach the students how to analyze a document using the SOAPS test. Shay, Michelle, and George all relied on historical literacy resources provided by the College Board, found on the AP Central Website (http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers_corner/3501.html) as part of their planning. A teacher or teacher educator might also teach students how to break apart a document using a graphic organizer such as a T-chart as Michelle did with her students.

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), teachers and teacher educators are responsible for modeling and teaching best practice in history instruction, which includes the analysis of primary, secondary, and tertiary documents in the history classroom. As noted by the National History Education Clearinghouse (2014) and the National Council for History Education (2014), two best practices in teaching history include conducting historical inquiries into historical events as well as using historical thinking skills when analyzing primary, secondary, and tertiary source documents. VanSledright (2011) found that students, as young as elementary, can analyze documents if taught how to do so. The practice of analyzing documents in the classroom is one of active learning where students are engaged in "large and small group discussions, active note taking, visuals, [and] materials other than the voice of the teacher" (Malory & LaRoche, 2010, p. 49).
The teachers in the study also apprenticed their students through the argumentative genre of writing. The Common Core State Standards in Writing require teachers in all content areas to incorporate writing practices into their classroom instruction. In history classrooms that includes teaching students how to construct and deconstruct an argument. The students used evidence from their documents to help construct their own interpretation of a historical event. Monte-Sano (2008) found that the best history teachers apprentice their students in the writing process through direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and feedback. Shay, Michelle, and George followed this model in their own teaching of argument. As a result, the students crafted solid argumentative DBQ responses.

Researchers also found students who receive instruction on historical inquiry produce essays that are more historically accurate, longer, more elaborate, and contain more claims than students who receive no instruction on historical inquiry strategies (De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & Felton, 2010). De La Paz (2005) discovered students who receive instruction in historical inquiry and argumentative writing demonstrate mastery of target strategies and write historically more accurate essays.

Teacher educators and teachers can explicitly teach their students argumentative writing skills in the classroom. One such model of argumentative writing is the Toulmin model (for a description, see Hillocks, 2010). Davis (2012) noted that one thing that every teacher should do to meet the Common Core State Standards is to teach their students argumentative writing.1

Implications and Conclusions

My findings suggest that a variety of historical literacy reading and writing practices can be successfully implemented into history classrooms in a variety of educational contexts. The teachers scaffolded their instruction to meet the needs of their students. In particular, George and Michelle incorporated historical literacy practices in their classes with struggling readers, which refutes Faggella-Luby, Graner, Deshler, and Drew (2012) and Ehren, Murza, and Malani’s (2012) claim that struggling readers and writers do not benefit from learning disciplinary literacy practices because they lack foundational reading skills such as fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development.

In comparing and contrasting the three teachers instructional choices, the three teachers incorporated several historical literacy reading and writing strategies into their classroom teaching. However, with the exception of a focus on analyzing and using primary sources as evidence and teaching the argumentative genre, the three teachers each had their own specific historical literacy strategies they relied on in their classroom practice to meet the needs of their students. All of the strategies used by the teachers are research-based practices (see Monte-Sano, 2008; Seixas, 2006; Wineburg, 1991a, 1991b).

In addition, explicitly teaching such practices to students help develop civic-minded individuals (VanSledright, 2011). As Monte-Sano (2008) explained,

Developing the capacity to express a historical argument in writing teaches students that they have the power to make their own interpretations and to do so based on evidence rather than uncritical acceptance of other people’s claims. Such skills prepare students to understand the complexities of our social world, evaluate information responsibly, ask difficult questions, and succeed in college. (p. 1074)

Moje (2008) noted, “Content literacy instruction can help youth gain access to the accepted knowledge of the disciplines thereby allowing them also to critique and change that knowledge” (p. 97). Such disciplinary knowledge is essential for the development of active citizens (Lee, 2007; National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). Further, the Common Core State Standards in English/Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and the Technical Subjects
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(NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010) has the potential to revitalize citizenship education in the K-12 classroom. For example, the standards include analysis of primary source documents and the composition and evaluation of arguments. These skills are necessary to create active citizens. The three teachers enacted these historical literacy practices in their classroom instruction.

This study provided insight into the beliefs and practices of three APUSH teachers in one school district in a Southeastern state. Therefore, the limitations in this study suggest the need for continued investigations into teacher beliefs and pedagogical practices. Additional research should expand the number of teachers interviewed and observed. Further, observations of teacher practice should occur over a longer period of time, such as an entire semester of teaching and could possibly include examining teacher practices at different times during the school year.

In the age of the Common Core State Standards, teachers across the content areas are required to implement literacy practices in their classroom practice. In the history classroom that includes teaching students to analyze of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources and to compose argumentative essays with evidence. Such literacy practices illustrated in this manuscript can serve as a useful guide for history teachers in elementary and secondary schools who are starting to apply discipline-specific pedagogy into their own classrooms.

Note

1 A good resource to learn more about the Toulmin model of argumentative writing can be found at Colorado State University’s Writing Studio (see http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=58) which breaks down the model and provides examples for teacher educators and teachers to use in their classroom instruction.

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