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## The Pandemic of Online Teaching

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# **The Pandemic of Online Education**

By Steven Swanson

An Action Research Project submitted to Western Oregon University

In Partial Fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of:

Master of Arts, in Teaching

June 2021



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**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF  
WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED**

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Action Research Project Title:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Graduate Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate for the degree of : Master of Arts in Teaching: Initial Licensure

*and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of this master's degree.*

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A special thanks goes out to my collaborating teacher, Sarah Waddell. Not only did she accept me into her classroom, during a world pandemic, to help me learn to be the educator that I aspire to be, but she also did all that was possible to recreate a traditional classroom environment for me to gain experience from.

Regardless of all the chaos that occurred during the years of 2020-2021. I have felt that I have gained a great educational experience on what it means to teach students in a wide variety of situations.

## ABSTRACT

### **The Pandemic of Online Teaching**

By Steven Swanson

The purpose of this Action Research Project was to take a look at how my own actions towards students, and their own actions towards myself, compare and contrast between an online environment and a physical classroom environment. With the corona virus pandemic, students were transitioned from going to a classroom physically in person, to working remotely from their own houses online. When beginning this project, I wanted to put a specific focus on how the interactions between students and their educators change from an online environment to a physical classroom environment. Alongside of that, there is also a focus on whether or not student interactions change when interacting within an online environment or an in person environment.

Through this analysis of classroom interaction with students in both an online an in-person environment, as well as example lessons and journal reflections, it has become apparent that student academic experiences are vastly different between the two environments. While both can be successful and efficient in what students learn and accomplish in their academics, the personal relations and the connections made between classmates that are made within a physical classroom can be replicated in an online environment. This project looks at the different aspects of differentiating instructional material, the various styles of creating presentations between online and in person learning, and how students interact with one another and with their educator depending on whether their online or in person. These interactions that I encountered and handled throughout my teaching experience in this program shaped how I want to act as an educator for my future students.

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## Chapter 1

Through the MAT program at Western Oregon University, I have not only learned many different aspects of the inner workings of education, but I have been able to reflect on my own views and wants for my future classroom. Through reviewing the personal reflections that I wrote through the year, and in the different theories and methods that have been viewed in my classes in the MAT program, I believe that I have gained a better understanding of how I want to act as a future educator, and how I want my future classroom to be organized and conducted. I do recognize that these wants and beliefs are uncontested right now, and currently live within a perfect world scenario, but in my opinion it's better to have higher ambitions and have to bring them down to reality rather than having to raise them to unimagined levels. In the beginning of the program, I gained new insights on how a constructive system of education, along with allowing students to work within an inclusive and understanding environment, can be extremely efficient in being a successful teacher and allowing a student's academic potential to grow as much as possible.

### Knowing Who My Students Are

In looking back at one of my first reflections in the MAT program, in which I discussed my own educational experience and views, I found different aspects that I think could be important to implement in my future classroom for my own students. For example, the use of student reflections on the work that they turn in can provide excellent insight on their thought and work processes. In my early schooling as a student, I had a teacher who after every paper that was turned in, required us to write a two-page reflection on anything that related to how I came to the point of having a finished product to turn in for a grade. These reflections were simply for the act of expressing any hardships or any points of enlightenment that may have



occurred during the writing process, and to voice any concerns that we may have had as students within the class.

For my future classroom I want to utilize this process for the different types of major assignments that I know my students will have to go through. Such as any presentation projects, book reports, essays, etc. Essentially, I want these reflections to be structured in a non-stressful format, in which students will be able to just vent out any frustrations or positives that they felt through their work processes. I would want students to write out two pages, double spaced, that focus on points such as, but not limited to: how they decided what to research, did they plan out their work or did they procrastinate, was there information that they had found that had to be cut out, and did they work/communicate with others at all through the project. In my mind, it only makes sense to give full grade points on these assignments to all students, unless they specifically do not follow guidelines, such as writing less in length than what is required or discussing matters that are off topic from the work done on their assignment.

These reflections not only serve a purpose for the students to be able to understand how they operate in the academic world, but also serve the purpose of helping me get to understand each student's academic habits as individuals and to see how they change over the course of the year. Reflections in the beginning of the year will be important to me to learn how I should structure out future assignments, E.g., do I need to give students more time to work on assignments, do I need to give them more future notice, should I create more deadlines that break projects up rather than having all work due on the same day, are students finding instructions not clear enough, do they feel they need to talk with other classmates for clarification, etc. While the reflections at the end of the school year will allow me to see if the changes that I implemented actually created a difference, and/or if students reacted to those changes in the ways that I hoped.

My plan would be to give students back their reflections at the end of the year, in order for them to be able to see their own progress and give insight to how they were when they started in the new grade level to how they are now that they're advancing to a new and higher grade.

Reflections can also be a great way to bring a day's lesson all together for students. Giving students a chance to be able to write out what they have learned and be able to add an informative measure to this writing can help solidify ideas and concepts that they have just learned. In my own experience as a student, a large struggle to overcome is being overwhelmed with a vast amount of information that is given every day. A way to help remedy this struggle is to give students a moment at the end of a class to simply write out their thoughts and understanding of the topic being covered. This can also be a great tool for an educator, as they can get a personalized understanding for each student on where they are in their own learning, and get better insight on whether or not any points of the subject should be recovered during the next time that class meets together.

### Inclusive Classrooms

Creating a classroom environment in which students feel not only heard, but included as well, is very important to me. I personally have been in situations as a student where in one class I was both engaged and enjoying a class, and then in other classes I've been in the situation where I felt completely discouraged and uninterested in how I performed with class assignments. Often this simply stemmed from how I felt the teacher treated both the subject material, and the students as a whole class and as individuals. Specifically, the class that I remember feeling the most discouraged in was my eighth-grade math class, for my class was titled "eighth grade math" rather than the other two periods that were titled "Algebra One". Right from the get-go we, the students, understood that we were in a class with less difficult work and because of this, we

didn't try as much as we should have. This also was evident in a middle school humanities classroom that I observed during a practicum I did at Oregon State, in which the third period class consisted of the least amount of students (in comparison to the other two periods) and these students were known to be less achieving in the subject matter. Though I'm aware that in both cases, this arrangement of students is not the teachers fault, I did see a large difference in the handling of students between my personal teacher and the teacher whom I was observing.

When I was a student, feeling discouraged in my eighth grade math class, I can remember feeling as though our teacher didn't actually care if we learned or not. All that seemed to matter was that the lesson was done, and assignments were turned in. In the classroom I observed however, students seemed to have the idea that their teacher actually cared for their learning, and gave more efforts to succeed than my math class ever did. A major reason that I saw for this difference was the simple act of treating students just the same as the students in the other classes, rather than simply as students who belong in a lower-achieving group. Something that I have been thinking about that could potentially help with this feeling of discouragement from both the teacher and other peers is to create group partnerships between students of different class periods. The main purpose of this idea would be to form connections and communication with students from different classes, and try to create a more communal environment. For this to work, each student in the groups would need to have specific purposes in a project to work on (to account for their separation during the day) and then they could come together and present with one another. This would also require the acceptance from other teachers, as students would need to leave their classes for a brief period of time. I do see this as being a method to help students form better connections with one another, and to help eliminate any ideas that one class period is better or worse than another.

This is something that I wish to bring into my future class as an educator, a sense of respect and understanding for where students are in their academic lives. With middle school students, they may not be considered adults in life yet, but they do have a desire to be treated as such. Especially eighth graders who are looking at the future of going into high school. They don't always understand/realize that only three years, sometimes two depending on how the school system is set up, prior they were in elementary school. To treat them as young adults who aren't just elementary school children can be huge in their world, and can garner a mutual respect that is vital for the management of a successful classroom. That's not to say though that I think they should be completely responsible for all of their academic success, they still are only thirteen or younger and are still cognitively developing in maturity and responsibility towards their own actions. This is where I see the methodology of constructive teaching to come most into effect.

### Constructivism, Collaboration and Cooperation

I see myself as implementing constructivist teaching methods as my main tactic for classroom management. Being that I want to teach middle school humanities, specifically eighth grade which focuses on early colonial American history, I understand that it will be extremely important for me to not only make the historical material to be interesting, but also memorable for students. I myself had the problem when going through primary school, as many students do, in which I didn't see my history classes as relevant as my other classes. While my math and science classes weren't always the most interesting, they at least were teaching me information that was able to be applied to everyday knowledge. What I didn't understand at the time, is how important actually knowing and understanding historical knowledge is. To be able to respect how far our country has come in terms of equality in society, to learn what different cultural and

ethnic groups have gone through in order to build this country to what it is today, and to understand how the events of the past still have repercussions that we're handling in today's modern age is vastly important and crucial in a societal perspective. But when in middle and high school, to the average student, none of that seems to matter as much or doesn't seem to have as much of an importance.

With my future students, I want them to be able to see the connections that link both historical facts to one another, and how those historical instances can be seen as having an effect on today's society. I see constructivism as being the most efficient way of doing that. Creating a foundation for students at the beginning of the year, and then allowing them to create the structural knowledge that can guide them through understanding new terms and events that are covered in the class. A main means of constructivism is also through cooperation with other students, and using one another to help with interpretations and understanding of concepts. While individual assignments and projects will be apparent in my classroom, I do have a want for students to be able to openly talk with one another about the work that they're doing if they so please. They should be able to feel that they have the ability to rely on one another as peers who are all within the same situation of the class, rather than as individuals simply trying to get a good grade on an assignment. Turning in their own required work will still be a requirement, as I will want to see their own ideas and knowledge being applied to assignments, but collaboration should be welcomed within the classroom.

A method that I have thought of when it comes to creating cooperation in the classroom between students is to have group discussions that are broken apart by smaller groups. Each group will have a major question that will be given to them ahead of time, and this major question will be broken down into different parts. Each student of the small group will be

responsible for their own separate part, and together they will be able to become a group of “experts” to educate the rest of the classroom and facilitate portions of the main class discussion.

With the idea of cooperation on assignments being welcomed, I also see this as a way to help create an inclusive environment within my future classroom. As an aspiring educator, I understand that it will be not only my duty, but my responsibility to accept and educate all who come into my class. Regardless of documentation status, ethnicity, race, gender identification, or any other demographic description that may apply to the individual student. Any personal biases or judgements that I may have, have absolutely no place in the classroom, and should never have any effect towards the education that an individual student receives. It’s my hope that students within my class will feel confident enough to be able to come and speak with me if they’re having any kind of issues within school, and trust that I will work with them in order to help find a solution.

The same levels of respect that I want to uphold for my students should also extend to their parents or legal guardians. Full and open communication with parents about class activities and individual student progress will be a priority for me for responsibilities outside of immediate classroom activities. An idea that I have to help with this would be a monthly letter to be sent out to parents on the first of every month that details the future four weeks of the class. My plan is to simply detail out any assignments that are due, any volunteering options that may be available for the future, and possibly a brief overview of what main topics that will be studied over the month. This not only will keep parents more involved and knowledgeable on what’s going on in their students' lives, but it will also allow parents to be able to bring up any questions, comments, or concerns that they may have regarding their child’s education. A second letter could be sent

out halfway through the month in case of any changes that may have occurred since the previous letter. These kinds of changes could include any assignment dates that have changed, topic additions, project modifications, or just a simple progress to how students are doing in general. I don't expect to write a secondary letter often, but the concept should still exist in case it's ever needed. My hope is to make sure that parents understand that I want them to also feel comfortable in coming to speak with me about their child's education, to help ensure that the best is being done for the student in all aspects. I may not be able to completely accommodate all individual parental wishes, but I can try and provide the ability for people to speak their thoughts and try to work with them and keep them informed on all that is happening. A major aspect of getting along with others and having individuals feel respected is by making sure that they know they're being heard. People want their opinions and thoughts to be heard and understood, and as an educator of other people's children, it will be my responsibility to be sure that parents understand that I'm here to help and provide the best educational experience possible.

As for other groups of people that influence how my career goes and the decisions that are made for me as a teacher, there isn't much of an argument that I can have. For example, in the case of our current world situation with the Covid-19 virus that's going on, many Oregon teachers who have taught in-person classes for either all of, or majority of, their career are now being forced to teach their classes online. Though they may not be the most pleased with this decision being forced onto them by the state of Oregon, it's their job to follow the choice of remote teaching. Regardless if it's the route of action that they personally would want to go through, or would choose to go through if they were in full control of their own class situation. Unless a situation or decision made by school board members, legislation, etc. creates a situation that I find to be a great hindrance to the education of my students, I don't think that I'll be

bringing up many protests to how the school is being run. I do however have an ambition to move into an administrative position, so that I can have more of a personal say in how a school is run and the decisions that are implemented for its daily operation. The idea of being a principal or a superintendent has been attractive to me, but I've always had the belief that being a teacher first would allow me to have a better, more effective, perspective on the true needs of a school building, the staff that works within it, and the students who are in attendance. While those ideas have been in the back of my mind, being an educator within a classroom has been a main goal for me to achieve in life.

My desire to be a teacher stemmed from when I was in middle school, specifically in my eighth grade humanities class. During the second half of the school year, we had a student teacher come into our class that gave me the spark of inspiration to want to become an educator. Both the man's personality and his attitude when teaching our class made the profession seem not only fun, but real in comparison to the adults who had been teaching me all through the year. I viewed them as teachers who were a part of the school, staff members just doing their job. But with this student teacher, he brought a new perspective to both the job and my original teachers for me to see them both through. As a student, I had always wanted to be the one who sat behind the desk and wrote tests to hand out to students. To be the one to grade the assignments rather than having to complete them. When this student teacher came into our class though, he inadvertently reinforced those ideas in my mind, and brought to light for me that working as a teacher could be a career path that I would want to pursue. However, that thought would be masked by the idea of wanting to become an accountant after being in business and accounting classes my senior year of high school. When I look back though at my time in those high school classes, I realize that it wasn't the material I enjoyed learning, it was more the teacher that I was



learning from. I enjoyed being in their class, and found inspiration from them and how they operated their classroom just as I had from the student teacher in my middle school class. Many of the different aspects of how I wish to run my future classroom are mirrored to the ways that my favorite teachers through middle and high school operated theirs.

### Social Studies Pedagogy

My thoughts and expectations of how I want to manage my future classroom have changed over the time that I've been in the MAT program at Western Oregon, as well as over the time that I am professionally employed. The thoughts and beliefs that I have now may be impractical or made for an ideal world scenario, but it is my hope that I can make a difference in how students view school and their education. I want to be a teacher that shows students that it can be fun and interesting to learn new knowledge, and specifically bring more of a positive light to studying historical events. For I know that the subject can be dull and boring in a multitude of aspects, whether that be through watching documentaries, reading historical documents or the different reports that are necessary for analyzing different events, but the importance of knowing and understanding history is much more important than most people realize. I've learned through the various readings that we've had across this term's education courses, and from my own personal experiences as a student, that a great amount of student engagement stems from the attitude of the teacher. A teacher who shows passion and understanding towards the students of the class, and demonstrates a positive want for them to succeed, will often have more success in the career than a teacher who is perceived as simply being there just to do a job. I am hopeful that I will be the former of the two options, and can bring a successful and inclusive environment for future students to learn within and experience a great growth in their individual academic potentials and futures.

Because I believe this about education and want to create this type of classroom in which students are able to respectfully speak their own opinions and ideas about class material, I have created a set of goals for myself to guide my learning and teaching experience over time. My first goal is to utilize more differentiated material with the classroom so that I can give students various perspectives on different subjects and topics that we cover in the curriculum. The second goal that I set for myself is to create a successful environment for students to be able to work more efficiently. Having this year be primarily online, with a possibility of returning to in person learning in the spring, students are having to learn how to work more independently on their assignments and be more accountable for their own academic success. I want to try and make this situation easier for students to work through, as I work through it myself as a student teacher trying to learn all that I can about working with real students. The third and final goal that I had created for myself to try and follow is to encourage more collaboration between students within the classroom. Whether they're online or in person, I think that having students talk and discuss with one another about their ideas and opinions is important. This can create connections between students and expose them to the different perspectives that exist simply amongst their own classmates. As I have progressed through my teaching program, I have learned that my different ideas of how effective education can be achieved is supported by a variety of education researchers. Alongside this, the goals that I have set for myself to focus on through my student teaching experience are based on the ideas of improving student success and classroom management efficiency during a period of time that is confusing for everyone to navigate through. With this action research project, I want to learn more about the impact that online learning can have on a student's academic performance, while also learning about different strategies that can be implemented into the classroom to help boost student engagement and

interest in topics and subjects discussed within the class curriculum. The next chapter of this Action Research Project will focus on the research that has already been published on topics related to my goals for improvement as an educator.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### **Purposes and Objectives for the Literature Review**

My purpose in this review of the research was to discover how teachers and researchers have looked at effective teaching and teacher growth in their discipline. I searched for research on differentiation of classroom instructional material because depending on the original source of the material being taught, students can often find different information on the same subject matter. I also searched for studies on student success rates of learning in an online environment versus being in class in-person because with the corona virus pandemic, almost all students have been transitioned to going to school online, and educators across the country have found a difference in student academic success. Additionally, because I would be studying my own practice and focusing on these ideas in my endorsement area, I looked for studies that indicated the kinds of instruction that are effective for collaboration and communication within the classroom between students.

This literature review addresses my knowledge of these concepts as a foundation for my understanding to set goals and grow from in my own teaching. I especially looked for research that described effective strategies for each area and gave examples of how it might work in a classroom. Application of this research was an essential part in building my own knowledge base for this project.

## **Procedures for the Literature Review**

I selected literature for this review based on several specific criteria. Research on differential instructional material was included if it contained the following descriptors: perspectives, bias, southern/northern textbooks, collaboration between students, use of technology in the classroom. This search yielded ?number of relevant articles. In order to narrow my findings and make them more specific to this research project, I then focused my review efforts on articles that discussed the best methods of teaching social studies in a successful online environment while giving students efficient methods of collaboration and participation. From there, I looked for articles that supported sub-themes that emerged from the major articles in my literature review. These sub-themes are: 1) differential education within the classroom, 2) scaffolding within social studies teaching in an online environment, and 3) practices of collaborative group work teaching within social studies. For these sub-sections, I initially searched Google Scholar for articles that met the keyword criteria listed above, along with a conducting a search for books in the data base of the Hamersly Library at Western Oregon University. After finding these books and articles, I hand-searched their reference lists as sources to find additional related articles and books.

In order to integrate the literature review, I developed a coding protocol and corresponding separation of research into the major themes: differentiation of educational material, teaching online versus in-person, and collaboration among students in social studies. I read each article to determine how it fit within these broad thematic categories, and then, through a process of reading and rereading for salient features of each study, I determined the subheadings in the literature review. My intent was to start with a broad treatment of each theme and then to systematically reduce broad understandings of how social studies is taught across the

country and within an online environment to specific understanding of how these themes are present in research about how to best provide students with the capabilities of understanding differences of perspectives in what they are studying and hold discussions with one another to deepen and solidify their own personal academic understandings.

### **Theme One - Differentiating Classroom Material For Instruction.**

One aspect of cultural respect and appreciation is maintaining educational professionalism for students who speak a language other than English. These children face different challenges in their classes that primary English speaking classmates never do. While it's important for an educator to put a focus on these students to make sure that they aren't falling behind, it's as equally important to remember that putting too much emphasis on these students may become more of a hindrance than a supportive tool. There are methods to educating ELL students that allow them to be able to have an easier time with their time in class while they're increasing their proficiency in English. Byrnes and Cortez (1992) discuss that "In classrooms with patterns and routines, children don't have to figure out what is going on every day. They can concentrate on the language and what they are supposed to be learning" (pg. 76). Providing students with routines and patterns to follow creates both a stable environment for all students, and give ELL students a better chance for success in their education. Rather than having to worry about what's going to be happening when they walk through the door, routines and patterns take away that obstacle and help reduce anxiety and worry that a student may possess. A part of an educator's responsibility is to be sure that their students are in a promising learning environment that sets them up for success. In the idea of creating a successful environment for students, questions such as what routines work the best? How should teachers speak with their students?

Are there any kind of key words that should be brought up while giving instructions? These are points of interest that I wanted to have answered in my research.

When it comes to North American classrooms, more often than not, the educator of the students was born and raised in the United States. There are teachers from other countries and cultures, but for the most part they will have an American background, and were previously educated in the United States. Because of this, the information taught to students about other cultures and ethnicities comes from second hand knowledge, and is prone to inadvertent inaccuracies and biased perspectives. Whether these come from the curriculum, based on the amount of lesson time reserved for teaching the information, or from the educator themselves on what they find to be more important to teach or have more interest in personally, this will be the primary means of students learning about other cultures. While these obstacles may exist from second hand knowledge sharing, there are methods that both educators and students can implement in order to help reduce these issues.

One of which is for educators to change the way that they handle discussions of other countries and ethnicities. In social studies, analyzing the writing of authors is a primary means of learning of historical perspectives on people and events. To do this effectively, an educator must be well versed in both the author and the subject matter that's being read. As Dieterich (1972) states, it's important to “-not only understand the literary environment from which it emerged, but [they] must also learn the significant facts about the history and culture of the writers and should make an effort to understand their national or racial experience in order to comprehend the significance of their writing” (pg.144). It's not enough to simply analyze a text for what it says, but to look at both the environment it was written in and the environment that the author comes from as well. In doing this, students can become more aware of perspective biases within

their resources, and learn of different inconsistencies that exist within studying historical events. As the old saying goes, history is written by the victors, and for the most part this is true. It is those who win wars that often get to tell of the events that transpired, and it is the perspective of those who lose that becomes lost in time. Students who learn of this concept can perform more thorough research to learn about whether or not the information they're learning is entirely accurate.

The same goes for the lessons that they learn in school. Due to the fact that textbooks often take years to write and then are used for years after, the information within them can become outdated or inaccurate over time. A teacher needs to be aware of this to be able to point out to students where different aspects, such as used language or historical facts depicted, are in need of modification. A book that was written in the late 1800s will have different diction when talking about non-white individuals than a book that's written in the early 2000s. As an example, one can look at the representation of men and women throughout history in older textbooks. An evaluation of outdated textbooks by Otlowski discussed how in "A study carried out by Ansary and Babii (2003) concluded that `women often appeared less visible than men` and women `were more visible in indoor passive activities and were placed in traditional roles.'" (2003, pg. 4). Not only can this type of misinformation taught to students give misinformation of the events of history, but also create a bias in their own perceptions of society. Education should be about expanding students' perspectives and deepening their understanding of all different subjects and topics.

As the information within textbooks can become outdated, curriculum taught across the country can also become outdated as well. Though students in public education all learn the same subject matter, the information explained in that subject matter can be different in scope. In



America, the perspective of historical events changes when looking at what is taught to students in the northern states and students in southern states. Mint Julep textbooks, a name given to southern textbooks which is based on the popular southern Mint Julep drink, have been known to disregard or even modify historical information that can be found in textbooks written by authors from the north. Looking at 20th century textbooks as an example, when discussing the events of slavery and the Civil War, it's been known that Southern historians have often created "depictions of slaves as content and happy, as well as the war being fought for states' rights" (Bohan, 2020, pg. 139). Making a brighter and less negative portrayal of the dark history that exists in the Southern half of the United States - Mint Julep textbooks have a significant bias within them that can have a distinct modification of how history is perceived by students. The students who learned from these textbooks are some of the adult educators of today. Northern textbooks, on the other hand, have their own set of biases that often have a pattern of leaving less depiction and detail to Southern leaders, and put more emphasis on figures who fought against those individuals. Such can be seen in McLaughlin's, a Northern textbook author, writing about President Lincoln's assassination in which he "implicated, by extension, many Southerners in Lincoln's death" (Bohan, 2020, pg. 145).

These biases of historical events, and the individuals who played parts within them, lead to a distinct change in the lessons taught to students across the United States of America. To bring in different cultural perspectives into the classroom for students to learn and understand, an educator must be certain that their information is truthful and accurate. As stated before, while the subject matter may be the same across the country, the details discussed are often what become changed and modified. Social studies falls into a problematic scenario in which students often think that the historical events discussed in class have all been resolved and no longer play

a part in our modern day society. Looking at the example of the teaching of the Civil War, students often receive the idea that because the war ended in the 1800s, that social and racial issues have been since worked out and are no longer as much of a factor. Because of this, “Many students, understandably, assume that these issues are in the past and we are now a compassionate, caring democracy—a model for other peoples” (Nelson & Pang, 2006, pg. 116). This can prove to be problematic when including the cultural perspectives and issues of other groups of people from around the world in the classroom, as students will feel a distant distinction between what happened in the past, and what is currently happening now.

This brings in the importance for educators to bring to light for their students difficult questions and conversations that affect our modern day way of life. To not stray away from topics that may make people uncomfortable, because this is how we learn and understand the problems that still face our modern day society. To show students that biases still exist and that they aren't only visible or represented in the teachings of the past. It's becoming increasingly recognized in importance for teachers to have more uncomfortable conversations with their students about subjects such as racial identities. “As a White teacher working with students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, [he] intentionally examine [his] own place in an institutionalized system that gives me privilege and power based on [his] race” (Martell, 2013, pg. 67).

One method of doing this is to bring in material to the classroom that handles current modern issues, such as newspapers or clips from different news broadcasts. In doing this, educators can make way in “creating real-life curricula as a basis from which teachers can help students shape their own growing understandings of race and racism” (Brown, 2011, pg. 11). While bringing in texts from authors of different cultures and ethnicities may still create a feeling

of division for students who don't directly relate to the topics being covered, bringing in material that talks directly about the community that students live within can help bring the ideas covered in class more to life. Bringing this type of realism into the classroom not only creates a more realistic version of the world to students' education, but also teaches them to see that how they experience the world may not be the same as how others perceive it. This not only helps students to develop more empathy and compassion for others, but also clear up any kind of misconceptions about pre-European colonization history that they may have.

An issue with teaching history in the American public school system is that it's been center focused around the teaching of European history. While the country of the United States has deep historical roots that originate in Europe, there are a vast amount of ethnicities and nationalities that also have their own ties in the history of the creation to the modern day country. But these other ethnicities and nationalities are often overshadowed by the stories and events of white-European history. Along with this overshadowing, events depicted prior to European colonization are often imaged as being less civilized than they actually were. An observation by Kaomea was done at an elementary school once, in which indigenous teaching was just recently being introduced into the curriculum. The students were tasked with giving a presentation about Hawaiian history, and how islanders lived prior to the period of colonization. Kaomea (2005) reported, "The children's presentations and the textbooks they draw from depict precontact Hawai'i as a dark and scary world with merciless rulers, senseless rules, and harsh life or death consequences" (pg. 28). European centered teaching often describes colonization as the means of spreading civilization to unruly or "wild" (Kaomea, 2005) areas of the world. That the Europeans were the ones to spread culture and civility around the world, when it actuality that is simply not true, as they were simply just spreading their own ideas and beliefs of what civility looks like.

Ironically, teachers often need just as much multicultural teaching as their students do. While for students it's to teach avoidance of racism and to increase understanding of others societal life experiences, the multicultural teaching of educators often - but not limited to - white educators in most cases, is for reconstructing their already preset conceptions of different cultures. Many teachers, while educated and experienced in their field of study, have come from generations in which multicultural education was not a priority. They've also been apart of an American educational system, which hasn't made this become a priority in primary and secondary education until more recent years. Howard (2016) says, "Too often we expect White teachers to be what they have not learned to be, namely, culturally competent professionals" pg. 6). This is primarily due to the fact that white educators don't have the same personal backgrounds or cultural experiences as their students of color. This creates a disconnect from the multicultural lessons that they themselves are teaching to their students. Which only adds emphasis on the fact that educators themselves need to be also educated in the lessons that they'll be teaching to their students. This creates a more accepting and meaningful classroom environment, while also making sure that educators are teaching accurate lessons with as little of bias as possible.

### **Theme 2: How Technology Affects Student Academic Achievement**

It has been recognized and acknowledged that differentiation of instruction is a highly effective strategy to utilize when working to promote student learning and achievement. Due to the events of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the transition both educators and students had to make from in person learning to online learning, this strategy became much more difficult to manage. Thus, this next section of the literature review will focus on how learning through means of technology has an impact on classroom success rates. In the midst of the coronavirus

pandemic, students have been reliant on virtual distance learning. Classes that were once originally in-person are now directed and taught online. While this still creates an environment that students can work with one another and the teacher, it provides a whole new set of challenges for all individuals involved. For my research, I focused on how a learning environment changes when technology is utilized as the main medium for students.

With this new form of learning environments, the ability to be literate in technology has become more important than ever. With in person classes, students can often get by with paper and pencil utilities. They are able to take notes, complete assignments, and keep up with their classroom studies with these tools. However, as online-distance learning has become more mainstream with everyday classes, due to the pandemic that has swept the country, the use of computers has become the main mode of success. A discussion of technology literacy importance was created by Judson (2006), who stated that “as technology literacy improves, the ability to use technology as a mediation tool also develops. In turn, learning is better facilitated” (pg. 274). Being able to help students become familiar and experienced with using technology in an academic setting is just as important as helping them learn subject content. These two concepts go hand-in-hand with one another, students need to be literate in technology to be successful in their classes, and to be successful in their classes they need to understand the content.

Because the two concepts of technology and classroom learning have become ingrained with one another, educators need to wonder if whether or not students are receiving the same quality of education now as the students prior to them who were. One thing to consider when wondering about this kind of information, is whether or not the use of technology as beneficial to learning as working by hand. It’s often be found in studies that students often benefit from

writing their notes by hand, due to acts of muscle memory and having a physical connection to what they're working on. With systems such as typing, while the process of thinking is still being used, individuals may be losing the personal connection to the notes that they're creating that would exist in hand writing information. Anthony, Yang, and Koedinger (2008), studied student success in mathematics with fractions in regards to typing and handwriting. Students were taught the same fractions as one another, with the main difference that some were using handwriting methods to solve the problems, and their classmates were typing and solving the problems. As a result of the study, it was found that "These results show that handwriting does indeed afford students a higher degree of transfer to paper because it does not involve a modality switch from training to testing" (Anthony et al., 2008, pg. 7). I found this to be interesting, considering that my original thoughts about the concept of handwriting versus typing would lead to the result that students who rely on handwriting would do better academically. Interestingly enough though, as the results of the research showed, learning through technological mediums doesn't create a situation in which students are unable to understand or comprehend content. It may create a different feel to academics, but it doesn't necessarily take away from the students' ability to succeed. Along these lines, Mangen, Walgermo, and Brønning (2013), studied the differences of reading comprehension when reading on paper and on screen. Being specialized in social studies, reading comprehension is a vital skill that I see as being most important to succeed in the content area. With online learning, students are more likely to have class readings be found and read online, rather than being put into a physical paper format. The study focused on students' abilities to answer reading questions relating directly to the content, amount of words read, and a vocabulary test that was taken prior and after the test to see if students were able to directly learn from the text. In contrast to the study done on mathematics, reading scores did show a difference

between students who were reading on paper in comparison to the ones reading on a computer screen. It described that “students who read texts digitally were more likely to receive lower scores on the reading comprehension tests compared to the students who read the texts on paper” (Mangen et al., 2013, pg. 65). A large issue that was shown in reading on digital text was that students were only able to see a portion of the text at one time, and had to put more effort into searching through the document than those with physical paper copies. Students with paper copies were able to both see the entire document with ease, and also search much more quickly without any technological interruptions.

As students begin to use technology at greater lengths for their academics, there is the idea that students are changing their thoughts as to what constitutes as academic behaviors or not. Williams (2005), *Leading Double Lives: Literacy and Technology in and out of School*, focuses on the idea that some students create a disconnect between similar actions that are done both in and outside of the classroom. The action of writing is focused in specific, and Williams (2005) details how students often feel a disconnect between the physical writing activities that they do in school and the typing that they do at home for their own enjoyment. With the majority of students going to school online, this disconnect can potentially have a negative impact on how they feel about their learning. When students leave their homes and go to a classroom, they’re in a new environment specifically tailored to learning and academics. There’s a physical disconnect between where they are supposed to act and be seen as students, and when they can be their own individual person. Studies indicate that most students “complain of not really getting to know their online classmates, and that online interaction is not as personal as face-to-face interaction” (Dorniden, 2005, pg. 2). This can have a large hindrance on their enjoyment of actually attending online classes, and in return impact what it is that they actually get out of their online lessons.

With online classes though, this physical disconnect lessons, and students begin to merge the ideas of home and school together. This highlights the question of whether or not students are actually able to learn as successfully in their now online classes, in comparison to the physical classes that they were once a part of.

It's due to this change in physical location of schooling that educators may need to rely on more in-depth teaching methods, such as deep scaffolding, to reach students more efficiently in their classes. ELL students in specific are at a higher risk and disadvantage in this online scenario, as it can be more difficult to keep up with what's being taught to them through a video conference call. Brown and Broemmel's research (2011), dedicated to the idea of deep scaffolding methods with ELL students, found that one of the most important things an educator can do for these students is to provide easy access to documents read in class. Allowing ELL students to be able to reference text documents with ease can help them outside of the class lessons and provide a remedy to any kind of learning obstacle they are working through. One way that this can be done is by sending these students a PDF file of the readings directly, so that they don't have to navigate through deep online sources to find what they need. Known as "priming," with access to documents ELL students can preview them prior to lessons, which then once in class "The text has already become more comprehensible to ELLs, and they are ready to begin tackling the text" (Brown & Broemmel, 2011, pg. 36). Rather than having them struggle during the lesson, and then become more comfortable after the fact as they work through it outside of the lesson, ELL students will be able to have a chance to become familiar with different concepts and vocabulary and have more of a chance to participate with what's being taught to them. In respect to this type of scenario, being able to communicate with the educator, and receive formal feedback on assignments is crucial to know whether or not true understanding



is being reached. Unfortunately though, with this new system of online learning being placed onto students, having assignments be turned in on time can be a major issue within the classroom. This is both a hindrance to the students - as they will receive lower grades until turned in and in return higher stress levels - but also on their educators as well, as they aren't as knowledgeable on how a student is actually doing within their classroom. It has been found "that key frustrations commonly found among [online] instructors were a lack of interaction with students and difficulty providing feedback in a timely manner" (Brown & Broemmel, 2011, pg. 38). Having a lack of understanding on how to utilize online resources, not having a full understanding of the online assignment, or not being able to complete an assignment on time, can all be fixed by creating modified assignments for students with specific learning needs during this time of online instruction.

Scaffolding instruction is often described as being the most successful method of teaching, in which educators allow students to become self reliant in their academics and not have to rely as much on heavy instruction. In social studies, this often comes along with teaching students how to take efficient notes when reading, or how to analyze different documents to be able to pull all useful information out to be utilized in a variety of ways. Within the overarching aspect of scaffolding are different variations of high leverage practices that are useful for educators to utilize in their classrooms to help their students. One specific practice that I see as being most beneficial for students in an online scenario is to use "Explicit goals help teachers to maintain coherent, purposeful, and equitable instruction over time" (Martin-Raugh et al., 2016, pg. 37). With teaching students who have been thrown into the world of online classes, having very clear and explicit goals and instructions can help keep students not only on track, but also help relieve any anxieties or worries that students may have through this new system of school

that they're learning. Having these explicit goals of how the classroom should be ran and how students should act in their online classes can also create a sense of normalcy for students who aren't used to online learning. Having distractions such as personal items or family members, who wouldn't normally exist within the classroom, become a detriment to students learning abilities and can often have negative impacts on their success. To help with this, and begin in the early stages of scaffolding in which students need to learn how to become more reliant on their own learning processes, educators need to create an environment - to the best of their abilities - that students feel as comfortable within as they would within a physical classroom. This falls in line with the understanding that "When [students] perceive their online collaboration activities as useful and the platform as easy to use, they will become active participants" (Kahlid, 2019, pg. 6). Scaffolding instruction will become much more effective and appropriate for students online once this has been achieved, otherwise they won't truly be able to become self-reliant in their learning and will always need to lean on and utilize their teacher for assistance.

### **Theme 3: Utilizing Collaborative Learning Within the Classroom**

Differentiation and changes in the academic environment are important considerations for successful and effective teaching within the classroom. However, an educator cannot do all of this work on their own. By creating a collaborative learning environment which fosters and encourages communication and cooperation, students can help one another build a strong foundation for their learning success (Vygotsky, 1978).

This final subtheme will focus on the importance of acts of communication and cooperation among students in the classroom. It's no surprise that the world of academics is a fairly individualistic environment. While working along side their peers through their classes, students are graded and tested on an individual basis. Because of this, some students may feel a

discomfort towards the ideas of group work, in which their grades now become more dependent on the work of other people. They no longer have a full grasp of control to the type or quality of work that is done, which in turn can create more anxieties or frustrations that wouldn't necessarily exist if they were doing an assignment/project on their own. However, group work and collaboration have shown to not only be effective in many instances, but also beneficial for students in the long run. Not only does it create a system in which students can work together in a more comfortable manner, but also it allows them to learn how to interact with others and develop social skills. There are many different ways that an educator can create a meaningful and beneficial learning environment that utilizes both individual and cooperative learning in a supportive way to students' academic lives.

One of the ways that an educator can do this, is through the use of technology in the classroom. In today's day and age, technology and education go hand in hand in various amounts of ways. Including through online classrooms, where students are on a virtual call with one another rather than being in the same room. But with concepts such as live document sharing where students can work on an assignment simultaneously, and discuss with one another about how they want to go about their work. It is interesting to note that working in a group environment, demonstrates that "Individuals working cooperatively tend to value heterogeneity and diversity more than do individuals working competitively or individualistically" (Clevenger, 2018, pg. 11). This can be attributed to the fact that they are being exposed to one another in a social way, but also that their perspectives of others change as well. In a competitive environment, individuals think of others as opposing forces. The main goal is to end up on top and surpass all others. In this kind of thought process, an individual must try to think of how they can be better than those around them, and find a means of staying better. In a non-competitive,

but still individualistic, environment the emphasis lies more on finding a way to succeed and maintaining that way. Others around you can succeed as well, and ideas can be based off each other, but in the end the work is all individually different. Both of these scenarios have the common theme of being an advocate for your own learning. Which can be an advantage in it's own way, but the social concept of being able to help and relate with others is lost.

Another way that educators can utilize groupwork to create a more effective cooperative learning environment is by choosing the right moments for when to have students work together. In a study based around the concepts of using group work in the classroom that was conducted by Bliss, it was found that teachers within social studies often follow a pattern of choice of when they utilize groupwork. In a set of interviews with 40 high school social studies teachers, it was asked of participants to choose three classroom objectives that they focus on bringing students together for collaborative work. Results of the study showed that “Teachers who used groups frequently (as least once every two weeks) had first and second choice objectives that were quite similar to those of other teachers : essential concepts in history and government and critical thinking skills” (Bliss, 1989, pg. 308). For both of these class objectives, group work is an effective choice on how students can become more solidified in their understanding of classroom subject material. Students working together on essential concepts is a great system for testing preparation and presentation creation. When having conversations and discussions about essential concepts, all students involved benefit in some way. Students can quiz one another, ask each other clarifying questions, and learn about one another's thought processes which can help give other perspectives and insights that weren't thought of prior. In terms of critical thinking skills, group work in this regard can help students with their academic problem solving skills, analysis for research projects or presentations, and hold small group discussions that tackle

complex questions and issues that can be discussed later with the entire class as a whole. In order to be able to properly identify the most opportune time for group work, an educator must be both in tune with the classroom dynamics of their students (does the class as a whole actually handle groupwork well or is there a general tendency to become distracted and disengaged?) as well as knowing what points of a lesson can become more academically beneficial by allowing classmates to talk with one another. Knowing these two factors of classroom management can help make sure that class time is used in the most efficient manner, and as limited time as possible is lost due to class activities that aren't executed at the right moment.

Education is a powerful tool when it comes to how individuals interact with one another. Being able to understand how specific events and actions have underlying causes and consequences that can be felt for years to come is taught through the use of social studies. Most individuals within America are taught from a young age that when they get older, they need to get a job that not only makes them enough money to survive on their own, but also one that they enjoy doing. Unfortunately though, these two concepts don't always equal out to one another. As students climb through their levels education though, often what can be seen is that "education makes people more concerned with performing meaningful voluntary work than with maximizing their wealth" (Gilead, 2009, pg. 10). This most often stems from the acts of cooperative assignments and environments in the classroom. Students begin to learn and understand that their lives are not all separated, and that the actions they make have impacts on those around them, both in the classroom and in the communities that they live within. In other cases, it has been found that "having students engage in cooperative learning results in higher achievement, greater retention, more positive feelings by the students about each other and the subject matter, and stronger academic self esteem, compared to competitive and individualistic

learning” (Johnson, 2008, pg. 29). At younger ages, having classrooms that are cooperative and allow for students to communicate with one another on an open basis can help strengthen these ideas and concepts of a positive social community.

While there are many different benefits to group work and collaboration within the classroom, there are aspects of the process that aren’t completely positive. One of which is supported on the social relationships that students have with their classmates. While students having friends within their classes isn’t necessarily a problem, these relationships can have strong impacts on student performance in their academics. In a study done on student productivity within group work, Janssen and Wubbels (2016) found that many students “described that feelings of friendship in the group sometimes inhibited them from working seriously and constructing good arguments” (pg. #112). When working in groups together, friends often have no problem holding conversations with one another, the main problem is though that often these conversations are not related to the classroom material. Getting off track with others or not being able to maintain a serious conversation can be a large obstacle to overcome in group settings. There is also an opposite effect to this, in which students are grouped with students whom they normally don’t ever interact with. In this scenario, students may have limited discussion and spend most of the dedicated time sitting in silence or working individually rather than together. This can be exceptionally difficult in social studies, where students often can often get lost within details of history, ignore the readings assigned, or have a disinterest in the subject matter, causing them to have a lack of participation in both small and large groups.

In an online environment, as the Covid-19 pandemic has required students across Oregon to experience, the use of breakout rooms is most utilized for group work collaboration among

students. Breakout Rooms are a system utilized with online classes, where students are broken apart from the main call and into separate small groups that are set up by the teacher. Like many other systems of online collaborative work, this online tool has its own set of advantages and disadvantages that educators and students alike need to both work with and around to maintain the most successful classroom environment possible when working during this pandemic. Research has found that “weaker language learners find it beneficial that the closed audio environment obliges them to talk...[while] attending to technical problems engages too much lesson time from both the teacher and student” (Siltala, 2005, pg. 229). Being in private online rooms, rather than in a shared physical classroom space, allows for students to be able to both hear one another and talk with one another more clearly than with all of their classmates speaking around them as well.

The question emerges from these obstacles of how an educator can make an efficient and effective classroom through the use of collaborative work. How can someone specifically in social studies create a system of participation that can overcome the challenges of that arise when there are friend-groups forming or in cases in which students may feel more isolated in their group settings? There are different strategies that an educator can implement within the groupwork to make it more successful for students, as well as different kinds of group work that can help boost student creativity and achievement levels. One idea that has been shown to promote high results is the act of roleplaying in a lesson. As discussed by Garvey (1967), “By assuming the roles of others, students acquire a better understanding of events in history, methods of government, conduct of international relations, and problems in social relations than is the case when more conventional methods of instruction are used” (pg.19). To have students pretend that they are a person in history, or a part of an event, can help with understanding

concepts of the subject as well as boosting memory abilities. This keeps students from being able to zone out as well in class and become a part of the material, rather than only listening to lectures and reading on different subjects. This type of teaching can also bring students within the class together in a more interactive and positive way, as they are required to work together in a way that's different from reading together and filling out a worksheet. As with every teaching strategy though, this method of role playing can have it's own downsides that need to be watched out for and overcome if they arise. One major problem that can occur is that student's aren't prepared enough on their roles to efficiently role play the scenario presented by their teacher. Blatner (1995) puts this into a great analogy, in which when a teacher simply just assigns a role to a student to portray without any kind of detail or discussion of the role, this "isn't enough information and those thrown into this situation in that fashion will feel as if they'd been tossed into a pond and told to learn to swim" (Blatner, 1995, pg. 4). Proper and thorough guidance for students is required in order to make a role-playing exercise be actually useful to student's learning experience. However, during the time of a pandemic in which students are in their own homes online rather than within the same classroom as one another, group work becomes much more difficult to plan effectively.

### **Conclusion**

Over the course of working through my research for these three different themes of my Action Research Project, I found that they could be connected to one major overarching idea that I want to hold for my own future classroom. Education should be operated within a "person-centered" mindset by the educator. In which making communication and connections between everyone in the classroom should be a major priority. If students are in a classroom that they feel is a safe space to speak their ideas and opinions, they'll be more inclined to do so. This is much



more difficult to obtain within an online classroom, due to the fact that when a student speaks up into their microphones, every person in the classroom hears what they have to say. The act of privacy and being able to discretely say something to their friend is taken away within this context. This begins the start of the disconnect, for students, from feeling like they're still in a regulated school environment. Adding in the factor that nobody has their cameras on during online class meetings, so nobody is seeing any of their friends faces, only creates more of a disconnect for students from their academic work, responsibilities, and effort.

When moving back to the physical classroom, and having students physically back in school, not only will this be a major shift in student behaviors, but it will also change the dynamics of the classroom completely. Students will no longer be able to hide behind their cameras that were turned off, or their microphones that were muted. This is important due to the fact that it will provide me with a chance to put this research to use, and make true comparisons to both what I learned through my research and what I experienced through student teaching. When students come back into the physical classroom, there will be many more chances for student participation/engagement during classroom presentations and discussions, and I will also be able to facilitate more group work activities efficiently. Keeping students engaged in the classroom material - whether their working individually or within groups - is a key concept that I have seen as being a way of creating a successful classroom. Whether it's online or in person. This is a concept that I have learned through all of my research, and hope to be able to successfully bring into the classroom that I will be student teaching within, as well as the future classroom I will be professionally teaching. The next chapter will focus on how I used what I have learned from this research to refine my own goals for teaching, and then study my teaching improvement in line with my goals, in my practicum classroom.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Context of the Study**

For my Action Research Project study, I worked with a group of middle school students online with the use of Google Meetings. If their classes had been in-person, rather than online due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, I would have been working with these students in a fairly large school within the area of Tigard, Oregon. The school itself is broken down into three grade levels, 6th, 7th, and 8th, with a rough average of 30 students per classroom. However, with online classes, this number has lowered to an average of 15 students. The reason for this is how classroom setups had to change in the transition from the school building to the computer. Language Arts and Social Studies have become combined in their responsibilities towards students. Every day I see two groups of students - one in the morning and one in the afternoon - and for each group I provide them with a lesson in social studies and then a lesson in language arts. Each class period is set for 50 minutes of instruction. Because of this, rather than there only being three social studies classrooms sharing the whole group of students in the eighth grade, there are now six teachers (three social studies and three language arts) - all of who teach the two different subjects. This change in educator responsibility has also created a change in the amount of instruction time that teachers have to give to their students. I've learned that in the actual classroom, rather than only seeing two groups of students for 100 minutes total, I would be seeing six groups of students for 45 minutes each. Needless to say, this switch to online education has created a large change in both the speed at which the classroom runs at, but also the amount of responsibility teachers have to educate their students on multiple different subjects.

While I am unable to speak about other grade levels or subjects, eighth grade social studies has been working through creating their own curriculum of lessons. When making the shift to online school, and the difference in speed that would affect classroom management, the school district had adopted the Florida Virtual Curriculum for educators to work through. Unfortunately though, when reviewing what all would be taught to students - specifically social studies - the teaching team found that the curriculum was full of misinformation and biased opinions that they did not feel comfortable teaching to students. With permission from their principal, the social studies teachers have been working together to form their own specific lessons that mirror what they would normally teach with the standard curriculum that they would teach in person. A major challenge that has arisen from taking on this task though, is making modifications for lessons being in an online format, as well as making sure that only the most important information is being presented on account that the classes are moving at a slower pace and not all topics can be covered. The teamwork that has been required of the social studies and language arts teachers has been incomparable during this specific school year, from sharing the responsibility of setting up and making different lessons, to sharing these lessons and assignments with one another and sharing details about how they should be taught.

The teamwork between teachers is not only limited to those working within the same subject matter. Teachers of all grades are paired up with another educator, from their same grade level, to work with one another in regards to maintaining student participation and engagement in multiple subject areas. In the online world of teaching, these pairs of teachers share the same cohort of students to work with. For example, my mentor teacher is paired with an eighth grade science teacher, and they share the same groups of students. On any given school day, the students my mentor teacher and I see in the morning will be going to the science teacher she's

been paired with in the afternoon, and the students that he sees in the morning will see us in the afternoon. As a pair, they often work together in student-parent-teacher meetings, or staff conferences about student attendance and participation. This provides a great scenario to watch how students interact within different classes, and also compare teaching styles with one another to see if student success is consistent within different subject fields, or if motivation within classes can be improved in comparison to others.

When it comes to the demographics of the students that I help to teach, there is a surprising amount of ELL students within the one cohort. On her own, my mentor teacher was placed with fourteen English language learners, a number that is higher than any of the other eighth grade student cohorts at the school. All of these students vary in different language learning proficiency levels. Because of the online environment, these students, specifically, are facing more difficulties than their English speaking classmates. Technical difficulties, having to read instructions online, not being able to directly talk with their teachers, or even simply being able to work alongside their classmates and interact with them more personally, all have different negative impacts on these students and their success within the classroom. For these students, specific modifications have been made to make sure that they are able to achieve success in their education, and be able to learn in an effective and efficient environment. One of these modifications is the simple act of having special teaching assistance to pull these students out of the virtual classroom, into breakout rooms so that they can have more personalized and focused attention. These students who are pulled out are often those who are considered to be lower in their English language proficiency. Alongside this method of helping these students, my mentor teacher has also made the decision to excuse these students from any and all Language Arts work - putting a full focus for them on social studies. This is due to the fact that the work done in

social studies is often both connected to the work done in language arts, but also they are getting a large amount of practice in their academic reading and writing skills through the work of social studies. It's difficult enough for these students to keep up with all of their classes while learning English, so allowing them to have time to focus specifically on one class - such as social studies - is a tactic to help alleviate the amount of academic stress they may be feeling and help them have more success in their middle school experience.

Another strategy that is utilized for these students to help their success in this online environment is through the act of "differentiated assignments". These are not only for ELL students, but also students with specific plans such as IEPs or 504s. Differentiated assignments are modified to give students more assistance and provide more instruction than the standard assignment given to other students who don't have any differentiated learning needs. For example, if there is a reading assignment that requires students to analyze a primary source document and then answer a few questions about the document itself, a differentiated assignment may have sections of the document highlighted. It may also have example answers or sentence starters for students to reference when answering the questions. These modifications don't necessarily make the assignment easier by requiring students to do less work than their classmates, but provide assistance so that these students can be more independent and successful in their classwork. This can be made possible through the use of the online resource of Canvas. Canvas allows teachers to be able to separate assignments by specific students, which allows my cooperating teacher and myself create these differentiated assignments, allow specific students to be able to access them, and not compromise any kind of privacy with these students - due to the fact that students who aren't selected for having differentiated assignments will only see the standard assignment.

As for my role within the classroom, I have taken the role as the primary teaching instructor within the classroom. Students go to a specific Google Meets link that is designated as my virtual classroom, and interact with the lesson presentations that I have created. My mentor teacher is also present within the video call, but will have her camera turned off so that students only see myself and direct their questions and attention to me. My teacher's main purpose for being in the virtual classroom now is to make observations of my teaching, and be able to answer specific questions that I don't have the knowledge or ability to answer (such as technical submission questions or anything to do with going back to school in person). Overall though, since the start of the students second semester of school, I have been the primary instructor of both the class, and one of the main lesson planners for all other teachers in the social studies and language arts team.

### **Participants**

Because this study was designed using an action research approach, the main participant in the study is myself, as the teacher. As my learning progressed throughout my student teaching program, I became interested in a number of ideas that would help me to improve my instruction. Ultimately, I decided to focus on the main research areas outlined in my research question. To lend credibility to the results I will share from my self-study of my practice, it is important to describe my role in the classroom where I teach. In this section I will focus on describing my own classroom and my role as the teacher.

As stated in the prior section, I have become the primary instructor within my classroom, and the primary lesson planner for the social studies curriculum that is being moved through for eighth grade. It has become my role to take a basic idea, such as westward expansion, and form different slideshow presentations that I share out with the other eighth grade social studies and

language arts teachers. One major aspect that I have learned is that giving a slideshow presentation online is much more different than giving one in person. When in person, it's possible to see whether or not students are paying attention and are able to actually keep up with the information being presented. In an online classroom, due to the fact that students have a greater amount of distractions that exist outside of what the camera shows, they may not be giving their all to the lesson at hand and may be paying more attention to something else outside of their immediate schoolwork. This has been a major issue in my own student teaching experience, in which I have had to handle students who are not actually engaged or participating in the virtual classroom meetings. Because the school cannot legally require students to have their cameras on and show their faces on screen, students are able to hide behind their profile pictures and reduce their participation to the bare minimum. To alleviate this, my mentor teacher and I have been marking students absent when they don't engage with us after we have made multiple attempts to call their name out and allow them to participate, as well as sending out emails to families to make sure that parents are being kept aware of how well their children are actively participating within their online classes.

Another major issue that is apparent that I have seen in my classroom is the act of assignment submissions. Students are having a hard time keeping up on submitting their assignments on time. At the start of this whole pandemic situation, my teacher made a policy to her students that they could turn work in at any point, without any penalties. It doesn't matter when they turn something in, it only matters that they do turn something in. However, I'm seeing this to be a double edged sword. Eight months into this online school year, students are taking advantage of this policy and are constantly ignoring deadlines. While this may be making their lives easier during this emotional and stressful time, most students are adding more pressure onto

themselves by waiting until the last moment to be able to turn in assignments. Students have more time to finish any assignments that they need more time to complete for whatever reason that may be causing them to slow down in their schoolwork, but at the same time students have also become more stressed because they are falling behind in the assignments that they aren't turning in and have to work on later in the school year.

### **How I Studied My Teaching**

When I study my teaching, one major aspect that I am looking at is different reflections that I am writing about myself. I have been making a habit to write down my thoughts and feelings about the day. I have found that not only is this a great way for myself to keep track of what goes on day to day, but also to track how my personal thoughts and styles of teaching have changed throughout my student teaching experience. Being able to look back at different ideas that I had in the moment of teaching, or my perspective of different scenarios that occurred, without having to rely solely on memory to recall my thoughts and feelings is greatly helpful to see how far I have come in my student teaching experience. One example that I have regarding how my reflections can show my own personal growth as an educator is through the details that I write about what to discuss with students. When I began to teach students different lessons, and actually have a real role as an educator in the virtual classroom, I was writing down mini, detailed, lesson plans to use as a reference to guide myself through the day. From the different tabs on my internet browser that I would need to have open, to the specific slides that I would need to put more focus on, I wrote down everything that my teacher would do so that I could mimic her teaching style as much as I could. As time went on though, these notes changed as I grew into my own style of teaching, and relied less on notation references and became more



confident in my ability to hold discussions with students about the different topics we were covering.

Alongside my journal reflections, another way that I have been able to study my teaching is through the different lessons that I have prepared for students. When I first started to make slideshow presentations to teach to students, I not only utilized my mentor teacher a great amount for assistance, but I also had many text-heavy slides. Being an online class, I held the belief that students would be more successful if I wrote out everything that I wanted to discuss with them. What I didn't consider at the time, was that students often will become intimidated or discouraged if a presentation has a large amount of reading. Though I was talking them through each bullet point that I had made, seeing a wall of text on their screens puts them into a more negative position, and causes them to be more likely to stop paying attention. As I've made more presentations, I've changed my style to having less text on screen, and more verbal discussions with the students. I have found that students are not only more interactive with the different questions that I ask of them, but their answers are more detailed and thoughtful. In this regard, I have found that while classes are online and students aren't always turning in their assignments, they are learning information from the class sessions we are teaching and they are gaining knowledge.

As the program continued into the Spring, my class transitioned to in person learning. During this period of time, though short, it was imperative for me to study how my online teaching style compares to how I talk to the students in person. In order to do this, I needed to pay more attention towards the changes of how students behave and interact with in person learning. For instance, are there students who become more talkative during in person learning versus when they're in online learning? This will be something that I need to keep track of and

recognize the changes between the different class cohorts. Prior, as I work with students primarily online, I came to realize that the different cohort groups have different personalities. However, when students came back into the classroom again, will these different group personalities stay the same - or will they change? This was a focus point for myself to be able to recognize and understand the real differences in teaching styles and experiences when working with students online or in person. It also gave me a chance to examine how the different strategies I used to work with students online have changed since I moved into the physical classroom. The next chapter presents data from my study, including journal entries and lesson plans over time, to demonstrate how I integrated the research into my own teaching as well as demonstrating some of what I learned as I focused on these goals.

## Chapter 4

### Overview

When going through this project, and in collecting research, my main focus was pointed at looking at the effects of online learning and classroom management. With the CoronaVirus Pandemic, both students and teachers alike were thrown into an academic situation in which standard procedures and behaviors were changed dramatically. Because of this, my research efforts during my student teaching experience have been focused on three major questions that I felt could help not only improve my own teaching methods now, but would probably have an impact in the future. These questions were:

1. “Utilizing more differentiated material within the classroom”
2. “Create a successful environment for students to be able to work from home more efficiently”
3. “Encourage more collaboration between students within the classroom”.

When these goals were originally created and established, students were primarily working from home on their iPads within our virtual Google classroom. However, I found that once in-person learning became available again, my goals and observations had changed dramatically from my time spent online. I had also created modifications to my goals to encompass the changes experienced once the switch from the online environment to the physical classroom was implemented. Those changes were as follows:

1. “Utilizing differentiated classroom material and instructional methods to maintain student engagement”
2. “Create a welcoming environment for students to become reacclimated to working within the physical classroom environment”

3. “Encourage efficient interactions between students while still maintaining proper safety protocols”

Whether they were new to the school at the start of the year, or if they had been classmates in years prior, a large portion of their middle school experience has been spent in an online classroom. Different habits were formed while going to school at home, interactions between one another were changed, and these students became much more accountable for their own learning much sooner than they would have during a normal academic experience.

My research and findings will be presented a variety of different ways; differences in presentations that I created within a hypothetical setting and within a real life setting, as well as journal entries that I used to record my own thoughts prior and during teaching practice. Due to the unprecedented nature of this year, and the dramatic changes that have occurred for both myself and my students, the data presented will reflect on the changes in the academic experiences I had between online teaching and in person teaching.

### **Data Set One**

When collecting data about my own teaching, and seeing how I have made changes in my own methods - one specific aspect that I paid attention to was how my journal entries changed over time. A major aspect of my entries that I noticed changed dramatically was the confidence that I was demonstrating in my own writing. On the first page entry, there is a list of bullet points - all of which are detailing to myself the basic way on how to conduct the classroom. These journal entries, which were written during the time of online teaching, are heavily focused towards my goal “*Create a successful environment for students to be able to work from home more efficiently*”. In being new to these students and the method of teaching, I placed a great

amount of pressure to not only on making= sure that the class continued to move along smoothly, but also to maintain consistency on student routines.

Figure 1. - First Recorded Journal Entry on January 11th 2021

- You can mostly just read directly off the powerpoint slideshow - this isn't a formal TedTalk presentation that requires in depth detail on your own knowledge
- Use chat or Peardeck for responses - Peardeck allows for better student accountability
- You don't need to make the ELA lesson, but you will teach it
- Present the Peardeck to the students (share your screen) as well as provide them with a link to join into the Peardeck
- Make sure to bring up that the British went into debt after the French and Indian War and taxed the colonies to help repay debt
- Demonstrate where to go on canvas for split screen instructions and point out the Social Studies French and Indian War Week Work assignment

When this journal entry was written, I had only been observing how the classroom was ran by my mentor teacher. I had yet to teach a class at all, and I was preparing for my first lesson to be taught on January 12th 2021. At the time, we had been discussing the events leading up to the American Revolutionary War. The nervousness that I was feeling towards teaching the class can be seen at the fifth bullet point (“Make sure to bring up that the British went into debt after the French and Indian War and taxed the colonies to help repay debt”) in which I'm writing down specific information to be sure to say to students. This was also done for my own benefit, to make sure that I could remember the information as well and not tell students incorrect or misconstrued information. I was also putting a great amount of pressure on the actual

presentation portion of teaching, and the basic way that I should teach students the information being shown to them. Making sure to remember to share my screen with them, to provide them a link to join in on the Pear Deck presentation tool, to provide specific information about where to find assignments on their classroom Canvas page. Other early journal entries do look like this in a similar fashion, in which I wrote down each thing that my teacher was doing to manage and work through the day's lesson. With this, I would use it as a roadmap and would teach the classes in a way that replicated how my mentor teacher would teach.

Figure 2 - Journal Entry Recorded on February 8th 2021

“I have to set up my own lesson for my formal supervisor observation on Friday. I’ll be teaching it on Thursday and Friday for practice. I’m learning that this is more than just a basic presentation, and that I need to consider that these kids are actually learning from me. I need to be on top of all of this, and I need to be sure to know and understand everything that I’m talking about. Hopefully I’ll be able to actually answer the questions that they have for me.

It was during this reflective journal entry that I wrote that it can be seen that I’m not only connecting to the practice of teaching more, but I’m also seeing the importance of my actions as a practicing teacher. Though I’m a teacher candidate who is still learning more about the profession and the methods that go into it, I began to truly see and understand how I’m educating these kids. The information that I tell them will be carried off with them into the future, and there’s a great amount of responsibility in making sure that the information I present is factual. It was at this point in the process that I was starting to take on a more concrete role within the classroom. I was teaching two out of the four classes, Monday and Friday afternoons, and was beginning to grow in my own confidence. In regards to the goal of creating an efficient online

classroom environment for students to be successful in while working from home, it's this type of confidence that would allow me to be able to help students in all different ways that they may need. Whether that's answering questions in class, responding to emails, explaining assignments, or being able to present them with more detailed information that's not directly on the slideshow presentation, I was beginning to be more comfortable with running the online classroom on my own.

Figure 3 - Journal Entry Recorded March 1st 2021

"The social studies peardeck is all about the Battle of Yorktown. It's all lecture and videos, with no student engagement. It's dense in information, but I was able to make it through the first day of classes. It just feels weird to talk the entire time. I may just call on students for ideas to liven the class up a bit"

This journal entry is significant for two major reasons, it's the last journal entry that I had recorded and it demonstrates how I started to bring in my own changes and modifications to lessons within the classroom. I was beginning to take more ownership for how I wanted to teach these students information, and I was starting to think of variations of bringing in student involvement to build engagement and inclusion. I was not the creator of the Battle of Yorktown presentation, and when going through it with the Monday cohort of students, I felt that it would be necessary to bring student inclusion into the lecture for the fact that it would be much easier for them to become involved with distractions. By requiring students to respond to different questions or by asking them of their own opinions, it not only creates accountability but makes sure that they are keeping up and paying attention to the lesson itself. In looking at the different journal entries that I had written, this exemplified the confidence that I gained in teaching. No

longer was I writing down specific bullet points on what I need to cover with students, no longer was I detailing how I'm unsure about different aspects of the classroom or my responsibilities as an educator. This was a moment in which I was making changes to the class that I felt was necessary. To create a more efficient online learning environment for students to be able to keep up with their academics, and to do what I can to give a more efficient and effective chance for student success. It's at this moment that I'm no longer following my mentor teacher's methods directly, and I'm starting to form my own style of teaching. I'm starting to form my own opinions and ideas of how the classroom should be ran, and the type of teacher-student relationship that I want to form with my students.

In the act that this was my last written journal entry in my notebook, I found that this was where I stopped focusing on recording my thoughts after each class. I had switched to writing basic notes regarding attendance records or names of students who aren't participating as much as expected to. I had hit a point in my teaching experience where I had become comfortable and confident in how I was managing the class, and how I was interacting with students, that I had established a system of routines and each class was running efficiently. My journal entries and notes focused less on me, and more on my students. March was also the month that we had learned that students would be returning to in person school by April 19th, and a greater amount of effort to explain to students what that would look like, how their parents can make the choice to be in person or stay online, and preparing future lessons for once students came back into the classroom was becoming the main priority for myself and my mentor teacher. It was with the confidence that I had gathered from working online with these students that I was able to transfer to in-person teaching with more confidence than when I had begun teaching in January.



This is the moment that the goal made a transition to become *“Create a welcoming environment for students to become reacclimated to working within the physical classroom environment”*. Needing to reteach students acceptable behaviors and explain old and new classroom expectations during a pandemic was most imperative during the first week of classes. Making sure that students felt safe to be around one another, that they learned how to go through class without the different distractions that were once available to them at home but no longer in the classroom, and adapting to more personal public speaking are different examples of changes that students had to readjust to after their return on April 19th.

### **Data Set Two**

*“Utilizing differentiated classroom material and instructional methods to maintain student engagement”* was another goal that I had set up for myself prior to my student teaching experience. I didn’t want to have a sole focus on information that came from a textbook, I wanted to bring in all different perspectives and opinions about different subjects and topics to help give students a more rounded and detailed explanation of information. This was prior to my understanding and knowledge of how my mentor teacher was running her classroom. I learned that she and the other social studies teachers were actually going through the process of creating their own curriculum, and were setting up lessons and assessments on their own - rather than pulling from premade materials. This not only gave me ample opportunities to create lessons that held differentiated material and instruction, but also provided me a chance to look at past, hypothetical, lessons that I created within my college classes and compare them to actual lessons that I taught to students.

Figure 4 - Hypothetical Lesson Presentation about Manifest Destiny

**Manifest Destiny**

What

1. Railroads are being built towards the west
2. The Angel is carrying a book that reads "school Book"



**Manifest Destiny**

What


1. Railroads are being built towards the west
2. The Angel is carrying a book that reads "school Book"
3. The angel is laying Telegraph wire as well as she travels West



**Manifest Destiny**

What

1. Railroads are being built towards the west
2. The Angel is carrying a book that reads "school Book"
3. The angel is laying Telegraph wire as well as she travels West
4. Bones in the field show over hunting of the buffalo



**Manifest Destiny**

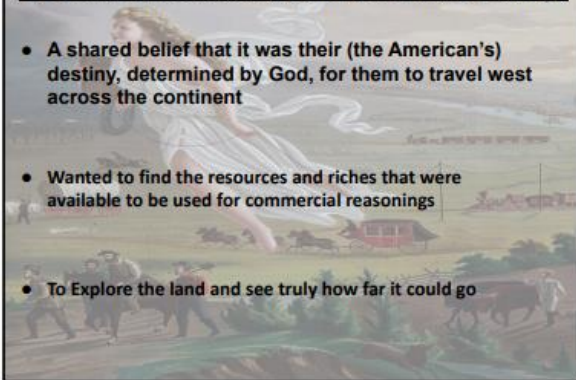
What

1. Railroads are being built towards the west
2. The Angel is carrying a book that reads "school Book"
3. The angel is laying Telegraph wire as well as she travels West
4. Bones in the field show over hunting of the buffalo
5. Changes in housing between the two groups of people



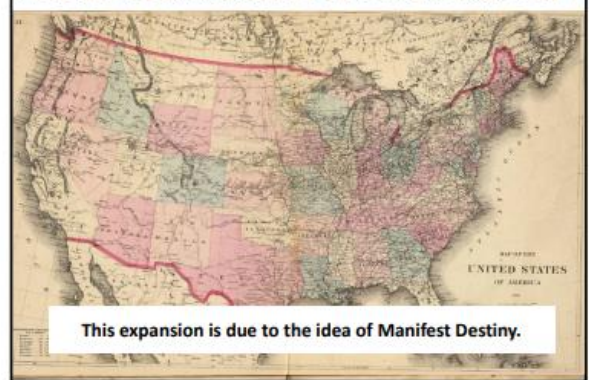

Figure 5 - Actual Lesson Presentation on Manifest Destiny

**What Were the Reasons Behind Manifest Destiny?**



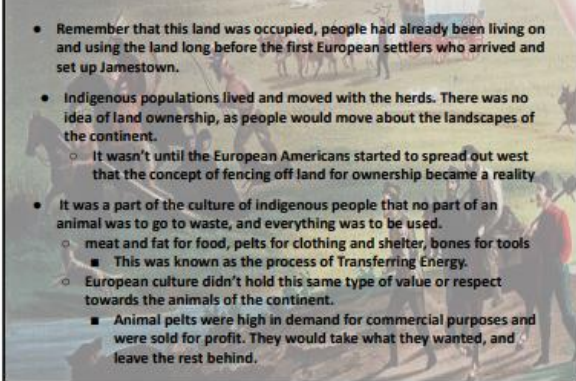
- A shared belief that it was their (the American's) destiny, determined by God, for them to travel west across the continent
- Wanted to find the resources and riches that were available to be used for commercial reasonings
- To Explore the land and see truly how far it could go

**The United States in 1816 . . . 1850 . . . and 1872**



This expansion is due to the idea of Manifest Destiny.

**What Happened To The Indigenous Populations?**



- Remember that this land was occupied, people had already been living on and using the land long before the first European settlers who arrived and set up Jamestown.
- Indigenous populations lived and moved with the herds. There was no idea of land ownership, as people would move about the landscapes of the continent.
  - It wasn't until the European Americans started to spread out west that the concept of fencing off land for ownership became a reality
- It was a part of the culture of indigenous people that no part of an animal was to go to waste, and everything was to be used.
  - meat and fat for food, pelts for clothing and shelter, bones for tools
    - This was known as the process of Transferring Energy.
  - European culture didn't hold this same type of value or respect towards the animals of the continent.
    - Animal pelts were high in demand for commercial purposes and were sold for profit. They would take what they wanted, and leave the rest behind.

**Analyzing Primary Sources**

1. Listen to the document being read aloud to you
2. Write in the Pear Deck response how this document relates to Manifest Destiny
3. Repeat for the second article on your own

Figure 4 demonstrates a hypothetical lesson that I had created in a college class prior to going through my student teaching experience. Having never spoken in front of a class before, I was unaware of what all would be necessary to include in my presentation. In looking at the example section from figure 4, after going through student teaching and making lessons that were actually taught to students, I can see that there is a large amount of redundant information that could have been presented in a more efficient way. The lesson in its entirety was to focus on how to analyze different imagery from history, in this case using the picture of Manifest Destiny made by John Gast in 1872, with a focus on students utilizing the questions “Who? What?”

Where? When? Why?” when going through their analysis. The main issue with the hypothetical lesson is that is all it focuses on. When pulling four consecutive slides from the presentation, they all handle the question of “What?” - in which students would be pointing out all different identifiable items, people, and scenery that they see in the image. Comparing this though, to the slides shown in figure 5, it becomes much more apparent that not only did I become more experienced in making real life slideshow presentations to show to students, but the amount of information discussed is much more in-depth and includes higher expectations of what students should be learning and keeping up with in class.

In figure 5, the slides discussed with students expand on the reasons behind Manifest Destiny, an image of how the United States of America evolved over the course of the 1800s, a discussion about the indigenous populations and how they were affected by the European-American settlers, and then a transition to reading and analyzing primary sources. In my hypothetical presentations that I created during different classes in my college program, I never initiated these detailed and in-depth modes of teaching. I had always assumed, and set up my presentations through these assumptions, that I would have a lesson dedicated to explanation of learning and then the next lesson would be set up through the application of that learning. Prior to being a part of my mentor teacher’s classroom, I had always had the thoughts and anticipation that I would create lessons plans or presentations that would be too difficult for students at a middle school level, so I would purposefully try and reduce the amount of detail and length that I could talk about a subject within a set period of time.

However, as I went through my online student teaching experience, I not only learned that my presentations need to be more detailed in information being presented, but also that middle school students are capable of handling a greater amount of knowledge than I originally

anticipated. When moving back into the physical classroom though, the concept of how much information should be presented to students on a slideshow changed in a manner that I did not expect.

Figure 6 - Example Slides from In Person Presentation About Nat Turner

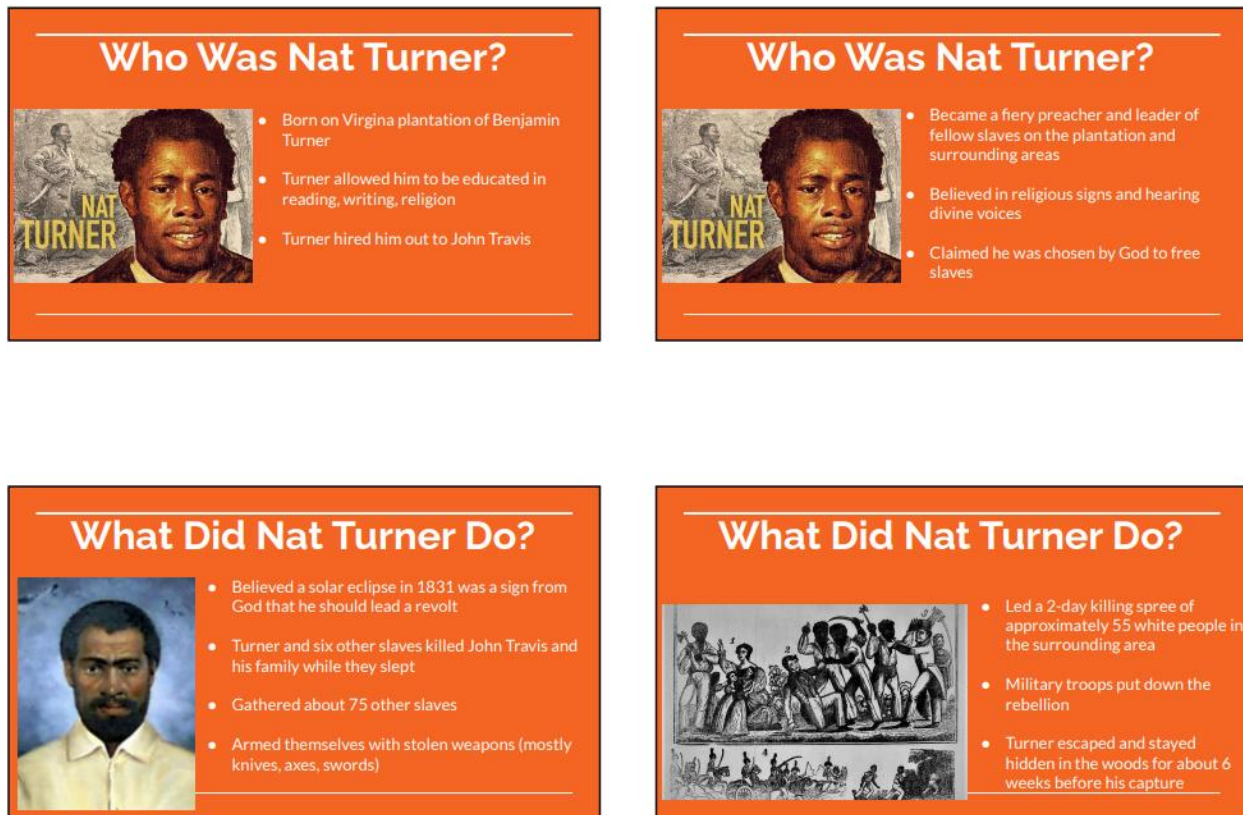


Figure 6 is an example set from an in person presentation that I used with my students about Nat Turner and the slave revolt he created back in 1831. Something interesting that can be found in this example is how the information is much more limited on the specific slides shown to students. This is due to the fact that when online, points that need to be covered or information that is most important needs to be stated both verbally and visually more explicitly. This is to help those students who either are having struggles with learning online, or who simply are not paying as much attention as they should be and who need to relook back at lecture slides for a

recapping of information. When in person though, I have found that it is both much easier to provide students with explanations of different bullet points, and to provide them extra details, as to make sure that students are actually paying attention and/or taking notes while I'm providing this information to them. This was information that I couldn't see while online teaching. Whether or not students had their cameras on, I would have to put a greater amount of details on slides in case students needed to relook at the slides online. While in person though, it's become much more apparent how seeing my student behaviors and habits physically, is a much more important aspect of managing the classroom. I have now learned that the classroom management skills that I learned with online school do not necessarily convert to the physical classroom. Due to the fact that students have had more distractions while in their home life than they do in the classroom. Also, it goes without saying that by being able to see students and how they act during the lesson itself, I am able to keep more accountability on my students within a physical classroom than I am within an online classroom.

All three of these figures shown (4, 5 and 6) demonstrate the progression that I have learned throughout my college experience and throughout my student teaching experience when it comes to creating lessons for students. When looking at the modified goal that I had made for myself, "*Utilizing differentiated classroom material and instructional methods to maintain student engagement*", these examples from presentations that I have made show a use of differentiation within the classroom. The style of the presentation, the amount of information placed on each individual slide, the different resources given to students to enhance their learning (Videos or primary source documents), and how I've implemented my own methods of teaching my students, have created a classroom that utilizes differentiated material and instructional methods. With the pandemic, it has been difficult to provide students with primary

source documents, as we aren't allowed to pass out materials to them physically. So either going through the documents as an entire class, or giving them out electronically, has been the main mode of providing students with this type of academic exposure.

### **Data Set Three**

My teaching goal three was, *“Encourage efficient interactions between students while still maintaining proper safety protocols”*. When working through this goal, I found that it was more difficult than I had anticipated it being. During the online classroom environment, group work was the most difficult aspect to manage as a teacher. Students would be placed into “breakout rooms” with other students, and would be expected to work with one another on the assignment at hand. However, unlike a physical classroom set up, the teacher cannot see or hear whether or not each group of students is working efficiently or staying on task. Having to periodically check in with each individual group was a way to connect with groups and be sure that they were collaborating, but that would only prove to be limited in effectiveness in the fact that students would be on their own again the moment the teacher leaves the breakout room. More often than not, as this was the main system of group work, students would sit silently together and wait until they were brought back into the main meeting room. Because of this, when I started my student teaching process, I tried to think of different ways that I could include collaborative work while still maintaining student accountability and success.

Figure 7 - Journal Entry of Patriots and Loyalist Venn Diagram Lesson (Revolutionary War Unit)

- To start the lesson, I could give a basic description of what it meant to be a loyalist and what it meant to be a patriot

- Break students into thirds, each group gets one section to specifically focus on
- In breakout groups (of three) each student focuses on describing either what constituted a patriot, or what constituted a loyalist. Each group could be given a primary source reading that is specific to their subject.
- We can debrief as an entire class and have each group give out at least one point that they came up with.
- Once all groups have shared, we'll then think of the similarities that are found in the differences (One example should be given to students, such as that both loyalists and patriots came from the country of England).

Figure 7 was a rough idea that I had put together while I was observing my mentor teacher's class. I had been a part of a few breakout groups, and learned how students interacted with one another, and at the time I had felt that this would be a way that I could get students to talk with one another and work together more efficiently. Holding students accountable, by asking each group to give a response, was something that I thought would at least get them thinking and talking about the assignment as a whole. As said before though, this was a major issue with online teaching. I wouldn't actually know if they were talking with each other, unless I joined their specific breakout room. Many times, when doing this, I found that students were working on their own - rather than with each other. Online, it was much easier for them to just work in solitary while sitting quietly in the breakout room. I can only imagine that this is due to the fact that they felt a disconnect from one another, and if there wasn't an adult/educator there to promote interactions and to push them to talk to each other, they didn't feel much incentive to do so.



However, as I've worked with these same students within the in-person classroom environment, I have found that they're not only comfortable with speaking to one another, but that I have to manage how much collaboration work I provide to them. More often than not, they want to talk to each other and they want to work together, especially with their friends who may be within the class. This has led me to having to create specific seating arrangements when I know we have group work setups, so that students aren't only working with classmates that they enjoy, but who will also provide them with the best academic support.

Figure 8 - Example Slide Demonstrating Group Work Efforts



Figure 8 is an example slide from a unit done with students, with in-person learning conditions, that required them to work together and share their own ideas and content together. In contrast to figure 7, which was created prior to my own experience of teaching students, something that can be seen as a major difference is the requirements of students. In my own, hypothetical, creation, I had students focusing on one aspect and learning together within their

groups about specific sources of information. In a real world situation, students are expected to take work that they've already completed and share it with their classmates. Something that I never considered when creating my own group work, prior to having student teaching experience, was to differentiate between different roles of the students. For example, in a group of three students, if one student is speaking - what are they supposed to be talking about? If a student is listening - how should they be responding? And should one student be writing down notes to present to the rest of the class? These are things that I didn't necessarily think about during my initial time as a student teacher, but now that I have had more experience working with my own students, and have gained experience in creating real-life lessons and presentations, I've found the importance in making sure that each student has clear and specific jobs within the groups that they're working in. Not only to keep each student on task and to complete the work that's expected of them, but also to make sure that there is no confusion on what's to be done during their time within their groups. I have learned that when it comes to assigning work for students to complete on their own, or within groups, the two most important aspects that can be given are explicit roles and specific responsibilities. While it's great to have students be able to think on their own, and create their own academic success and accomplishments, they still need to have some sort of guidance from their educators. This was something that I had not fully comprehended prior to starting my real student teaching experience.

With pandemic restrictions and safety protocols, group work is much more difficult to maintain and manage within the classroom. Specific seating arrangements must be made, and student behaviors have to be kept in mind, in order to facilitate an efficient and effective learning environment. In a normal situation, in which factors such as social distancing aren't concerns, students would be allowed to pick their own groups and be allowed to converse with one another

in closer quarters. This could allow for either more groups of students - which in turn could bring up more perspectives and opinions, allow for more ideas to be shared about a specific topic, or provide more opportunities for students who don't always work with one another to do so. However, with safety protocols, students are bound to work with students specifically sitting in their immediate areas. While this is similar to a table group set up, it has proven to be more troublesome than not at times. Such as in the case that two students may work well together, but cannot be seated next to one another due to how much they'll talk and/or distract one another during the entirety of the class.

### **Summary**

Throughout my student teaching experience, both online and in person, I have faced a multitude of challenges and experience that have helped shape the way that I look at teaching in regards to the profession as a whole, and how I want my own specific teaching style to look. When online, students were often more quiet and less engaged with classroom material. This brought to light for me the importance of creating lessons that were both informative but also engaging to students. I learned that it's necessary to constantly check in with students, and to consistently hold students accountable for turning in assignments. The online classroom provided me a chance to learn how presentations should be given to students at a middle school level, and to learn about my own style of speaking with students. General classroom management was not as much of a factor when it came to the online environment, which gave me ample opportunity to work on learning the skills of creating assessments, forming lessons, and talking to students or responding to questions that they may have. Through this experience, I was able to build basic relations with students, and create a base foundation for my own teaching experience that would occur in the future.

Once the classroom moved to being in-person again, these skills became much more important to utilize, as now I had to manage a real life classroom situation. Knowing the students was useful for maintaining relationships and creating a welcoming classroom environment for them to enter, but I was less prepared to handle scenarios such as students talking during class, behavior issues, distractions such as cell phones, or students who become completely disengaged during a lesson. With the goals that I had set in place for online teaching, and then the modified goals that I created once in-person classes resumed, I have been able to find my own style of teaching that works well for myself, and is most effective for my students to be successful in their own academics.

The next chapter will layout all that I have learned, and how I want to apply that knowledge to my professional career in the future. Though this experience, I have gained a great amount of insight on both what it means to be a professional educator, but also how I want to present myself as a professional educator. I have created goals for myself that will be outlined within chapter 5, that I believe will help me to create a successful and effective classroom environment for my future students. Working through an online classroom environment, and then a physical classroom environment, as shown me different methods of teaching and how interacting with students can change throughout the different mediums of communication.

## Chapter 5

Over the course of creating this Action Research Project, I wanted to focus my own student teaching, I did this through exploring the different goals and research questions that I had set for myself. For my research questions, my major focus was aimed at: *How can an educator bring in differentiated types of instructional material into the classroom? How are students impacted by online learning? And How can collaboration between students improve their learning?* These questions helped me frame how I wanted to go through my student teaching, and gain a better understanding of the research that was behind the different factors that I find to be most important in education.

As I went through my research of these different questions, I formed goals that were based around these ideas. As I discussed in chapter 4, my main goals for my time spent in the classroom - during the period of online distance learning - was to: *“Utilizing more differentiated material within the classroom”*, *“Create a successful environment for students to be able to work from home more efficiently”*, and to *“Encourage more collaboration between students within the classroom”*. But these were soon to be modified once I entered into the classroom for the first time, and worked with students in person. As an overarching concept, the main lesson that I learned through this experience in its entirety was that the worlds of teaching online and teaching in person are two incomparable systems of learning, both for the educator and the students.

### **Online Learning and In Person Learning Experiences**

When I was educating students online, the largest issue that occurred was that students were lacking in participation, attendance, and assignment submissions. On the first meeting with

my mentor teacher, she had told me that online school was highly centered around talking to a group of pictures that you have to pry responses from. At the time, I couldn't fully understand what she was talking about, and it wasn't until I gave my own first lesson-presentation to our students that I did. Students would join into a Google Meeting (Google Meets) in lieu of their physical classroom, and would have their microphones muted and their cameras turned off. In almost every class session, with all the different student groupings, most everyone would not speak unless spoken to. Communication was encouraged, my teacher made various attempts to have students turn their cameras on to create a sense of normalcy, students were prompted often with various questions that would take a fairly long period of time, or repeated asking, to gain a response. This most likely was due to students being distracted away from the lesson completely, or students walking away from the lesson all together.

As for in person learning, the largest issue that I have had to learn is how to effectively manage is classroom disruptions. With the pandemic regulations that have been put in place for student safety, students are not allowed to leave the classroom unless approved by their teacher, or when going out to lunch. Rather than the students swapping classrooms for each different subject that they have, it's the teachers who move between classrooms. On top of this, the desk a student sits at is the desk that they're supposed to stay at until the end of the day. This causes a whole set of behavioral issues that don't normally exist within a regular school environment, due to the fact that students become emotionally and physically tired of the monotonous situation that they've been put in, after experiencing a system of academics where during the class period they could do practically anything that they wanted to - without any direct repercussions from their own educator. Everything was filtered through the screen, and different interactions were not as meaningful as they would have been if we had been in person the entire time.

It's my own opinion and belief that this situation, in which the different experiences that I had when teaching online versus teaching in person, had mainly occurred because students were not academically prepared to have all of their academic work to be placed completely in their own hands. Eighth grade is the specific year in which students learn to become more independent in their studies, but there still requires a great amount of structure to be set in place for them to make the transition from being seventh graders to eighth graders who will be entering into high school the very next year. Essentially, I believe that the sudden and dramatic shift to online learning gave students too much freedom over their own academics, and in that many became overwhelmed and discouraged as the year went by. Students found more joy in playing video games, watching tv, drawing, or any other similar kind of distraction, rather than listening to the presentation being given to them. This would lead them to fall behind in some, if not all, of their classes - which in return would leave them feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

However, when in person, I found that having classroom work time, in which students just work on an assignment, occurs much more often than when online. Due to the fact that you can actually monitor students and see what they're truly working on, it's a more effective tool to keep students engaged and on track to being successful in the classroom. Where when online, because students don't have their cameras on, it's not possible to know if they're actually working or not without constantly checking in on them. In person though, this issues becomes nonexistent. Making these productive moments more meaningful to both students and the educator. Students are able to make actual progress and gain efficient academic practice, while the educator can learn about student work habits and behaviors. I've also gotten to learn about my own habits and behaviors, and how they're much different between online and in person teaching.

I have found that each of my four separate classes of students that I work with all have their own separate group personalities. And my own personality and attitude will change with each class. Monday morning my class is generally on task but the students like to ask questions that have nothing at all to do with the subject matter, Monday afternoon is more rebellious and often needs constant adjustments to keep everyone on task, Tuesday morning's class has more ELL students within it as well as more teaching assistants who help me with translations or with pulling students out of the class for individual one on one work, and Tuesday afternoon's class is one with behavioral issues that I am constantly on the watch for. These simple descriptions that I have for my four different groups are more than I ever could have described these same groups when teaching them online. Each class was relatively the same in regards to how much students participated, but the amount of personality and interaction that has come out of students in the six weeks we've been in person - versus the eight months that they spent online, has been phenomenally drastic.

Even in the ways that I've learned how to communicate with my students on both individual levels and as entire classes has changed dramatically since the change to in-person learning. There are students who would never speak during our online classes, but with just a few weeks in the class they've become my most talkative students. The same can be said in the opposite fashion, in which some students have become more quiet since the change to in-person learning. My only guess as to why this has occurred is either from the lack of distractions students have access to within the classroom, so they feel more obligated to participate rather than just sitting silently - or on the opposite side of this, students who were more comfortable with talking during online classes may feel more shy or timid when having to speak directly in front of their classmates. Online they can hide behind their screens and cameras that are turned



off. When in person, it feels more personal to share out ideas in front of others. Behavior wise, I'm also finding that some students who I never had issues with throughout online school have become some of the more troublesome students that I need to keep an eye on. While this may be a negative to in-person learning, I have utilized it as a great experience to learn from. That if I ever have the opportunity to teach an online class, the personality traits that students show online may not be equivalent to the ones they would show within the physical classroom.

### **Implications of Learning**

With the three focus questions that I had utilized to conduct my research, and to create my different goals for teaching, my main overarching concept of my research was "*How can I make an online classroom environment be as similar to an in-person classroom?*". However, once I entered into the actual classroom, my overarching concept changed to "*Make the transition from online learning to in-person learning as smooth and efficient as possible, while still maintaining classroom teaching standards and expectations for students*". This was due to the fact, as detailed above, how vastly different the experience that I had was from teaching online to teaching in person. The major classroom expectations and standards for students was the same, but the interactions that have been made with students and the relationships built between students, and even between myself and them, have grown immensely. That being said though, there have been great challenges that have come with in person learning.

### **Challenges and Limitations**

Student behavioral issues have been a challenge on their own, as many students are either frustrated with the way Covid restrictions have impacted the classroom environment, they're

disgruntled about having to come into school rather than stay at home, or they simply have friends within their class and cannot focus. However, it was Covid pandemic restrictions that had to be set in place that caused a major issue for myself when trying to achieve my own student teaching goals. Creating a collaborative environment for students to work together and help one another achieve has required me to think outside of the box when it comes to bringing students together in an environment that they're meant to stay apart.

One method that I utilized was a circle group outside, in which students had plenty of room to space out from one another, and yet still be able to talk to everyone. Students have been working through a unit in which they're required to create a story of their own choice, and it can be about whatever they choose for it to be about, as long as they incorporate specific aspects of a story (Protagonist, Antagonist, Conflict, Resolution, Setting Descriptions, and a Beginning, Middle, and End). So to bring in more collaboration between students, and to build a more group positive environment, I had students stand in a group and share out what their story is going to be about. Once they shared, I would point to a different student and ask for a response to what the prior student had said. They could say what they found to be interesting, how they would lead the story, they could ask a question about the story itself - it was an open ended response. The main purpose of this was to find out where each student was individually on their ideas for a story (did they have a strong concept or a basic idea), and to get everyone involved in hearing different perspectives of the assignment or being able to share and receive different types of feedback that could potentially help the creation of the different stories.

This is how a large amount of group work is structured now that students are no longer allowed to be within six feet of one another. At times, students are given the chance to turn and talk to their neighbors, but being able to have students move around the room and converse with

all different people is, at this moment, no longer an option. This being a major limitation to my study as a whole, and being able to learn of different group activities that can increase engagement and learning efficiency. However, though a limitation when looking at it in regards to my Action Research Project, it did force me to have to think of more creative ways to utilize group work and get students involved and communicating with one another.

Another limitation that has occurred within this student teaching research experience is the short amount of time that I have had to actually learn about who these students are as individuals and being able to create strategies on how to help them all as best as I can. As stated before, students online act in a vastly different manner than they do when in person - both in their own positive and negative ways. If I had been able to get to know the students for who they actually are, rather than how they behave when learning from home, I could have been able to go much further with understanding my ARP research and gained a more detailed understanding of how what I have learned in research and reading can be applicable to a real world classroom.

A third and final limitation to this project is that everybody was learning about the situation at the same time. Because of the fact that the Corona Virus Pandemic hit so suddenly and impacted schools in a dramatic manner, all educators, parents, and students, were put into the same situation of confusion and distraught. Educators had to learn how to transition from in-person learning to online learning, students had to learn how to stay focused and navigate through their academics without the immediate structure and support of an educator, and parents had to learn how to manage both their children and their professional lives at the same time. All of this combined created a stressful, and at times chaotic, challenge to sort out and form to be efficient and effective in student academic success. While this is an issue in its own, as I'm not able to get the full experience of watching a live classroom work and see real world classroom

management skills, I was able to watch and learn from a group of professional social studies teachers who were collaborating and creating curriculum together for the year.

Being able to hear them workshop different ideas of how to conduct different lessons, seeing how they would map out future weeks, and then also being able to see how each teacher individually created their own presentations that worked the best to their own styles and teaching methods, was something that I never could have truly learned through online learning. If it had been a normal school year, I would have been able to take more of an attentive role within these meetings and would possibly have been able to help with planning. While watching my mentor teacher and her colleagues work through the pandemic and handle all the issues that came along with it gave me great insight on how the profession of education is consistently changing and no year is going to be exactly the same. Often the times of the best success in this profession, come from the most creative of moments.

### **Goals for My Future in Education**

For my own future teaching goals, I want to focus on keeping my classroom student centered and equalized in behavioral expectations. While keeping in mind that all students learn differently and have their own individual personalities, there are different ways of creating “clusters” of categories that encompass various patterns of student behaviors within the classroom. These are known as Danielson Clusters, which give specific targets within various categories of classroom management that can be focused on to enhance student success and efficiency. For myself, I chose the two clusters, “Successful Learning By All Students” and “Classroom Management”, as specific sections for me to focus on within my future career. With the category “Successful Learning By All Students”, I want to bring a focus to creating lessons that provide enough structure for all students within the classroom. This may take the form of

creating separate lessons that can be accessed outside of the classroom by ELL students specifically, which can contain more specific examples and definitions to help with comprehension and understanding. The other cluster category, “Classroom Management”, is centered around the concept of providing students with equal expectations of behaviors and standards. While taking into consideration that some students have different behavioral plans set in place, such as IEPs or 504 Plans, it’s also important for students to all have an understanding of what’s expected of everyone in the classroom. In my student teaching experience, I found that students test behavioral boundaries a lot, and they will often test to see what they can or cannot get away with. As a professional educator, it’s one of my main goals to be able to set fair and explicit expectations for students to follow, and then create accommodations for those who require them.

**GOAL #1**

Danielson Cluster: (required) SUCCESSFUL LEARNING BY ALL STUDENTS	
<p>What specifically do I need to learn in order to grow as a teacher that will impact student learning?</p>	<p>I need to learn of specific strategies that will bring students to see enjoyment in learning social studies. Whether that’s how assessments are structured, how presentations are given, or how consistently students are given opportunities to participate - and what those opportunities look like. I’m able to provide students with the information that they need to succeed within the classroom, but I don’t always feel like I’m reaching each and every student.</p> <p>Creating lessons that cater to ELL student needs more indepth is something that I also need to learn and strengthen as a skill. At the school I’m student teaching at, there is a team of individuals who can come work with ELL students specifically, but not every school is going to have these kinds of people on staff. In which case, I have to learn to be more attentive to how much time I spend on important terms</p>

	and events, while also maintaining clarity to my lesson.
What is the evidence for this area of need?	Often at times, once a social studies lesson begins, students will put their heads down on their desks, or become much more silent than usual (even when given the opportunity to speak their ideas out to everyone). Students will often seem shocked or confused when past topics are brought up, as though they're hearing the information for the first time, when in fact we had gone over the concepts in prior weeks. While this is not every single student, this is showing me evidence that not every student is keeping up with the classroom material and there is something that I can change to reduce this amount to as close to zero as possible.
How would I describe my current practice related to this area? What are my strengths and evidence to support my strengths?	I believe that currently, with how I've changed and learned to teach students in person rather than online, I'm making good headway for this cluster subject. I've been able to maintain a good system of communication between myself and my students. They know that they're allowed to ask me questions and I'll answer as honestly as I can - meaning if I don't know the answer, I'll tell them and conduct research to figure it out with everyone. I talk and interact with everyone, and during lessons I hold everyone to the same standards of being able to answer any question thrown at them. If an answer is not known, I'll often ask another student to help out, rather than having it just be me who gives out hints and clues until the answer is reached. When I see that students have their eyes closed, or are looking at their phones during a lesson, I make sure to specifically walk up to them individually to provide a reminder of class expectations. If I have to visit them twice then solutions have to be made, I.E. having a student who's falling asleep walk around the hallways for a moment, or taking away a students phone if they keep using it in class. This is to both maintain student participation and involvement within the class, but to also show the rest of the students how everyone is being held to the same standards of learning. Not just a few specific students.
How will I measure my progress? What changes will I see in	One way that I can measure my success is through student success rates with recollection assessments.

<p>my student learning? What will success look like for me?</p>	<p>Having simple weekly/biweekly tests that just cover the main highlights of previous lessons. This will be able to show me where students are keeping up in subject material, where they're falling behind, and if they're understanding main vocabulary terms that are being used within class. Success to me will be in the form of having more than 90% of the class performing successfully on these assessments. That will show me that not only are they keeping up with the material, but they're understanding it as well. Questions on the recollection assessments would vary from simple fill in the blank answers, to open ended questions that could have a variety of opinions and perspectives applied. If a majority of students are doing well, then that will give me the indication that I can spend more time with individual students on going back over where they may be falling behind. That could be by putting specific information in different review sessions, or holding individual meetings with each student to review their progress and give suggestions on how they can change to make improvements in their own learning.</p>
<p>My goal statement: As a future educator, I need to work on how to manage my classroom so that all students are able to both stay engaged in the learning of new material, but also remain accountable for the material that was covered in the past.</p>	<p>Specific Action Steps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hold recollection assessments on a weekly/bi-weekly schedule - these will be for a minimal grade and are utilized more for information gathering purposes</li> <li>2. Hold individual meetings with students, regardless of academic success level, and provide suggestions on where they can make changes to be more successful in their education. This could be from making sure assignments are turned in to participating more in class.</li> <li>3. Maintain communication with students, and stay on top of their engagement during class. Students should be given enough time during class to be able to take a break from learning and interact with one another. But when a lesson is being presented, student behaviors need to be managed to reduce distractions and disengagement. If one student is allowed to get away with something, it'll send a message to everyone else that they can too.</li> </ol>

<p>With whom will I collaborate on my plan?</p>	<p>Other teachers who are a part of my teaching team are excellent collaborators with my plan. Both in a supportive fashion, in which I can compare how my class opporates to how they're running theirs, but also to gain new perspective on my students and how I should be handling them. Everyone has different ideas on how a classroom should be handled, and having someone who doesn't work with my students directly as much as I do give suggestions on how they would handle different scenarios, could provide myself with insight that I'm not thinking of.</p> <p>Collaborating with different administration members, such as councilors and specialized language assistants, could also be helpful in this situation. Councilors could provide great insight as to why a student is misbehaving in different ways, or allow for an opportunity to give students a place to escape and let out any frustrations they may have. A language specialist could help with any students who don't speak english as their first language, and provide them with more in depth and personal assistance on work being done in social studies. Which is often seen as a very complex and difficult class for ELL students to be within.</p>
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**Goal #2**

<p>Danielson Cluster: Classroom Management</p>	
<p>What specifically do I need to learn in order to grow as a teacher that will impact student learning?</p>	<p>I need to learn on creating, setting, and managing classroom behavior expectations across all students. I have found that in a few of my classes, students are becoming restless and more confident to speak out in negative ways that are neither on task or constructive to the class as a whole. Part of this is due to the fact that it's the end of the school year and students are becoming eager to enjoy their summer break, but most of this issue comes from the fact that I haven't been working with these students long enough to have set a firm behavioral management style and process.</p>
<p>What is the evidence for this area of need?</p>	<p>My students behave very differently between my mentor teacher is in the room, and when she's not in the room. This has lead me to see that my teacher more strict with the students than I am, and in return she has more of a respected authority presence. I often have to utilize multiple attempts to</p>



	<p>get students to be quiet, or make multiple pauses within presentations to tell someone to pay attention or to stop talking. Which becomes very distracting for not only myself, but for the entire class as a whole.</p> <p>I have also had to create specific seating arrangements for one of my classes, due to the fact that certain students become too distracting to the rest of the class if they're allowed to sit around one another.</p>
<p>How would I describe my current practice related to this area? What are my strengths and evidence to support my strengths?</p>	<p>One strength that I believe that I possess in regards to this cluster segment is that I do have authority within the classroom. Though they don't view me as their main teacher and educator, I have gained enough respect from them to have great moments of participation and productivity. I have also had great success in students respecting seating arrangements, and working towards making better choices so that they can choose to sit by their friends - rather than a part from them.</p>
<p>How will I measure my progress? What changes will I see in my student learning? What will success look like for me?</p>	<p>One way that I can measure how well i'm doing in this goal area is by how well I can contain the classroom at the start of the real class period - especially in the afternoon classes. Being able to start up a lesson, and work through it with minimal distractions from students is a method of measurement.</p> <p>Also keeping note of how many times I have to interact with specific students due to behavior issues can also be a means of measuring how well my behavior expectation plans are impacting students. It will also show me a detailed list of who I need to put the most amount of focus on.</p>
<p>My goal statement: To create a system of classroom behavior expectations that students follow and respect.</p>	<p>Specific Action Steps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a system of clear and attainable behavior expectations for students during class periods</li> <li>2. Maintain and uphold these expectations at all times. Especially during the beginning of the year, to demonstrate to students what will and will not be tolerated.</li> <li>3. Keep a running list of the days that don't go as well, and the specific students that need the most focus on in regards to behavioral issues to be able to make either individual or classroom wide changes.</li> </ol>
<p>With whom will I collaborate on my plan?</p>	<p>For collaboration of this plan, I think that collaborating with parents and school councilors will provide me with the most success. Councilors would be able to help me set up specific</p>

	behavior plans (IEPs, 504s, etc.) for specific students and form a classroom environment that's best for them. While working with parents can help me with making sure that they're up to speed with what's expected of their children in the classroom. That way, if I ever need to make a phone call home, they will have a better understanding of why the call is being made, rather than having to have behavior expectations explained to them at that very moment.
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When it comes to this project as a whole, the main overarching concept that I learned is that teaching students in person is much more advantageous and worthwhile than teaching students online through a computer screen. While I was able to make some connections with students and learn about their personalities from an online perspective, it wasn't until I was transitioned into in person teaching that I gained an understanding of what this profession entailed. How students behave when their faces aren't shown to their educator, and when their voices can be hidden behind a muted microphone, is completely different than how they are when in a physical classroom.

When students are in an online classroom environment, they are more incharge of their own success within the classroom. Presentation are given via an online conference setting, such as GoogleMeets or Zoom, and students are expected to be engaged and be paying attention to the information presented. While at the same time, students also have to fight against all distractions that exist within their own homes. Whether that be drawing, texting, watching videos, playing video games, taking care of siblings, or whatever else that students may have going within their lives, the environment of online education expects students to be able to put their academics above all else. Students have presentations explained to them, and then are given the slideshow (with necessary modifications depending on if the student is considered an English language

learner or has a set learning plan) online utilizing the educational tool Canvas. Which in an online environment, is considered sufficient to teaching all students at an equal level.

Once I moved into a physical, in person, classroom (April 19th 2021) and began teaching students face to face, I understood how I need handle students on a personal level. I saw how students had more ambition to speak out when they're around their classmates in person, rather than just looking at profile pictures. Students are more inclined to talk with one another, and ask questions about the lesson be presented, when their physically around their classmates than when they're sitting behind a computer screen. While I find more advantages to physical, in person, classrooms, I have learned how online education can help students with different issues regarding language proficiency, behavioral, or social anxiety, and create an environment that allows them to have different supports that provide extra assistance and foundations to be successful. At the same time though, in person education has given me the insight that nothing is comparable to making in person connections to each and every student within the classroom. Working with students on an individual level is something that cannot be replicated with online school. Experiences such as being able to see how students interact with each other when sitting physically next to one another, seeing different behavioral habits when interacting during a lesson or an activity, or handling a student who simply just doesn't want to be at school during the day, are experiences that can only be understood once a person teaches students in a physical setting. I have learned how to handle an online classroom, and how to uphold different academic expectations within that type of environment. I have also learned that how students act within an online environment is vastly different from how they act once they're in a room amongst their classmates. Regardless, it's important to create a classroom environment - online or in person -

that allows all students to be successful within their current academics, and be able to take what they learn and apply it to their future academics.

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