

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE AND ENGAGING SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES
INSTRUCTION IN AN ERA OF RISING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TEACHERS AND
STUDENTS

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Abstract

Differentiated Instruction, Thematic Instruction and Integrated Thematic Instruction combine to offer a potentially exciting and rewarding research-based, standards-based approach to teaching and learning in an era of rising accountability for students and teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects Differentiated Instruction, Thematic Instruction and Integrated Thematic Instruction have on student engagement and learning. In an era of high-stakes testing and increased demands on both students and teachers, something needs to change. DI, TI, and ITI are vehicles for improved instruction and deep, meaningful, and relevant learning.

Chapter I - Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The social studies curriculum is in trouble. Social studies classes are perceived as boring and useless by many students, social studies is not assessed at the level of other core academic areas, and increasing state standards have eroded many teachers' beliefs that creative practices can be used due to the pressure to "get through" the material. Budgetary cuts, often in the form of teachers, have contributed to the problem as teachers have more duties, which often lead to less time for class preparation and, therefore, less engaging lessons and units. State standards must certainly be met, but more importantly, the purpose of social studies must be met. The National Council for the Social Studies states, "The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (NCSS, 2010, p. 1). The cultivation of responsible citizens is important in any governmental system; it is intrinsic to a democracy. Today, the real problems lie with the amount of material to be taught and the task of convincing students, and policy makers, that the social studies curriculum is important in their world. The desire of federal and state governments to "improve" education has spawned unintended side effects that have changed the focus and perhaps the intent of teaching and learning in the United States.

The federal government's first endeavor to improve education for the nation's youth came in 1965 with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty (Graham, 2010). ESEA has been reauthorized several times, with major revisions in 1994 and 2002. The 2002 reauthorization, better known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), marked a dramatic increase in the role of the federal government in

guaranteeing the quality of public education for all children in the United States and significantly expanded the role of standardized testing in American public education. The NCLB requires that students in grades three through eight be tested every year in reading and math (NCLB Executive Summary, 2002). NCLB 2002 also stipulates that schools are required to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and continual progress as determined by each individual state. By the 2013-2014 school year, all students (including special education students, limited English Proficient students, and all other at-risk sub groups) must attain 100% proficiency in mathematics and reading in order for that school to reach AYP.

In an effort to comply with NCLB's directives, Michigan has required all public school districts to assess student achievement through a series of standardized tests known as the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) and the Michigan Merit Exam (MME). The MEAP has been in existence since 1969 for assessing student progress (Coleman, 1983), but the program has found new significance in meeting the testing requirements for the federal mandates and serving as one measure of meeting AYP. The MEAP is given to students in grades three through nine every October. The areas of testing include reading and math every year, yet social studies is tested only in grades six and nine. In addition to the MEAP, the MME is administered to grade eleven students. The MME consists of three sections: the American College Testing Plus Writing exam, the WorkKeys section, and a state developed test in math, science, and social studies (Michigan Department of Education, Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability, 2011). The American College Test, better known as the ACT, measures college preparedness. The WorkKeys section is a job skills assessment that also incorporates reading and math and was developed by the state. In eight years of state and federal mandated testing of students, students are only tested three times in social studies. In 2011, a draft proposal for the

reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was released. Although the document is 860 pages long, history and civics are only mentioned twice (Munson, 2011).

The National Council for the Social Studies (2007) has lamented the negative side effects of NCLB and the subsequent high stakes state assessments. In an effort to boost performance in language arts and mathematics, teachers, especially in the elementary schools, have relegated social studies to the back burner thus forcing middle school and high school teachers to fill in gaps (Hinde, 2005). Due to the increasingly large scope of mandated curriculum, teachers are pressed to “get through” the material. This rush is leaving social studies students unengaged, unmotivated to learn, and uninterested in democratic procedures that are necessary for a democracy to work (White, 1995).

Although history and social studies are repeatedly ignored by policy makers and relegated to the bottom of the academic priority list, proper implementation of the Common Core State Standards may help to improve the standing of history and social studies due to the intense focus on teaching literacy across all disciplines (Stout, 2012). In an effort to dramatically reform public education across the nation, the Obama Administration introduced a \$4.5 billion incentive program entitled *Race to the Top (RTT)*. Federal funds are tied to state adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which look to streamline math and literacy goals for K-12 education. The standards are based on the mantra “fewer, clearer, higher” and place an emphasis on critical reading and analysis of multiple forms of informational text across all disciplines. According to the CCSS Myths vs. Facts webpage (2011), “College and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature. These standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science.” A history curriculum, loaded with analysis of rich primary sources,

including foundational United States documents like the *Declaration of Independence* and Preamble to the *US Constitution*, in addition to maps, photographs, art, graphs, cartoons and quality secondary sources beautifully align with the Common Core State Standards' call for an increased focus on informational texts (Stout, 2012). The CCSS do not dictate what content must be taught with rigid specificity. Rather, the CCSS, with its underlying mantra of “fewer, clearer, and higher,” offer a broad based framework that targets big ideas, develops cognitive skills, such as problem solving, collaboration, and academic risk-taking, and also allows for local flexibility (Phillips & Wong, 2010). The Common Core State Standards offer an opportunity to completely redesign state and national assessments, using the standards and college-ready goals as guides. The creation and nation-wide adoption of higher quality, standards-based, next generation assessments could dramatically change education in the United States (Phillips & Wong, 2010; Strickland, 2012).

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards may feel intimidating and as social studies educators, we are already facing daunting realities on a daily basis; our jobs are becoming more difficult with continuous cycles of “reform”, reduction in funding, and incessant increases in administrative and societal expectations. Teachers cannot work much harder; we have to work smarter and we have to work together.

Four years ago, we, Kris O'Connor and Blythe Raikko, were assigned to teach on the same sophomore team at Marquette Senior High School, Kris as an English teacher and Blythe as the U.S. History teacher. Over the course of the year, we discovered that we shared the same educational ideals, energetic approach to teaching, classroom management style, rapport with students, and love of our profession. The following school year, the stars aligned and we both were assigned identical teaching schedules. Each taught one section of Advanced Placement U.S.

History and four sections of U.S. History; the U.S. history classes were taught during the same class periods. This gave us the opportunity to collaborate; it was quickly evident that we were so in sync that our teaching dramatically improved when it was a collective effort. Soon we were developing unit and daily lesson plans, co-teaching, and our students were working together so often that they grew to see us as interchangeable facilitators of learning. This collaboration positively affected, and still affects, our teaching and our students. When it came time for us to finish our Master's program, it was inevitable that we would collaborate on this endeavor as well. Chapters I and IV were written collaboratively, and Chapters II and III were written independently.

When selecting a research question, we wanted to choose a topic that was applicable and relevant to our daily existence. In 2010, Differentiated Instruction became a school-wide focus for our faculty at Marquette Senior High School. After becoming involved with the Differentiated Instruction Leadership Team, we were hungry to further our level of understanding and implementation of these tools. Differentiated Instruction emphasizes big picture thinking and planning, this was the catalyst for us to rethink our approach to teaching U.S. History. Student engagement, a key component to any successful class, traditionally can be a struggle in social studies classrooms. The idea of thematic, as opposed to chronological, instruction intrigued us. The more we researched these two academic interests, the more we realized that they could be successfully wedded. For our capstone projects toward earning our Master's Degrees, Blythe will delve into Differentiated Instruction, and Kris will explore the role of Thematic Integration. Our goal in this process is to create a research-based, user-friendly template for incorporating thematic and differentiated instruction into units of study. These units

will foster high levels of student engagement and facilitate deep and lasting learning that is desperately needed in order to restore social studies to its rightful place as a valued curriculum.

Research Questions:

For this project, we will seek answers to the following overarching question: What are the characteristics of effective secondary social studies instruction in an era of external curricular mandates and rising accountability for teachers and students? Blythe was part of an initial cohort of teachers that received exposure to various differentiated practices and will continue her exploration of DI as she researches sub-question #1.

- 1) How can secondary social studies teachers use effective differentiation practices to engage all learners while meeting standards?

As a teacher who has taught both American Literature and US History, Kris has long been interested in integrating these two curriculums. Her research will focus on thematic, in addition to integrated thematic instruction in responding to sub-question #2.

- 2) How can secondary social studies teachers plan thematic and integrated thematic units to meet all mandated standards and engage students in deep, meaningful, and relevant learning tasks?

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist learning theory is multifaceted, but all of the interpretations have the element that the student is an active participant in their learning (Elkind, 2004). Constructivism is derived from the work of Jean Piaget (1967), Lev Vygotsky (1978), John Dewey (1944), and many others who studied how learners acquire knowledge (cited in Acikalin, 2006). The basic elements of constructivism incorporate the ideas that learners “construct” their own learning; it is an individual process based on prior knowledge and the process is affected by outside influences.

The learning process is also social in that we gain understanding to further interact with others. Vygotsky (1978) argued that individuals learn in their own zone of proximal development and students can master new skills and become increasingly independent thinkers and problem solvers if supported and challenged by teachers who move them slightly outside of their comfort zone. Differentiated instruction, based on student readiness, interest and learning profile, allows for the needs of an academically diverse group to be met and advanced all within the confines of a single classroom (Tomlinson, 1999). Another important element of constructivism is that learning takes place when students are immersed in “real world” situations (Windschitl, 2002). Thematic instruction promotes in depth study of a topic and encourages active and social learning with application to life outside of the classroom. The elements of thematic and differentiated instruction and learning fit well into the basic tenets of constructivism.

Definition of Terms

Whereas the following terms are used often in the educational world, a few have varying meanings or are used, incorrectly, interchangeably. Michigan’s Department of Education defines for Michigan’s social studies teachers many of the following terms, others were gleaned from research. In this literature review, the following definitions will be used.

Academic diversity. “Students with identified learning problems; highly advanced learners; students whose first language is not English; students who underachieve for a complex array of reasons; students from broadly diverse cultures, economic backgrounds, or both; students of both genders; motivated and unmotivated students” (Tomlinson et al, 2003, p. 119).

Civic efficacy. “The readiness and willingness to assume citizenship responsibilities and to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a democratic society” (MDEOSI , 2007, p. 8).

Common Core State Standards. “Define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate from high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs” (RIDE, 2011, p. 1). The Standards have been adopted by 48 states, including Michigan.

Curriculum integration. “Proposed as a way of organizing...life skills considered essential for all citizens in a democracy. Curriculum is organized around real-life problems and issues...applying pertinent content and skills from many subject areas or disciplines.” (Vars & Beane, 2000).

Differentiated Instruction (DI). An approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of student to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom (Bearne, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999).

Envisionment-building. Comprehension is seen as the development of "meanings-in-motion," meanings that contain questions as well as already formed ideas that change over time (Langer, 1997).

Flow Theory. A state of deep absorption that is intrinsically enjoyable where an individual operates at full capacity and the process itself turns out to be intrinsically rewarding and is based on the symbiotic relationship between challenge and skills needed to meet those challenges (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Shernoff et al., 2003).

Holistic Education. “ Holistic educational philosophy includes [sic] 1) the education of the whole child, mind, body, and spirit, 2) all things are interconnected and related...and 3) the transformation of the way students think from separate, fragmented thoughts and ideas to a connected, caring and self-aware whole (Cook, 2004, p. 5).

Interdisciplinary Curriculum

“While the disciplines are defined in terms of their particular theories, concepts, and methods, interdisciplinary studies is defined not by the knowledge that it produces but, rather, the process of synthesis: "In interdisciplinary courses, whether taught by teams or individuals, faculty interact in designing a course, bringing to light and examining underlying assumptions and modifying their perspectives in the process. They also make a concerted effort to work with students in crafting an integrated synthesis of the separate parts that provides a larger, more holistic understanding of the question, problem, or issue at hand" (Orillion, 2009, p. 1).

Integrated Thematic Instruction. “A common theme is developed and addressed in more than one content area” (Barton & Smith, 2000, p. 54).

Professional Development. “The professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. Professional development includes formal...and informal experiences (cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2003. p.11)

Social Studies. “The integrated study of the social sciences to prepare young people to become responsible citizens” (MDEOSI , 2007, p. 8).

Thematic Instruction. “Organizing all or part of instruction of a particular group of students around a theme” (Barton & Smith, 2000, p. 54).

Traditional Education. “Teacher-centered, uses single-subject curriculum, and emphasizes testing as the ultimate way to determine knowledge” (Cook, 2004, p.10).

Chapter II: Literature Review

In order to create engaged, knowledgeable citizens, social studies teachers need to create engaged and knowledgeable students. In countries and classrooms all over the world, government leaders, department of education personnel, school administrators, and teachers grapple with this fact. A strategy that resurfaces often to enhance engagement and propel students to high levels of understanding is thematic instruction (TI) and its counterpart, Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI). The National Council of Social Studies has developed ten themes of study for k-12 students (NCSS, 2002), and the State of Michigan also has identified themes in U.S. History, World History, and Civics (MDEOSI, 2007). Studies have pointed to marked increases in engagement when TI and ITI have been embedded in instruction. (McBee, 2000; Yorks & Follo, 1993). This literature review will focus upon rationale for thematic instruction and integrated thematic instruction, the elements that make TI and ITI successful in engaging students and meeting standards, as well as suggestions as to how to include TI and ITI in the classroom.

Research question: How can secondary social studies teachers plan thematic units to meet all mandated standards and engage students in deep, meaningful, and relevant learning tasks?

Rationale for thematic instruction and integrated thematic instruction

Students often dislike subjects if they do not perceive the knowledge as relevant to their lives. History students, in particular, have difficulties connecting events and people from the past to their immediate experiences. To overcome negative attitudes and perceptions, teachers must create a learning environment that has relevance to students' lives, engages students in the learning process, gives learners the format to learn independently as well as socially, and encourages in depth knowledge and skill building. Thematic instruction and Integrated Thematic

Instruction incorporates various strategies to make learning relevant and rigorous while building relationships.

TI can be incorporated anywhere within the curriculum to enhance learning.

Fundamental ideas within subjects must be identified by teacher and student; this process narrows the content to relevant and useful information and skills (White, 1995). When students can connect the information or the skill learned in a classroom to their lives and to the world outside of the classroom, self-directed learning is more likely. This is not a new educational idea; in 1916, John Dewey promoted the idea that learning took place when experiences had meaning and importance to the learner (referenced by SEDL). VanDyk (2008) collected data over the course of a school year to assess the results of two integrated thematic units implemented in an 8th-grade team. Ten students out of the school's 75 eighth graders were selected to be part of the study, also included were three of the 8th grade team teachers. The four girls and six boys were randomly chosen based on their 7th grade results of the Stanford Achievement test. Of the ten students, two were below grade level, three tested above grade level, and five students were at grade level. The study was devised with a pre-test/post-test format and was aimed at studying four specific areas of student growth: depth of content knowledge, transfer of content to real life, engagement, and intrinsic motivation. Students were videotaped as they responded to questions prior to and after the first thematic unit; they also reflected on the curriculum in essay form. Students had pre and post examinations on content for each unit of study. The teachers' input was gathered through questionnaires that required detailed observations. As students and teachers had only two experiences with thematic units throughout the school year, both groups were asked to compare their thoughts on thematic and nonthematic instruction within their respective venues. Data were both qualitative and quantitative. Teacher responses were rated on

a scale of 1-5, and students' essays were transferred to a number base to become more objective. In this manner, the three qualitative sources were converted to quantitative measures to ensure the most accurate data for the study. Data results from both teachers and students support that there was student growth in all aspects of the four points of study, although there were disparities between the teacher results and student results. Teachers responded that the largest area of growth was in content development and the lowest area of growth was in student engagement. However, in the data gathered through students' interviews and essays, the highest growth was in engagement. Especially thought provoking is that two students diagnosed with ADD self-reported a large increase in their engagement during these units of study. As students with learning disabilities, ADHD, at-risk, and giftedness are incorporated into general education classes on a regular basis, TI and ITI are helpful for all groups of learners as the strategies focus learning, and create opportunity for self-instruction and social learning (Hargreaves & Moore, 2000; Tomlinson & Callahan, 1992). VanDyk's study also pointed to growth in student motivation to learn as the themes of justice and truth could be directly applied to the students' lives. Engagement and relevancy are requisites for deep learning.

Student engagement is imperative for attainment of knowledge and skills. Students should be actively engaged in learning 80-85% of the time allocated for class for the best chance of academic achievement. When thematic instruction is employed, student engagement rates increase (Yorks & Follo, 1993). McBee (2000) interviewed and observed ten elementary teachers who were identified by their principals and/or district administrator as highly competent in the implementation of integrated thematic instruction. Eight of the ten classrooms had students with classified disabilities. In all ten cases, the teachers responded that the integration of the curriculum positively affected their students' attitudes toward school and learning. Nine out

of ten interviewees thought that the structure led to better attendance and positive attitudes toward what they were learning as well as elevated academic performance. Other common themes that emerged through teacher surveys and interviews were homework completion rates were higher and improved standardized test scores were also reported. Teachers reported that students who received ITI instruction retained in-depth knowledge longer, as well as the ability to make connections between content and skills learned in school to elements in their world.

National and state standards are set as to content in disciplines, and Michigan's social studies standards include many higher-level thinking skills: critical thinking, problem-solving, analysis and interpretation, inquiry and research, and evaluation (MDEOSI, 2007). Due to the overwhelming amount of content, teachers often relegate these very important skills to the background. Thematic instruction can incorporate these skills into a unit. When the content is focused upon one rigorous and relevant theme, students have the time to think critically. Analyzing data and various sources should be part of the lesson; problem-solving individually and as a group member can also be incorporated into a unit. Students learn through social interaction and construct new information based on prior knowledge (Kalina & Powell, 2009). TI has the flexibility and the time for students to learn in multiple ways and engage in critical thinking to gain deep, meaningful knowledge.

Many teachers have set aside the creative practices once employed to engage kids in order to "cover" all the material that is set down in standards and is subject to high-stakes testing. The suggestion that traditional classroom instruction is the only way to prepare students for the standardized tests is being questioned. Although more data needs to be accrued, especially at the secondary education level, results are suggesting that students who are participating in

integrative thematic instruction are testing as well and sometimes better than students in traditional settings (Vars & Beane, 2000; Stevens, 2007; Hinde, 2005).

Thematic instruction and integrated thematic instruction are tools that can be implemented in the classroom to help all students learn, and the relationship of information and skill building to their lives and the world help all student engage in the learning process.

Elements of successful TI and ITI units

Thematic instruction has its critics; questions include the depth of content and the structure's ability to teach skills and concepts (Shanahan et al., 1995). These critiques can be valid if teachers make the common mistakes of choosing a topic instead of a theme, ignoring student interests and backgrounds, incorporating shallow content and/or weak disciplinary components, or not allowing for flexibility.

One of the most important elements involved in creating a powerful thematic unit is the choice of theme. One must have a significant, unifying theme (Barton & Smith, 2000). The theme should reflect student interests, mandated standards, classroom curriculum, and one that will stretch critical and analytical skills (McBee, 2000; Jewett, 2007). An Integrated Thematic Instruction unit must have the capacity to involve more than one discipline but must also be wary of inconsequential discipline additions. It is not a rule that as many disciplines as possible should be included within the unit. Only those disciplines that have rich, meaningful content and a relevant role in the theme should be included (Barton & Smith, 2000; Jewett, 2007). Cook (2004) studied Tulsa, Oklahoma's Thoreau Middle School during the fall and spring semesters of the 2003-2004 academic year; three academic quarters were included. Thoreau is a "demonstration academy" (p. 90) that implements Integrated Thematic Instruction in all three grades. Cook's study was qualitative. Data were gathered from observations in a variety of settings, including

classrooms and lunch rooms. Formal interviews with eight teachers and administrators were conducted as well as various informal interviews with teachers and students. A variety of documents were also reviewed. All the data were triangulated to ensure validity. Cook also had a dependability audit done by an outside examiner. The data were examined for patterns; the patterns that emerged were used to complete the study and the final report. Thoreau's curriculum is based on Integrated Thematic Instruction; every quarter, a new theme is introduced. Core classes are blocked into a language arts/social studies class and a math/science class. Each core class has approximately 40 students. Through the use of ITI, as well as many Differentiated Instructional practices, Thoreau's students are able to make connections across the curriculum as well as to the real world and their personal lives. According to the data patterns, students are engaged and feel responsible for their learning. As students must constantly demonstrate their learning, they know they cannot be absent – physically or mentally. Kids face demanding curriculum, it is the same curriculum content as the rest of the Tulsa District; but due to the delivery style, the students are immersed in the content. Teachers plan together and focus all lessons around the quarter's theme. They are limited by the district's standards and benchmarks for each unit, yet still work to ensure the rich and meaningful content is relevant to the students' world. Students read and write across the curriculum to enhance the connectedness of the content, their art and physical education classes are tied to the theme, and their many projects demonstrate their knowledge and ability to make those connections. Students are also able to verbalize why they are studying the content and how what they are learning is valid in their lives. There are many reasons that Thoreau is perceived as a successful school, but ITI is its core. It is that unifying theme that keeps the students, teachers, and administrators focused on their educational outcomes.

In the Thoreau Middle School study, it is evident that mandated curriculum has the potential to take choice out of the equation for teachers and students; yet thematic instruction can also bring choice back into the classroom. Teachers and students can work together to address state mandates and course curriculum in a manner that will elicit student engagement and deepen knowledge. If students are made part of the planning process, students will have more “buy in” to the lesson and better scores on assessment (McBee, 2000; Barton & Smith, 2000). At Thoreau, content was mandated, but teachers had choice in delivery and organization of content within their classes, and students had choices in how to demonstrate their learning and understanding.

“Rigor and Relevance” continues to be an educational mantra across the nation. Thematic and Integrated Thematic Instruction can address both of these elements. Hargreaves and Moore (2000) researched the relationship between curriculum integration and classroom rigor and relevance. The study was conducted in Ontario, Canada; twenty-nine teachers of grades 7 and 8 were interviewed for one to two hours each about their personal philosophy regarding curriculum integration, how they integrated their curriculum, and what it looks like, as well as their perspective of curricular integration’s successes. The transcripts from the interviews resulted in over 1,000 pages; these were entered into a database, analyzed, and organized into categories that reflected curriculum integration, learning outcomes, obstacles and elements of support for integration. Curriculum integration is rigorous for both teachers and students. To connect content effectively requires intellect, time, and ability to “think outside of the box.” Students also are required to think in different, challenging ways as they are constantly connecting new information to old. Relevance was a powerful and consistent element in the teacher self-reporting of why they integrate. Relevance to self, family, community, work, and aspects of

social and political citizenship were addressed in the various integrated curriculum units. The teachers were identified by administrators as being committed to curriculum changes that include integration. The patterns that evolved through the interview data suggest that teachers who are willing to put in the time, believe in integration as a tool to enhance student outcomes through making “learning more applied, more critical, more inventive, and more meaningful for students” (p. 13). That is rigor and relevance.

Meaningful content and authentic activities and assessment are also components of a successful TI or ITI. Activities should emphasize not only the “doing” but also the learning. There are many creative activities that teachers can implement but not all lessons involve deep, meaningful content or skill building. Carving presidents’ faces into pumpkins might be fun, but how does the activity assess the knowledge of the president or illustrate a skill other than carving? To keep the integrity of the thematic instruction valid, activities and assessment should further the goals of the course curriculum or state standards (Shanahan & Schneider, 1995). Having the pumpkin as part of an exhibit that also included the president’s impact upon social, political, and economic issues would up the ante and address more U.S. History and Geography standards (MDEOSI , 2007).

It is not only in the United States that educators are searching for ways to implement meaningful learning and incorporate authentic activities and assessments. Yang (2006) researched thirty-three junior high students in Taiwan. The students were part of an extracurricular history workshop that engaged in an E-Critical/thematic doing history project. It was a web-based project that provided students with a variety of historical artifacts and documents via a website. Students became historical researchers aimed at enhancing their critical thinking skills. The goal of the class was to have students acquire historical knowledge through a

project-based, thematic curriculum based on war in the Chin Dynasty. Yang used a one-group pretest and posttest design, as well as a questionnaire to assess “student attitudes, inclination or dispositions toward history learning and critical historical thinking” (p. 2102). The paired sample t-test was used to determine the effectiveness of history projects in cultivating critical historical thinking skills among students. Participants also completed an open-ended questionnaire to reflect upon the project as a whole. Data suggests the students enjoyed the history project and “conceived history questions requiring critical thinking as more interesting than those learned by rote-memory” (p. 2102). Other indications include the development of a more positive attitude toward history in general (pretest $M=3.94$, posttest results $M=4.05$, $t=5.06$, $p<0.01$). The increase in critical thinking skills after explicit instruction was corroborated in the findings. Caution exists with these findings; the project was computer-based and that fact may skew results as students generally enjoy working with computers. Also noted was the fact that this was a voluntary extracurricular event, no grades and subsequent pressure was in existence in this study. Even so, the data indicates that thematic, especially web-based, instruction is a venue to meaningful knowledge, critical thinking skills, and joy of learning.

Professional consideration of TI and ITI implementation

Thematic instruction is just one strategy of effective teachers. The strategy should not be used as the only tool. Forced integration of skills or information that does not “fit” degrades the positive elements of the strategy (Hinde, 2005). The planning and implementation of a thematic unit is a decision that needs to be made with caution and care. Reasons abound why teachers have tried to incorporate TI and ITI and have not been successful, but the reasons why teachers should make thematic and integrated thematic instruction part of their course and curriculum far outweigh the negatives. Applebee et al. (2007) collected data on 11 interdisciplinary teams that

involved 30 teachers and 542 students for three semesters. Three teams were comprised of 7th graders, one was an 8th grade team, three were 9th grade, and four were 11th grade teams. In each team, English and social studies teachers were included, three teams also had art as part of their team, two had science, one team had a math teacher as well, and one team added a philosophy teacher to its team. Within each class, the research team chose at least six students as “focal students.” These students were nominated by teachers; in each class there were two higher achieving students, two average students, and two students perceived as low achieving. An attempt was made to ensure proper representation of race and ethnicities found in the school. Genders were equitable. Extended interviews with teachers, administration, and students, classroom observations, program artifacts analysis, and perusal of written focal student work were elements of the study. Quantitative data were collected in 108 observations; the researchers measured minutes of open discussion, frequency of envisionment-building activities, and connection among the disciplines. The elements of the research most pertinent to this literature review are the question of the use of more engaging instruction in interdisciplinary teams as opposed to traditional classrooms and what determines the extent to which disciplines are integrated. To organize teacher observation data, hierarchical linear models were used. The researchers used HLM to determine the differences in levels of interdisciplinary curriculum at grade level and subject areas at the teacher level. The subject areas were assigned a series of dummy variables to track discrepancies and patterns. The findings suggest that there is a positive correlation between approaches to instruction and how closely curriculum is connected, but it is not consistent across teams or even within teams. Individual teachers dictate instruction, and traditional teaching still occurs even when integrated units are present. Research also suggested that certain teams integrated more readily and completely than other teams. In two examples,

social studies and English team members worked together to integrate curriculum. In both cases, integration was steeped in teachers' perception of their curriculum and their willingness to collaborate. In a 7th grade team, the English teacher viewed her job as one of developing skills in literacy and writing; the topics of the reading and writing in her class reflected the social studies curriculum. Integration was perceived as high. The 11th grade team experienced change in team membership after the first year of the study. The new team member felt strongly about the interdisciplinary program and American Literature, US history, and art were structured chronologically with readings and projects reflecting themes. The enthusiasm generated through the successful implementation of interdisciplinary units was reflected in teachers and students. They engaged in exploration of new subjects, ideas, and connections with a shared sense of purpose. One outlier that was noted in this study is the extent of planning and coordination it takes to make Integrated Thematic Instruction/Interdisciplinary Instruction work. Teachers must be willing to put in the time to plan thematically and create engaging lessons.

It is not only in public secondary schools that educators are struggling with student motivation and success. In a case study of a 1960s Movement class at a research university, Orillion (2009) studied a course offered to combat "general education programs that lack coherence and poorly prepare students for further study or for their roles in a global society" (p. 1). The university had been struggling with student dropout rates, and interdisciplinary classes were offered as one strategy to improve student retention. The perception was that the course design would engage students and increase student learning. The class was an interdisciplinary course team-taught by three tenured professors: an economics professor, an English professor, and a history professor. In an ethnographic data driven study, Orillion gathered official and course-related documents, read the online discussion board, observed the class, and attended

office hours, field trips, and faculty meetings. She also interviewed the professors and teaching assistants three times throughout the semester. Students were also interviewed at the start of the fourth week of class. Orillion organized and synthesized data in a frame analysis. She first developed an explanatory frame after her preliminary research. This frame was modified and adjusted as data was accrued and analyzed. The outcome was a modified frame with confirmed data connected to a literature review. According to the interpretation of the data, the course failed in its endeavor. It did not increase students' critical thinking skills, nor provide a venue for in depth inquiry as the "students were not given the means or opportunity to engage in inquiry themselves" (p. 9). The problem lies not within the curricular structure; the problem lies within the constraints of the teachers. The professors at this university are expected to conduct research; therefore, they must balance research with the art of teaching. Research often wins at the expense of teaching. The professors taught on a weekly basis and rotated; this led to fragmentation of delivery and content. Often the connections to the other disciplines were surface, and the students were not provided with the material to make the connections. The professors were not equipped to teach the class. They had not taken the time, or were unwilling to take the time, to collaborate and truly integrate their curriculums. This compartmentalization of subject areas is barrier across the secondary and post-secondary educational spectrum. Due to these inconsistencies, incomplete connectivity to theme, and lack of venues and resources to make these connections, students were unable to engage or attain sufficient insight. Students leave educational facilities when their instructional environment does not support their needs. This ill-devised and executed course will not change that fact. Teachers are on the frontline of a battle. Shrinking budgets are matched by increasing responsibilities. Many teachers have several duties incorporated into the job description, and many are getting burned out with the incessant change

in the curriculum, the manner in which subjects are taught, and the content that will be tested, which dictates all the other elements of change. Integrated instruction is not a new idea, but TI is one that can be helpful to teachers if the strategy is planned and implemented intentionally and with support. Teachers need time to think, organize, and collaborate with others. Professional development activities must be incorporated to introduce teachers to the instructional strategy thoroughly as many teachers have preconceived notions of TI or ITI. Another level of support from a university is also helpful in supporting teachers who are incorporating the new strategy. Support of others outside of the classroom, as well as other teachers involved in the same endeavor, encourages teachers to delve further, gain more resources, and sustain the strategy (Desmond et al., 1998). Ragland (2007) evaluated a Teaching American History grant program entitled McRAH (Model Collaboration: Rethinking American History). The three partners in the grant included Waukegan School District, Lake Forest College, and the Chicago History Museum. The purpose of the grant was to improve American History instruction, create ongoing professional development to assist with the improvement, and develop teacher education programs aimed at producing better history teachers. Ragland's study had three objectives: measure the impact of the project on the adoption of new strategies in teacher's classrooms, evaluate the comfort level of the teachers with the new strategies, and assess the sustainability of the new strategies after the program ended. Teachers who were part of the study were all social studies teachers in grades 6-12 and had applied for the program. They had been introduced to the twelve McRAH strategies during a summer institute at the Chicago History Museum by museum historians. The strategies were based on historian's work in the field and modified by education professors to reflect best educational practices. The initial introduction to the strategies had been reinforced during multiple Saturday sessions throughout the following year. Data were collected

three times via surveys, questionnaires, reflective comments from teachers as well as ongoing classroom observations. In the last data collection (one year after the program had terminated), teachers were interviewed. Qualitative analysis of data was categorized into subcategories to reflect the three segments of the study. The results indicated that teachers used more strategies as they became more familiar, and therefore more comfortable, with them. After the first data collection, three of the strategies were being used to some extent. The most common were the use of primary documents and document-based questions, perspective-taking exercises, and the use of family and community connections. Classroom observations revealed “doing history” exercises that incorporated higher levels of thinking as well as thematic instruction, which was recommended by project faculty. The second data collection revealed a marked increase in the use of the strategies and the willingness of the teachers to try the various strategies. In the last collection, results were indicative of sustainability of the strategies, as 64% of the teachers reported using McRAH strategies. The study indicates that when teachers are given specific strategies and given the support, time, and resources to “make them their own” (p. 49), teachers will expand their classroom activities and units to include those that help students succeed.

Challenges of Implementing Thematic and Integrated Thematic Instruction

Effective thematic instruction and integrated thematic instruction units have extensive resources. An intrinsic element for social studies teachers, in particular history teachers, is access to primary documents and artifacts. Primary documents are becoming easier to attain, and the World Wide Web is also assisting in the accessing of primary documents and artifact simulation; but the search for the tools is cumbersome and time consuming. The lack of adequate material is as daunting as the time commitment. Some schools are fortunate to have extensive libraries or museums in close proximity and are beginning to use the facilities and the staff more efficiently

and effectively, but the process of creating TI and ITI lessons with content rich material is still an endeavor.

Another roadblock to the implementation of integrated thematic instruction is the compartmentalization of disciplines, especially in the high school (McBee, 2000). Traditional separation of subjects and their non-congruent standards creates difficulties when attempting to plan an integrated unit. A successful ITI unit does not force subjects together if the content will not naturally flow. Some units will be language arts and social studies, others may incorporate science, and another math or art. The key is to create a compelling theme and decide which disciplines can effectively be included and to what extent. Schools with teacher teams or teachers that regularly collaborate have an advantage, although time is always an issue.

Chapter 3: Results and Analysis

The social studies curriculum is mammoth. Michigan has created standards for the elementary years and standards for high school disciplines, but social studies incorporates a vast amount of information and a multitude of skills to be taught and learned. High school history teachers cannot continue to attempt to teach everything from Reconstruction to 9/11; the class will become a long list of dates, facts, names, and events that have little relevance to students (Cervone, 1983). To meet the standards, Michigan's as well as the Common Core, and encourage social studies students to engage in deep, meaningful, and relevant learning, teachers should incorporate thematic and integrated thematic instruction into their curriculum.

Themes immerse students in a particular topic; TI gives learners time to think, time to make connections to themselves, to others, and to the world around them, and thus deepens understanding. Secondary education social studies students need a venue to explore and discover elements of our country. Whereas most of the research of thematic instruction is in the elementary and middle school (Cook, 2004; Hargreaves & Moore, 2000; Liu & Wang, 2010; McBee, 2000; VanDyk, 2008, Yang, 2006), the positive attributes lend itself to all grade levels (Applebee et al, 2007; Spaulding, 2002).

In a recent poll of American high school teachers, 28% of teachers reported that apathy was a major issue (Fabian, 2011); thematic and integrated thematic instruction can assist in combating this issue (Cook, 2004; Kaiser, 2010; VanDyk, 2008; Yang, 2006). Social studies teachers must engage students in the learning process. If teachers can make the learning relevant, students engage. Through a thoughtful theme choice and strong curricular connections to the theme, learning becomes relevant to kids (Cook, 2004; Hargreaves & Moore, 2000; VanDyk, 2008).

Developing critical thinking skills has always been a goal of educators. It is even more important now in the age of high-stakes testing. As the Common Core State Standards are embedded in education, and testing, it is essential that teachers are intentional and transparent in teaching these skills. The studies of VanDyk and Yang suggested the increase in critical thinking expectations led to greater satisfaction and engagement of students. Critical thinking is intrinsic to Thematic Instruction as students must look for connections to other points of study, their communities, and their lives. It is how life is outside of school, and how life should be in school.

Thematic Instruction and Integrated Thematic Instruction is not easy to implement, especially in the compartmentalized world of secondary education. It can happen, but it takes time and commitment on the part of teachers. Social studies is one of the areas that lends itself to collaboration and integration with several other curricular areas. Studies reflect English and Social Studies as natural components of one another (Applebee, Adler, & Flihan, 2007; Cook, 2004; Hargreaves & Moore, 2000; Spaulding, 2002) but social studies can also connect to science, math, music, art. Pre service teachers, as well as teachers who have been in the trenches, should be given the opportunity to explore the possibilities of TI and ITI. It cannot happen in one class period or one professional development day; teachers are students also and need the time to think deeply and organize their thoughts. In this era of so many constraints, teachers must be given the time to collaboratively plan, implement, and reflect on their instruction. Successful integrated curriculum can happen, and the rewards can be sweet for teachers and student alike (Hargreaves & Moore, 2000; Ragland, 2007; Spaulding, 2002).

There are holes in the research of Thematic and Integrated Thematic Instruction. Much of the research has been conducted at the elementary and middle school level. Whereas the studies do reflect patterns of high student engagement rates, increased relevancy to students, and deeper

levels of knowledge; it is only a hypothesis that TI and ITI will have the same results on secondary students. Educators are struggling to find strategies that will decrease the apathy of kids; researchers should investigate this potential.

Thematic instruction is a tool that teachers can use to get kids involved in learning, encourage students to use higher level thinking skills and learn independently as well as socially. The skills needed to become a responsible citizen and a productive member of a society involve the ability to problem solve and think critically. If thematic or integrated thematic instruction is thoughtfully prepared and implemented, the teachers are supported with time and materials, students will be engaged and gain deep, meaningful knowledge. The Michigan Department of Education's Social Studies mandates as well as the Common Core State Standards will be met; but more importantly, students will learn the content and how to think critically about the content. In social studies, that means they are thinking critically about their rights and responsibilities of being a citizen- the basic reason for public education.

Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

After thousands of hours of research and discussion, it is evident to us that quality teaching and learning incorporates many layers of instruction. Differentiated, thematic, and integrated thematic instruction are philosophies of education that have the potential to elevate the craft (Cook, 2004; Liu & Wang, 2010; Tomlinson et al., 1995; Westberg & Archambault, Jr., 1997; VanDyk, 2010; VanTassel-Baska, 2008). They all emphasize big picture thinking and planning. Rigorous academic standards and high stakes testing are here to stay, and teachers must have a game plan that is intentional and transparent to address curricular expectations and student needs. The following are four recommendations for incorporating differentiated instruction, thematic, and integrated thematic instruction:

1. *Exposure to Differentiated Instruction and Thematic Instruction at the undergraduate/pre-service level is essential.* Student teachers are entering their field experience lacking in basic instructional skills. Introduction and modeling of a variety of instructional methods and curricular organization would at least give pre-service teachers an opportunity to experience how teachers can intentionally structure units and craft lessons to engage academically diverse learners.
2. *Backwards Planning gives teachers a road map to help students achieve learning goals.* Backwards Planning can happen on a unit level as well as a yearly level; it reinforces the tenet that everything done in class is intentional and meaningful. Scaffolding is inherent. If we know the end goal, we know how to get there.
3. *Be open to collaboration.* Collaboration cannot be forced; it needs to happen organically, without an administrative mandate. With all of the external mandates and larger

classrooms, teaching is getting increasingly difficult. We need to work smarter and work together. Our collaboration has transformed the way we plan, teach, and even think. Due to the opportunity to perpetually discuss and dissect our craft, we are in a constant state of reflection. We feed off of one another's ideas and as a result, our planning and implementation of lessons has exponentially evolved.

4. *Sustained Professional Development is essential for school-wide reform.* Whereas it is possible for individual teachers to devise and implement innovative approaches to teaching, if the desired outcome is school-wide reform, there must be quality on-going and supported Professional Development.

Top Ten Differentiated Instructional Strategies

The following list of recommendations is a synthesis of the work of Tomlinson (1995) and Kryza (2010) work along with our own insights and experiences.

1. *Pretest/Posttest:* Ongoing assessments allow for students and teachers to recognize gaps in knowledge and skills and modify accordingly. Pretests for knowledge and skills at the beginning of every unit are recommended.
2. *Learning Style Inventory:* In order to mature as learners, students need to understand how they process information and learn best. In doing so, they will be able to develop strategies which will enhance their learning potential. Teachers can greatly benefit from knowing how their students learn best.
3. *Tiered Assignment:* Assignment focused on a key concept or generalization with tasks and/or resource materials adjusted to varying levels of complexity according to students' academic readiness. When analyzing primary source documents, documents could be assigned based on student lexile scores. Struggling readers could be given excerpts with

difficult vocabulary defined; advanced readers could be given segments of the original text.

4. *Curriculum Compacting*: Compressing the required curriculum into a shorter period of time so students who master it ahead of their classmates can use the time they “buy back” for other activities. Options include open-ended extension activities; for instance, music compositions, history v. Hollywood film and video game reviews, historical “what if?” scenarios and student-created films. Recently innovative assessments tied to the CCSS have been developed by groups such as Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (www.smarterbalanced.org/) and Next Navigator (<http://www.nextnavigator.com/>). These assessments provide flexible and actionable feedback of knowledge and skills for teachers and students.
5. *Choice*: Students crave choice; it gives them a sense of empowerment and leads to high-interest and high-quality learning and products. It can be as simple as giving students choice in terms of which questions they need to answer, letting students determine the format their culminating project will take to choosing a theme to help frame learning.
6. *Learning Stations*: Collections of materials that learners use to explore topics or practice skills matched to their readiness, interests, and/or learning profiles. Stations are a beautiful way for social studies teachers to expose students to a large volume of information via photos, documents, video clips, music, art, and political cartoons. Students, working independently or in groups, make their way around the room gathering information that will help them answer essential questions.
7. *Flexible Grouping*: Students are part of many different groups, and also work alone, based on the match of the task to student readiness, interest, or learning profile. CORE

groups are teacher-selected, fixed groups which students utilize on a regular basis. One great way to utilize CORE groups is for homework group checks. Other groups are more fluid and depend on the assignment or the activity.

8. *Chunk, Chew, and Check*: Teachers intentionally organize information into smaller learning chunks, allow time for processing of the new information and to make connections, and finally check for understanding through multiple assessments.
9. *Think-Pair-Share*: Students are given a moment to process and compose their thoughts, then turn to an elbow partner to exchange responses and refine thinking. By allowing students to process and collaborate before sharing responses with the full group, class discussion is exponentially richer.
10. *Exit Slips*: A quick and easy method to check for understanding and provide closure is with the use of an exit slip. The exit slip could be formal or informal formative assessment. An example is “State the most important point you learned today and what is one thing you need clarification on or want to know more about?”

Elements to Consider When Developing Thematic and Integrated Thematic Units

1. *Identification of a Theme*: Teachers and students must choose a theme that is broad in focus to encourage global thinking. The theme must foster student interest and lend itself to be deep, meaningful learning across the curriculum. Possible themes include responsibility, justice, conflict, truth, and identity.
2. *Time*: Creating Thematic and Integrated Thematic Units is time consuming. Backwards planning helps but it is a daunting task to overhaul curriculum and dissect and reframe units and lessons. However, it is rewarding for both teachers and students as engagement and interest are elevated (Applebee et al., 2007; Cook, 2004). Time is also an essential

consideration in the implementation of the unit. Students should have time to fully explore and reflect upon the theme thus making the learning relevant and meaningful.

3. *Natural Thematic Connections*: Content must be authentic and relatable; it cannot be forced or it will lose effectiveness. The connections must be relevant to students' lives as well as to the larger curriculum.
4. *Flexibility of Scheduling*: With the advent of teaming, Integrated Thematic Units are easier to implement but many secondary schools are still organized by departments. Consequently, the staffing issues of the entire building may create barriers to creating interdisciplinary connections. Therefore, administrative support and vision is necessary to facilitate innovative planning and instructional practices.

Recommended Secondary Social Studies Sources

Wonderful resources are available on the Internet that make teaching with primary sources accessible and engaging for students and easy to implement for teachers. The Stanford History Education Group's *Reading like a Historian* (<http://sheg.stanford.edu/?q=node/45>) curriculum includes 12 units focused on teaching sourcing, contextualization, close reading and corroboration while studying landmark moments in American history. Document-based lessons, ranging from Puritan contributions in American society to evaluating the arguments made by members of the anti-war movement in the 1960s, are all centered on a specific essential question students work to answer. Differentiated instructional strategies are embedded in many of the lessons and allow for carefully structured collaboration, assistance for struggling readers, alternatives for advanced readers and open-ended responses designed to illicit diverse student responses and create rich class discussions.

Another excellent resource for social studies teachers looking to incorporate quality and accessible primary source documents in a well-structured manner that promotes student inquiry is *HSI: Historical Scene Investigation* (www.wm.edu/hsi/). The site is an online project developed by the College of William and Mary, University of Kentucky Department of Education, and the Library of Congress was designed to help students think like a historian; evaluate primary and secondary source documents, make inferences, and support claims with specific evidence from the texts. The HSI cases concisely hit the Common Core anchor standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening in an engaging, easy to use format.

The Stanford History Education Group in conjunction with the digital archive of the Library of Congress has recently developed a collection of easy to implement new generation history assessments called *Beyond the Bubble* (beyondthebubble.stanford.edu/). The questions aim to assess student knowledge in a way that goes beyond regurgitation of information and requires students to use historical thinking skills like sourcing, corroborating evidence, and contextualization. All assessment questions are in line with CCSS and feature a rubric and samples of student responses.

Other recommended sites include the Library of Congress' *American Memory* (memory.loc.gov) for a plethora of primary source documents. Included are visuals, letters, governmental documents, music through the ages, and poetry in addition to lesson plans. The Gilder Lehrman Institute (www.gilderlehrman.org/) also has an extensive primary source collection in addition to essays, lecture videos for teachers, as well as a variety of Summer Institutes to enrich teaching. A new addition to the site includes curricular units tied directly to the Common Core State Standards. The College Board website includes a list of historical themes as well as previously administered document-based essay prompts and high-level

multiple choice test questions. *Great Debates in American History*

(<http://www.peterpappas.com/journals/greatdebates.htm>) poses twelve controversial questions.

For each debate, the site provides dueling viewpoints in the form of historical speeches and includes a series of comprehension and critical thinking questions.

Differentiated Instruction Thematic Unit Template

Attached at the end of this section is our product. First is the template that combines differentiated instruction and thematic instruction. After researching models and structures (Laufenberg, 2010; McTighe & Brown, 2005; MDE, 2008), we constructed this template. This is the tool that we use, in addition to a school calendar, when we use backwards design to structure a unit. By no means is this the only format one can use to combine DI, TI, and ITI; the template could be modified depending on individual need. We have also attached an example of a completed template using our War Unit.

Areas for Further Research

Very little research has been conducted in the specific area of Differentiated and Thematic Instruction in the secondary social studies classroom. In the era of NCLB, RTT, CCSS and high-stakes standardized testing, teachers need to know which instructional methods work with today's students. Additional research needs to be done to determine to what extent DI, TI and ITI can successfully embed Common Core State Standards into secondary social studies classrooms. We propose a case study that chronicles the process two 10th grade US History teachers who team teach undertake as they implement DI, TI and ITI in their quest to address the Common Core State Standards. Quantitative and qualitative data should be gathered to measure effectiveness of teacher planning and implementation through interviews, surveys, observations and document analysis. Interview responses and observations could be coded to highlight

patterns. The survey responses could be on a four point Likert Scale, to eliminate the option of ambivalence. Document analysis could include frequency of DI implementation, student growth, and connection to the Common Core. Four areas of focus could be teacher planning and collaboration, level and effectiveness of implementation, student engagement, and student outcomes.

Proposed Research Questions:

- 1) How can secondary social studies teachers use effective differentiation practices to engage all learners while meeting the Common Core State Standards?
- 2) To what extent do thematic units implemented in the secondary social studies classroom meet CCSS and engage students in deep, meaningful, and relevant learning tasks?

Summary and Conclusion

Differentiated Instruction, Thematic Instruction and Integrated Thematic Instruction combine to offer a potentially exciting and rewarding research-based, standards-based approach to teaching and learning in an era of rising accountability for students and teachers. Exposure to DI, TI and ITI should begin during pre-service training and be continually supported with ongoing quality professional development. Opportunities for colleagues to collaborate should be fostered without being forced. While rethinking approaches to secondary social studies may be time consuming and daunting, powerful results are achievable.

THEMATIC UNIT _____

TIME/DAYS REQUIRED:

Essential Questions:	Essential Understandings:
State Content Standards (What?):	Common Core State Standards (How?):
Takeaway Points: <i>Students will know...</i>	
Student Skills: <i>Students will be able to...</i>	
Formative Assessment (Pre-Test/Ongoing):	Ideas for Formative Assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessing • Journals, Think Logs • Think, Pair, Share
Summative Assessment:	Ideas for Summative Assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Test • Culminating project
Performance Tasks	Ideas for Performance Tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted instruction to address significant gaps in knowledge and skills following pretest • Lessons based on readiness → Tiering, curriculum compounding, stations • Interventions → Individual or peer coaching, small group instruction, tutorials
Materials/Resources:	

Action Plan (Unit Schedule):

THEMATIC UNIT EXAMPLE: WAR!

TIME/DAYS REQUIRED: 8 WEEKS

<p>Essential Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is war? • Is war ever just? If so, under what conditions? • How has war become part of the US narrative? • How does war impact domestic life? • Should the United States fight wars to make the world safe for democracy? • Does war cause national prosperity? • How has the role of the press affected war? • Should a democratic government tolerate dissent during times of war and other crises? • Should the president be able to wage war without congressional authorization? • Is it the responsibility of the United States today to be the world's "policeman"? 	<p>Essential Understandings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through their essential questions journal responses and classroom activities, students will discover their own essential understandings.
<p>State Content Standards (What?):</p> <p>Growth of U.S. Global Power – Locate on a map the territories (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Philippines, Hawaii, Panama Canal Zone) acquired by the United States during its emergence as an imperial power between 1890 and 1914.</p> <p>Analyze the role the Spanish American War, the Philippine Revolution, the Panama Canal, the Open Door Policy, and the Roosevelt Corollary played in expanding America's global influence and redefining its foreign policy. (<i>National Geography Standards 1 and 3; p.184 and 188</i>)</p> <p>WWI – Explain the causes of World War I, the reasons for American neutrality and eventual entry into the war, and America's role in shaping the course of the war.</p> <p>Domestic Impact of WWI – Analyze the domestic impact of WWI on the growth of the government (e.g., War Industries Board), the expansion of the economy, the restrictions on civil liberties (e.g., Sedition Act, Red Scare, Palmer Raids), and the expansion of</p>	<p>Common Core State Standards (How?):</p> <p>Reading</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. 2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. 3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. 4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. 5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

women's suffrage.

Outcomes of WWI – Explain how Wilson's "Fourteen Points" differed from proposals by others, including French and British leaders and domestic opponents, in the debate over the Versailles Treaty, United States participation in the League of Nations, the redrawing of European political boundaries, and the resulting geopolitical tensions that continued to affect Europe.

Causes of WWII – Analyze the factors contributing to World War II in Europe and in the Pacific region, and America's entry into war including

- the political and economic disputes over territory (e.g., failure of Versailles Treaty, League of Nations, Munich Agreement) (*National Geography Standard 13, p. 210*)
- the differences in the civic and political values of the United States and those of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan
- United States neutrality
- the bombing of Pearl Harbor

U.S. and the Course of WWII – Evaluate the role of the U.S. in fighting the war militarily, diplomatically and technologically across the world

Impact of WWII on American Life – Analyze the changes in American life brought about by U.S. participation in World War II including

- mobilization of economic, military, and social resources
- role of women and minorities in the war effort
- role of the home front in supporting the war effort (e.g., rationing, work hours, taxes)
- internment of Japanese-Americans

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently

Writing

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis,

reflection, and research.

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance Understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Language

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

	<p>6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</p>
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Takeaway Points: *Students will know...*

- the major changes – both positive and negative – in the role the United States played in world affairs after the Civil War, and explain the causes and consequences of this changing role.
- the causes and course of World War I and II, as well as the effects of the wars on United States society and culture, including the consequences for United States involvement in world affairs.
- the changes in weaponry, strategies, and rationales for war

Michigan Department of Education Social Studies HSCEs

Student Skills: *Students will be able to...*

- Reach class wide consensus
- Analyze a variety of primary source documents
- Draw conclusions based on historical and essential questions
- Summarize main ideas
- Evaluate decision making process (ethical debate)
- Articulate multiple perspectives
- Assess relevancy of content to life today
- Synthesize historical evidence
- Collaborate with core group/flexible groupings

Formative Assessment (Pre-Test/Ongoing):

- Content pre-test
- What is war? Is it ever just? Initial student response/group definition
- Reading quizzes
- Content quizzes
- Essential Questions journal responses (ongoing)

Ideas for Formative Assessments:

- Reach class wide consensus
- Self-reflection
- Self-assessing
- Journals, Think Logs
- Think, Pair, Share
- DBQ essay, persuasive essay

Summative Assessment:

- 2nd quarter exam
- Culminating portfolio project (student choice)

Ideas for Summative Assessments:

- Unit Test
- DBQ essay, persuasive essay
- Culminating projects (could include

	<p>poetry, murals, design a monument, song collections, compose music/rap, video, board game, story boards, digital story)</p>
<p>Performance Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veteran Interview Project • Maps, simulations, discussion and classroom activity participation, visuals (video, photo, art) analyses; comparing textbook entries from around the world • Essential Questions journal responses (ongoing) 	<p>Ideas for Performance Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted instruction to address significant gaps in knowledge and skills following pretest • Lessons based on readiness → Tiering, curriculum compounding, stations • Interventions → Individual or peer coaching, small group instruction, tutorials • One Pager assignment
<p>Integrated Thematic Instruction Unit Ideas:</p> <p>Language Arts: Veteran’s Interview project and presentation, literary circles with war novels and short stories, poetry of war, letters home, persuasive/document based essays</p> <p>Math: Calculating time spent in war, proportions/ratios using war related statistics, geometry of war</p> <p>Science: Pandemic of 1918 (bacteria, viruses), chemical and germ warfare (cell division), changing medical techniques</p> <p>Art: Murals, propaganda posters, design memorials, veteran portrait</p> <p>Music: Compose musical score for war movie/scene, analyze the effects war had on musical taste and style</p>	
<p>Materials/Resources: War pre-test, guided readings, wars at-a-glance overview, essential question journals, culminating portfolio project description/rubric, Victoria’s Family Tree PowerPoint, Sophie, Live for the Children! Story time, Should the US go to War simulation, Wilson’s <i>War Message to Congress</i> (1917), We are Fighting! Stations activity, <i>War Horse and Passchendaele</i> movie clips, propaganda/civil liberties in times of war poster project, Negotiating the Treaty of Versailles simulation, WWI quest, Ch 23 Sec. 1 terms, Rise of the Dictators powerpoint, <i>Pearl Harbor</i> clip with <i>History vs. Hollywood</i> article, rationing and budgeting activity, Women at War prezi, UP Goes to War reading and map activity, Japanese American internment video clips and docs, We’re Fighting powerpoint and map assignment, <i>Saving Private Ryan</i> clip, compare and contrast warfare activity, Ch 24 Sec. 5 terms, End of the War in Europe powerpoint, Ch. 24 Sec. 3. Terms, War in the Pacific video clips, music and pop culture of WWI and WWII listening day, End of WWII in Japan, Atomic bomb reading, Atomic Bomb Right or Wrong? Debate, multiple perspectives textbook comparison activity, history of atomic bomb testing youtube clip, <i>Why We Fight</i> film and viewer guide.</p>	
<p>Action Plan:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unit Four: War November 12-January 18</p> <p><u>Week #1: US Imperialism/Spanish America War</u></p>	

Monday, November 12 – American Expansion & Imperialism PP HW: Read Chapter 17 Sec 2 with guided reading/map due Tuesday

Tuesday, November 13 – Background Spanish-American War HW: Yellow Journalism, Jingoism and “Remember the Maine” with document analysis

Wednesday, November 14 – War pretest; intro unit and establish ground rules

Thursday, November 15 – Grunt work: Complete war overview, due Monday.

Friday, November 16 – Grunt work: Complete war overview, due Monday.

Week #2: Grunt Work

Monday, November 19 – Intro Essential Questions and Culminating Project: War Portfolio; What is war? Group consensus ; Math problem: Using your group’s definition of war, determine how many years the U.S. has been at war throughout its 236 years. Figure out the percentage, and be ready to defend your answer.

HW: Read Chapter 18 with reading guide and be prepared for a reading quiz on Monday 11/26.

Tuesday, November 20 – Is war ever just? If so, under what conditions?

Wednesday, November 21– (half day) Wrap up.

Thursday, November 22 – Happy Thanksgiving!

Friday, November 23 – No School ☺

Week #3: WWI

Monday, November 26 – Chapter 18 Reading Quiz; WWI intro (Victoria’s family tree) Raikko in LT; map assigned (due Fri.)

Tuesday, November 27 – The Great War Begins... story time! Raikko in LT

Wednesday, November 28 – Should the US Got To War Simulation HW: Read Wilson’s War Message to Congress w Q & A; **HW:** Respond to either EQ#2 or #5

Thursday, November 29 – We are Fighting – Station Activity; What Was Life Like? Activity; War Horse clip (BIG)

Friday, November 30 – C 18 reading quiz; Homefront – Committee on Public Information (propaganda)

HW: Respond to EQ#4 and #8

Week #4: WWI → Pearl Harbor

Monday, December 3 – EQ discussion; Treaty of Versailles simulation; **HW:** map revisions (due Thurs)

Tuesday, December 4 – Complete Treaty of Versailles simulation; Review for quest

Wednesday, December 5–WWI quest; Essential Questions discussion

HW: Read C23, section 1 w terms

Thursday, December 6 – Quest debrief; Rise of the Dictators (WWI aftermath)

Friday, December 7 – Pearl Harbor Day – Pearl Harbor clip w/History v Hollywood in Little Theater

Week #5: WW2: On the Homefront

Monday, December 10 – EQ#4: How did war impact domestic life? Mobilizing troops, rationing, Rosie the Riveter; **HW:** Extended response to EQ # 3, 4, or 7-choice out (portfolio element)

Tuesday, December 11 – *U.P. Goes to War Step 1: Gleaning info*

Wednesday, December 12–*U.P. Goes to War Step 2: Create annotated map, due Friday*

HW: *Respond to EQ#4or #6*

Thursday, December 13 - *Japanese- American Internment video and doc analysis (EQ #4) HW: Read C 24 Section 1w terms*

Friday, December 14 – *UP map due; We are fighting: North Africa-Battle of the Bulge PP; map assignment*

Week #6: WW2: We are fighting...

Monday, December 17 – *Saving Private Ryan clips: D-Day, Battle of the Bulge, Allied and German bombings – C/C warfare HW: Read C 24 Section 5 w terms & EQs (in Little Theater)*

Tuesday, December 18 – *Yalta, Goodbye FDR, Mussolini, Hitler; End of war in Europe (aftermath) HW: Read C 24 Section 3 w terms*

Wednesday, December 19– *War in the Pacific-island-hopping; Pacific clip + other video clips - C/C warfare of WWI and WWII*

Thursday, December 20 – *Flex day*

Friday, December 21- *Essential Questions discussion (#3), Music and pop culture of war*

Happy Winter Break!

Week #7: Ending the War in the Pacific

Wednesday, January 2- *Potsdam, decision to drop bomb, Japanese surrender HW: Atomic bomb reading*

Thursday, January 3 – *The Atomic Bomb: Right or Wrong? Debate HW: Multiple perspectives textbook activity, due Tues.*

Friday, January 4 – *Set up Cold War; Atomic bomb testing (youtube clip); begin Why We Fight w viewer guide (in Little Theater)*

Week #8: Evaluating the Role of War in Shaping our National Identity

Monday, January 7 – *continue Why We Fight (in Little Theater)*

Tuesday, January 8 – *Textbook activity due; finish Why We Fight (in Little Theater)*

Wednesday, January 9– *Essential Questions Discussion/Portfolio Work Day*

Thursday, January 10 – *Portfolio Work Day (Raikko 259; O'Connor 259 B); portfolio due on exam day*

Friday, January 11- *Final Exam review*

Final Exam Week

Monday, January 14 – *Final Exam review*

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