Why Writing Matters in Social Studies: Thinking, Learning and Engaging With our "Big Ideas"

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PROPOSITION:

It is important to prepare our adult students to write extended responses on Social Studies topics so that they do well on HSE tests, but by doing so we can also support their efforts to think about, learn about and engage with the foundational ideas and questions that tie us all together as citizens and community members.

So -- WHY does writing about Social Studies matter? Because it promotes

“Informed and Active Civic Engagement”

ROADMAP FOR THIS SESSION

- **Instructional Purpose:** More about the Role of Social Studies Writing in Informed and Active Civic Engagement
- **Instructional Guidance:** the College and Career Readiness English Language Arts Instructional Shifts
- **Instructional Goal:** Teaching Students to Build their Social Studies Knowledge by Using the Writing Process with Complex Text and Tasks

SHARE YOUR PROFESIONAL WISDOM

What strategies do you teach your students NOW to help them surface their prior knowledge and generate ideas about a topic you want them to write about?

OPENING ACTIVITY TO ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND GENERATE IDEAS: FREEWRITING

Spend 3 minutes responding in freewriting to the prompt

- DO write whatever comes to mind
- DO keep writing even if it feels like you have nothing to say
- DON’T worry about correcting or changing anything you write – YOU are the only audience!

OPENING ACTIVITY:

FREEWRITING PROMPT

What does “informed and active civic engagement” mean for me and my students today?

REREAD AND REFLECT ON WHAT YOU WROTE:

- Identify **ONE insight or question or concern** that seems to be “most important” or seems to “stand out” in what you wrote. Then

- **Tell us** what insight/question/concern you came up with

IN THE PREVIOUS ACTIVITY, WHICH IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF WRITING DID YOU PRACTICE?

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- Reflected on your prior knowledge and experience
- Generated text based on your reflections
- **Analyzed** text (looked closely at the parts of what you wrote)
- **Drew inferences** based on evidence you found during your analysis of your text (made a decision about what was most important)

What does “Informed and Active Civic Engagement” mean to some other key players in our field right now?

It defines part of what college- and career-ready students need to know (TEXTS) and be able to do (TASKS).

“Informed and Active Civic Engagement” – according to the authors of the CCRS/A

- **TASK:** “to analyze how and why events and ideas interact over the course of an informational text (Reading Standard 3)…a critical skill for comprehending factual accounts… this skill as critical to informed civic engagement…”

"Informed and Active Civic Engagement" – according to the authors of the CCRS/A

- **TASKS:** "grasping authors' points of view (Reading Standard 6) and evaluating content presented in diverse formats and media (Reading Standard 7) [are critical] to understanding political discourse and preparing for active civic engagement (e.g., voting, serving on a jury, campaigning, lobbying, testifying at hearings, demonstrating, petitioning), as well as making sound decisions as consumers."

“Informed and Active Civic Engagement” – according to David Coleman, one of the lead writers of the Common Core State Standards

TEXTS/TASKS: Reading and comprehending the United States Founding Documents and the Great Conversation that followed. “They ensure that adults will be ready for citizenship. Grasping the import of these works reflects an understanding of and commitment to participating in the civic life of the country.

"Informed and Active Civic Engagement" – according to David Coleman, one of the lead writers of the Common Core State Standards

TEXTS/TASKS: It is striking how much political conversation in the United States returns to the Founding Documents and the Great Conversation that they continue to generate. They are essential for participation in public discourse and being an informed citizen."

TEXTS: The "Founding U.S. Documents":

- **Complex:** Washington's Farewell Address, Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's Letter from Birmingham Jail, etc.
- **Highly Complex**: Declaration of Independence, Preamble to the Constitution, Bill of Rights, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, etc.

The "Founding U.S. Documents" – TEXTS AND TASKS:

- **Reflecting on such topics as**
  - application of constitutional principles,
  - use of legal reasoning in Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents and
  - purposes and arguments of works of public advocacy (the *Federalist,* presidential speeches/addresses, etc.)

BRAINSTORM:

So what are the important issues and "big ideas" that mean something to me and my students, and require our "informed and active civic engagement" right now?

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Build on your current understanding of the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Writing Standards for Adults.
- Understand how teaching to these writing standards can promote comprehension of and communication about substantive and important ideas expressed in text
- Identify the kinds of writing goals, processes and tasks that can integrate the CCR Writing standards with Social Studies instruction focused on key concepts of history, government, civics and culture.
- Use selected tools and strategies for planning and conducting such content-rich and standards-/evidence-based writing instruction.
- Prepare to help students write for deep understanding of and engagement with the "big ideas" of history, citizenship and culture.

OVAE'S COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS FOR ADULT EDUCATION: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTIONAL SHIFTS/ADVANCES

BRAINSTORM:

What are these 3 ELA Instructional Shifts? Why should we care about them?

While…

The College and Career Readiness Writing Anchor Standards for Adult Education describe **expectations of STUDENTS** – what they should know and be able to do,

THE 3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS "INSTRUCTIONAL SHIFTS/ADVANCES"

- Taken together, describe an overall, integrated approach to ***teaching*** reading, writing, speaking and listening skills
- represent the overarching message that the College and Career Readiness ELA Standards for Adults send about ***what ought to be the focus of Adult Education instruction***
- describe ***expectations of teachers*** (vs. standards which describe expectations of students)

CCR Standards – Based Instruction: Key Advances Build Toward College and Career Readiness for All Students

3 "SHIFTS/ADVANCES" IN LEARNING FOCUS

1 – Complexity: *Regular practice with complex TEXT and its academic LANGUAGE*

exposing students to

- **appropriately complex texts in both instruction and assessment.**
- **frequently encountered academic vocabulary—language common to complex texts across the disciplines of literature, science, history, and the arts.**

The Shift Toward Complexity: Examples from the CCR standards

- **W2**: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately…
- **W4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

3 "SHIFTS/ADVANCES" IN LEARNING FOCUS

2 – Evidence: ***Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational***

- **For writing, the focus is on analyzing sources and conducting research… The standards require students to answer questions based on their understanding of having read a text, or multiple texts, not entirely relying on prior knowledge or experience.**

The Shift Toward Evidence: Examples from the CCR standards

- **W1:** Write arguments… using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- **W9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

3 "SHIFTS/ADVANCES" IN LEARNING FOCUS

3 – Knowledge: *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction*

- **an extended focus on literacy – comprehension of informational text -- in the domains of science, history, and technical subject areas**

The Shift Toward Knowledge: Examples from the CCR standards

- **W7:** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- **W8**: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources…and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES AND BIG IDEAS:

Teaching Writing as a Process of Thinking and Learning

THINK/PAIR/SHARE:

If I am "Teaching Writing as a Process of Thinking and Learning", what specific knowledge, skills and strategies am I teaching?

Key Components of the Writing Process

1. Planning

Attention to writing purpose

Attention to audience

Writing to think (generating ideas)

Thinking to write (organizing ideas)

2. Generating Text

3. Attending to Writing Conventions

Grammar

Sentence Structure

Spelling

Punctuation

Etc.

4. Revising Text

Applying knowledge of content

Applying knowledge of conventions

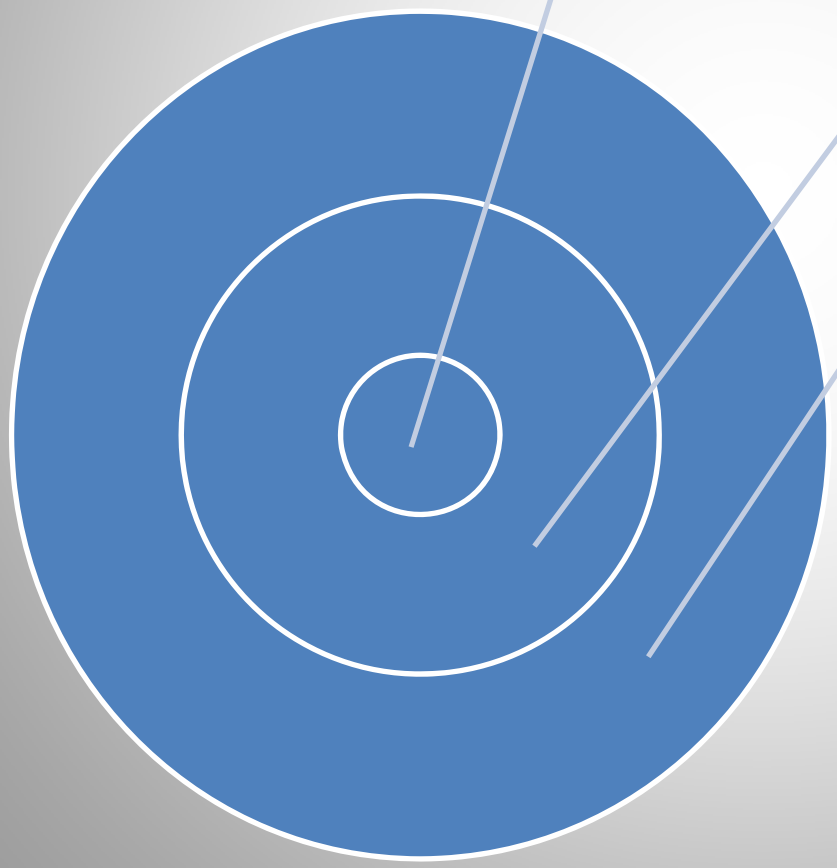
In the postsecondary classroom, … students who write effectively draw upon strategies that include planning, evaluating, and revising text to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. …writing is (also) a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge, a tool for learning subject matter.

(National Commission on Writing, 2003).

If students earn a GED credential but cannot plan, evaluate, or revise written text to write a report or express an opinion with the support of evidence, or if they cannot use writing as a tool for learning new subject matter, they may not be fully prepared for college-level coursework.

(National Commission on Writing, 2003)

Starting to Put it All Together: Building Social Studies Knowledge by



Starting to Put it All Together:

How can we teach our students to

- **Use the *Writing Process***
- **to Meet the *CCR Writing Standards***
- **to Build Social Studies Knowledge by Extracting Evidence from a Complex Text*?***

SOME INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS:

We can TEACH, and make sure students know and can use, strategies for…

planning, drafting, and revising writing to meet the writing purpose and accomplish the writing task

Starting to Put it All Together:

PLANNING: clarifying writing purpose and audience – What is the topic/issue and what do I need to write about it? What is this prompt/question/situation asking me to do in writing? Who is going to read this? What do I need to accomplish by writing?

Starting to Put it All Together:

PLANNING: Identifying what kind (genre) of writing will best serve my writing purpose

- **Argument (CCR Writing Anchor Standard 1) if I need to defend a position/support a claim**
- **Informative/Explanatory Text (CCR Writing Anchor Standard 2) if I need to explain something, describe a process, compare something to something else , etc.**
- **Structured Narrative (CCR Writing Anchor Standard 3) if I need to retell a real or imagined event**

and learning how to do that kind of writing

Starting to Put it All Together:

***PLANNING TO DRAFTING: Understanding and writing about the content of text*.**

- **How to surface prior knowledge and generate ideas about its topic**
- **How to find and extract specific information from the text**
- **How to document that information**
- **How to summarize that information**
- **How to use that information to answer a question/respond to a prompt**

Starting to Put it All Together:

REVISING: **Using**

- **knowledge gained from the planning stage about content (prior knowledge, evidence from text), and**
- **knowledge about genre-specific and editing conventions,**

to revise writing as necessary.

Starting to Put it All Together:

AND What might it look like if we incorporate these goals into our instructional planning?

Let's consider an example:

A Writing Prompt Aligned to the CCR Standards:

Consider the claims made about the purpose of the Constitution and the source of its legitimacy traced in the excerpt from Linda R. Monk's *The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution*. How does Thurgood Marshall's presence on the Supreme Court illustrate the evolution of the Constitution? Use evidence from the excerpt to develop your answer.

Starting to Put it All Together:

NOW – for my instructional planning,

1. **What knowledge, skills and strategies will my students need to know and be able to use in order to respond effectively to this prompt in writing?**
2. **And what knowledge, skills and strategies will I need to teach them?**

Possible Teaching/Learning Goals:

How to use the full writing process (plan, draft, revise) to meet the writing purpose and accomplish the writing task expressed in the prompt

Possible Teaching/Learning Goals:

- **How to clarify writing purpose and audience (unpack the prompt)?**
- **what kind of writing will best serve the writing purpose expressed in the prompt, and how to do it?**
- **How to surface prior knowledge and generate ideas about the topic of the prompt?**
- **How to find and extract specific information from the excerpt from Linda R. Monk's *The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution*.**

Possible Teaching/Learning Goals:

- How to document that information
- How to summarize that information
- How to use that information to respond to the prompt
- How to revise for content and "correctness"

QUESTION FOR SELF-REFLECTION

When I consider the ideas and issues that I said earlier were important to me and my students for *"informed and active civic engagement"*, can I see myself planning writing lessons that address those ideas/issues and promote that engagement?

How do we decide on the best texts to use to build students' knowledge about important issues and big ideas?

- Look at what the CCRS/A authors say*: works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries.*
- Look at key documents of US History, Civics and Government, social and environmental sciences, economics, world cultures, etc.
- Check out publishers' textbooks designed for new HSE Test preparation to find level-appropriate reading materials in relevant content areas
- Look at *Authentic Texts* that students need or want to read

Where can we find these texts? For Informational Text in Various Knowledge Domains, try

The Annenberg Foundation. ***Annenberg Learner***
http://www.annenberglearner.org

Khan Academy
http://khanacademy.org

Open Educational Resources (OER) Commons
http://www.oercommons.org/

WGBH Educational Foundation/National Science Foundation. Teachers' Domain
http://www.teachersdomain.org/collection/kypl/kyaded/

WorkKeys
http://www.act.org/products/workforce-act-workkeys/

Some Places To Find Authentic Text

- This I Believe http://thisibelieve.org/
- National Public Radio www.npr.org
- NY Times Science pages http://www.nytimes.com/pages/science/
- National Geographic http://www.nationalgeographic.com/
- National Geographic's Center for Geo-Education http://education.nationalgeographic.com/

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Contact info

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Please don't forget to complete a Workshop Evaluation

and

Many thanks for attending

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