BECOMING MORE “CIVIC” THROUGH
THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY

A Dissertation in
Curriculum and Instruction

by
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ABSTRACT

The nation’s recent preoccupation with reshaping academics and raising academic performance has all but overpowered a task of vital importance – educating our young people to become engaged citizens of their communities. Traditionally, students are taught citizenship skills in either a civics education class or through citizenship courses in the social studies curriculum. This study examines how a course on local history influenced students to develop greater civic mindedness and become more civically engaged.

Open to all 11th and 12th grade elective as a social studies elective, the researcher developed and taught a Local History course that addressed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for democratic participation through purposefully selected instructional activities reflecting constructivist and place-based pedagogy. To study this rural high school course, an action research approach was taken. PRE - and POST - course surveys were used to gauge students’ civic awareness and engagement. Fourteen months after the class, a third survey was administered. Data collected throughout and shortly after the class included teacher and student artifacts, student and course narratives, written and spoken definitions, and interviews. Findings from this broad set of data indicate positive results supporting the use of local history to promote civic awareness and eventual civic engagement. The data suggest that a Local History course based on the critical concepts of place does promote civic mindedness and engagement.
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EPIGRAPH

The teacher said to the students:

“Come to the edge.”

They replied: “We might fall.”

The teacher again said:

“Come to the edge.”

and they responded:

“It’s too high.”

“Come to the edge”

the teacher commanded.

And they came

and the teacher pushed them

and they

Flew.

Adapted from “Come to the Edge”

by Christopher Logue
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Civically, the mission of public education has primarily been to educate young people about their rights and responsibilities as American citizens (Spalding & Bobb, 2005). This mission has been accomplished by developing a conception of citizenship and fostering the growth of civic values that are still a central focus of our schools today (Galston, 1995). However, public schools have become increasingly less attentive to their civic purpose. The nation’s recent preoccupation with reshaping academics and raising academic performance has all but overpowered a task of vital importance – educating our young people to become engaged citizens of their communities. Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (2001), the amount of time teachers spend on social studies, geography, civics, and other related subjects has decreased at both the elementary and secondary levels, while the time spent on reading, mathematics, and science has increased (Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools, 2005, p. 3). An increasing number of students receive little to no education about how the American government operates, the Constitution, The Bill of Rights, the evolution of social movements, and U.S. and World History. Schools are giving less attention to civic education than they once did, requiring fewer civics courses and neglecting civics outcomes in state assessments (Miller & Piscatelli, 2003).

Critics argue that this decrease in instructional time for civics education has a direct correlation to the decrease in the levels of informed civic engagement across the United States (Center for Civic Education, 2008; “Civic Mission of Schools and CIRCLE, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement,” 2008; Civics Framework for the
Numerous studies have found that levels of informed civic engagement are lower than desirable, and in many cases, are declining (Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Social Capital Community Benchmark Executive Summary, 2001). Bowling Alone, The Social Capital Benchmark Survey, Youth Helping America: Educating for Active Citizenship, BetterTogether, and New Voices at the Civic Table are studies conducted in the United States within the past 20 years. The results of these studies indicate that the American population is not as actively involved in community, social, and political events as in the past and offer support, strategies, and suggestions for increasing America’s civic engagement.

Several factors have contributed to the decline in civic life in the United States. Histories of civic engagement have argued that suburbanization, commuting, urban and suburban sprawl, the effects of electronic entertainment, and the expansion of the workforce to include a majority of adult women have led to civic decline (Putnam, 2000; Schudson, 1999). Robert Putnam (2000) proclaimed that Americans had become less inclined to join the voluntary associations that for generations had served as the backbone of their communities and expressions of their common ideals. Bowling Alone documents that membership has declined in long-established volunteer organizations as Parent Teacher Associations, the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, the Lions, the Elks, the Jaycees, and the Masons (Putnam, 2000). Additional factors playing a role in civic decline include (1) pressures of time and money; (2) generational change; (3) changes in the American family structure such as the breakdown of the traditional family unit of mom, dad, and children; (4) greater socio-economic stratification which has given way to class tensions and a decrease in shared values; and (5) the arrival of big business, capitalism, and the market.
economy (Putnam, 2000; Schudson, 1999; Skocpol, 1996; Morse, 1989; Kasarday, Appold, Sweeney, & Sieff, 1997). Putnam believes that our nation’s market capitalism lacks the interpersonal warmth necessary for friendship and devalues human ties to the status of mere commodities (p. 282). I believe that our market capitalism has played a role in the decrease of small town businesses. More and more, for example, we find a chain hardware store replacing the corner family-owned hardware store, dissembling the local economy.

Many communities are reacting to economic development that disrupts, rather than cultivates, community life by implementing place-based education programs. As multinational corporations constantly relocate in search of cheaper labor and production costs, communities in the United States are left with high rates of under and unemployment, a shrinking tax base, and often, environmental decay (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008, p. xiii). Wal-Mart and other superstores continue to displace local businesses and depress wages; the pressure to keep costs down leads to a downward spiral of more downsizing, outsourcing, and few economic opportunities for struggling communities (p. xiii). Education efforts that focus on one’s locale or place aim to promote the civic development of a community’s youth to “think globally, act locally.”

Traditionally, the American school system has been the place where children were taught to become civic minded. It was the school’s primary mission to enhance the commitment to the basic ideals of democracy by teaching civic education to young people. Having a curriculum that encouraged citizenship education in multiple processes through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are needed for democratic citizenship was vital to our American educational system. Accompanying classroom learning were opportunities for students to become actively involved in the community both in and out of school. For this study, I refer to civic mindedness as the capacity to recognize, pay attention to, and have concern for public affairs, whereas civic engagement refers to actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.
Historians today still believe that in order for democracy to function at healthy capacity, it is necessary for the community to be actively engaged and involved in the democratic process (Bridgman, Shreve, White, Heaviside, & Dunshee, 2006). Although our school systems today still claim to enhance democratic ideals through the civic development of our young people, our nation has seen a steady disengagement from political and civic institutions. Is it that the primary mission statement of years ago is no longer a priority of American schools?

**Research Questions**

If our public schools are to continue with their primary mission of educating children to become responsible, informed, and engaged citizens then students must be taught the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for democratic participation. Traditionally, students are taught citizenship skills in either a civics education class or through citizenship courses in the social studies curriculum. I propose that through a Local History course based on the critical concept of place and the pedagogical practices associated with this course, students will learn to become civic minded, which will ultimately result in an increase in their level of civic engagement. My inquiry was designed to answer three research questions:

1. What were the key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced the initial design of a local history course that was intended to promote civic engagement and civic mindedness on the part of high school students?

2. As the Local History course unfolded, what events and activities were perceived by the student and the teacher as being the most powerful in impacting their ‘civic’ thinking and beliefs?
3. What evidence, if any, suggests that the Local History course actually influenced students to develop greater civic mindedness or become more civically engaged?

Who Knows our Local Community Better than a Shaner?

My maiden name was Shaner. If you know anything or anyone in Hugeville, you know the Shaner name. I am the youngest of ten children, the aunt to 36 nieces and nephews, 21 great nieces and nephews, and over a hundred cousins who all have roots and connections to Lysock County. Everywhere you go in our community, you run into a Shaner or someone who is related to or knows a Shaner. Literally, there were so many Shaners’ in our neighborhood, that our family farm had a sign on the mailbox that read Shanerville. I always joked with my Local History students that if your name was Shaner, Barto, Smith, Holmes, Houseknecht, or Kepner, (all names found in my family tree) make sure you date outside of our local community, because we are all distantly related. When the idea of developing a local history course that addressed the history and culture of our local community arose, who better to teach it than a Shaner who had local roots, local values, and local connections? I attended high school in Hugeville, lived in the surrounding community my entire life, went off to college, and was now back to teach social studies to our town youth. It seemed my duty to teach students about the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship.

How did this idea for a Local History course come about? One day while pumping gas at the local gas station, my principal at Hugeville High School was at the pump across from me (incidentally, he is also a distant cousin whose family farm is near my parents’). I can distinctly remember him looking at me and saying, “Amy, I have been thinking that we need a course in the high school that addresses the history and culture of our local community as a way for students to
appreciate our community and become more involved in it. You know about everyone in the community, and you would be the best choice for going out and getting the stories of the older people here and teaching it to the students.” At the time I was in my fourth year of teaching 7th grade World Geography, and had just finished my Master’s degree in Reading from a local university. Professionally, the furthest thing from my mind was developing a course about our local roots, but the more I thought about it, the more excited I became about the chance to do this! Moreover, my principal was right: who knew more about our local community or had more contacts with the people of our community than a Shaner?

So the research began. I spent the entire spring and summer of 1998 visiting local libraries, attending historical society meetings, rummaging in attics and old barns, and sitting on the front porches and barn banks of local residents listening to the stories of days gone by. I collected oral histories from town residents and spent countless hours with our town historian (a retired history teacher from our high school who has been a teaching inspiration to me) who shared with me his knowledge about the East Lysock School District and the villages and boroughs that comprised it. It was one of the best summers of my life. I learned so much about our community, and more so, about myself and my beliefs in community involvement. I came to realize that young people need to have a connection with their local surroundings, a feeling of belonging and ownership. This belief became one of the founding principles of my class.

Key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced my initial design of the Local History course arose from the study of pedagogy of place and the use of community-based, constructivist philosophy to promote civic mindedness and civic engagement on the part of high school students. The key content in the course was reflected in the unit titles, such as: Highlights in Pennsylvania History; The History of Lysock County; The Physical, Historical, Political and Cultural Geography of the East Lysock School District (ELSD); and The Underground Railroad
in Lysock County. Assessment of this content came from classroom discourse, quizzes, tests, written reactions, oral history research presentations, and projects.

Pedagogically speaking, these topical units governed the overall way in which field trips, guest speakers, student and teacher discourse, and oral histories all played into particular units of study. Each of these instructional strategies were selected and taught so that students would experience a constructivist and place-based pedagogy with the greater goal of enhanced civic mindedness and engagement. For example, when we studied the history of the East Lysock School District, each aspect of the unit was designed with the hope that the students would learn more about the history of the school system. The culminating activity was a field trip to a one-room school in our local district in which the students were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic by a teacher who had taught at a one-room school. Within this context, the students would learn about the “box socials” that were part of the civic activities of the youth of days gone by. Young ladies would prepare a box lunch and bring it to school, and young men would then ‘bid’ on the box lunch. A winning bid entitled the boy to eat the prepared meal and spend time with the girl who made the lunch. This function and many others helped the children learn social responsibility, knowing that the proceeds from this event went to the school.

I taught the Local History course through a constructivist philosophy of teaching that was grounded in place and deeply rooted in cognitive psychology. Using a constructivist approach allowed me to be a facilitator and the students to question, interpret, and analyze information in order to develop, build, and alter the schemata that they already had around a given subject. This student centered style of teaching allowed students to shape the knowledge and truth that they create, discover, and attain in the learning process by taking into account their own background and cultures.

Finally, a sense of class community was designed, encouraged, and embraced throughout the course as the students were taught the knowledge, skills, and dispositions underlying civic
mindedness and engagement. The study of local history (pedagogy of place) builds content through pedagogical concepts and practices so that students not only learn more about the place but also become more aware and involved in community engagement in the class, the school, and the community at large. From the onset of developing this course, I believed that schools could foster a sense of community as a societal asset through the study of local history, rekindling community allegiance.

The teaching and learning that occurred during this course was mainly student-centered, with little time spent on whole group lecture. Rather, students doing inquiry-based projects and the teacher as facilitator seemed to work well. Making changes during the 18 weeks of the course was not unusual. It was not uncommon for me to bring in a speaker or discuss a ‘hot’ topic that was currently occurring in our community.

Over the eight years I taught Local History, I revised my syllabus numerous times. As I grew educationally, my teaching style changed to become even more student-centered. My belief in the study of place-based education continued to grow, and if I had my way, every student in our high school would have taken this class.

This dissertation deals with a hometown girl teaching a successful Local History class for her last time. I hope to show that this class did make a difference in the lives of students in terms of their enhanced levels of civic awareness and engagement. After eleven years of teaching at Hugeville High School (HHS), I was granted a sabbatical to further my education at a large research university in central Pennsylvania. The academic year following my sabbatical, 2006 – 07, I returned to the East Lysock School District (ELSD) to find myself serving in a different educational capacity, a Literacy Coach at our grades 7 – 12 junior/senior high school. I also had the opportunity to teach one section of Local History that academic year, and when my schedule allowed, I would assist with the teaching of two additional classes of Local History.
That year (2006-2007) turned out to be my last year at HHS. Knowing this may be my final semester teaching Local History, I began to formulate a teacher action research inquiry in which I examined and reflected upon my own assumptions about the development of a course promoting learning that is rooted in what is local – the history, culture, and economy of a local place, as well as the pedagogical practices associated with teaching a course such as this. Moreover, I began gathering evidence to support whether students really became more ‘civic’ in their awareness and actions through the study of local history. As my research study unfolded, specifically, I chose to look back at 1.) The development of the course and reflect on the key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced the initial design of a local history course, 2.) The events and activities that students and I perceived as being the most powerful in impacting their ‘civic’ thinking and beliefs, and 3.) What evidence, if any, suggests that the Local History course actually influenced students to develop greater civic mindedness or become more civically engaged?
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teacher Action Research

Cochran-Smith & Donnell (as cited in Cochran-Smith & Kelly, 2005) identify action research, under the umbrella of practitioner inquiry, as a commonly used name to describe collaborations among school-based teachers and other educators, university-based colleagues, and sometimes parents and community-based activists. Many of the findings of teacher action research projects are aimed at altering curriculum, challenging common school practices, and working for social change by engaging in a continuous process of problem posing, data gathering, analysis and action. Teacher research has been conceptualized by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, 1999) as a central task of teaching across the professional life span and by Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (1994) as a way to study one’s own school or classroom. Teacher research refers to the inquiries of K – 12 teachers and prospective teachers, often in collaboration with a university based colleague, who work in inquiry communities to examine their own assumptions, develop local knowledge by posing questions and gathering data, and in many versions of teacher research, work for social justice (Cochran-Smith & Kelly, 2005).

Traditionally, teachers have been the researched, not the researcher. Thus, they have been expected to put into practice the knowledge generated by professional researchers. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) held that it is possible to imagine a different knowledge base for teaching – one that is not drawn exclusively from university-based research but is also drawn
from research conducted by teachers, one that is not designed so that teachers function simply as objects of study and recipients of knowledge but also function as architects of study and generators of knowledge. As teachers pursue their wonderings, asking and answering questions about learning, they evolve as researchers transforming the way they view themselves in the classroom. In other words, action research is a term used to describe professionals studying their own practice in order to improve it. Applied to teaching, it involves gathering and interpreting data to better understand an aspect of your teaching or student learning that interests or concerns you. Action researchers are critical in the sense that they not only look at ways to improve their practice but also examine, analyze, and reflect upon the research as it is being conducted. Action researchers are accountable in that they aim to make their research and its results available to other practitioners (Stringer, 2007).

Due to the fact that action research is largely about examining one’s own practice, reflection is an integral part of the action research process (Mertler, 2006, p. 10). Reflection can be defined as the act of critically exploring what you are doing, why you decided to do it, and what its effects have been (Mertler, 2006). Mertler states that effective teaching requires active participation and observation, analysis and interpretation of data, and reflection and action planning on the part of the teacher. Through action research, teachers are encouraged to examine the dynamics of their classrooms, critically think about the actions and interactions of students, confirm and/or challenge existing ideas or practices, and take risks in the process (Mills, 2003).

Action research draws on many theoretical frameworks and methodologies, but the most fundamental worldview embraced by action research is the participatory one. This view seeks to connect action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). The contributions to knowledge and theory that emerge are based not only on the solutions to practical problems that are collectively identified,
but also on the process of collaborative experimentation and on the intended and unintended consequences that emerge from the research.

Critical to the success of an action research study is the importance of action and reflection. Whether acting as an insider or outsider in the positionality of the action research, the researcher is linked to the practice setting and to others in that practice setting in order to collaboratively explore whether the cycles of interventions chosen actually work to change the situation under study. Traditionally, action research was initiated by an outsider observing the situation, attempting to become involved in the research to a greater extent than with traditional research (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 29). With the advent of highly educated professionals who have acquired research skills and are enrolled in doctoral programs, action research dissertations are often done by organizational insiders who see it as a way to deepen their own reflection on practice toward problem solving and professional development (Herr & Anderson, p. 29). A fundamental difference between action research and traditional academic research is that action research represents insider or local knowledge about a setting. This inside approach allows the researcher to gain knowledge that is traditionally impossible for an outsider to gain. However, this makes it harder for the teacher researcher to ‘step back’ and view the setting dispassionately (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994). Herr and Anderson suggest that the degree to which researchers position themselves as insiders or outsiders will determine how they frame epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues in the dissertation.

The questions pursued in action research are often related to the researcher’s own passions and beliefs. Often times the project undertaken touches the researcher’s heart in some way if it is to sustain him or her. Thus, the action researcher tends to be concerned with the workability of the knowledge generated from the research to translate findings of use in practice. Through critical reflection, the researcher is willing to transform practice when need be and work in collaboration with others. An action research study incorporates some of the features of a
naturalistic study: participant observation, sensitivity to participants’ concerns, focus on descriptive data in the initial phases, nonstandardized instrumentation, a holistic perspective, and the search for underlying themes or patterns (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

When teachers are reflective and critical of their own practice, they use the information they collect as a means of facilitating informed, practical decision making (Parsons & Brown, 2002). Through reflection and collaboration, the ultimate goal of educational improvement can be achieved. Herr and Anderson (2005) suggest that the concern with both action (improvement of practice, social change, and the like) and research (creating knowledge about practice) sets up a conflict between the rigor and relevance of the research (p. 54). Herr and Anderson assert that unlike traditional research that frowns on intervening in any way in the research setting, action research demands multiple forms of intervention:

1. to identify a question/problem
2. to develop a plan of action to improve and undertake what is already happening
3. to act to implement the plan
4. to observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs
5. to reflect of these effects

Judging quality in teacher action research

Action researchers, like all researchers, are interested in whether knowledge generated from the research is trustworthy, but they are usually also interested in outcomes that go beyond knowledge generated. Checks for trustworthiness, therefore, are designed to ensure that researchers have rigorously established the veracity and truthfulness of the information and analysis that have emerged from the research process (Stringer, 2007).

Sound inquiry must demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for its truth value, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the veracity of its findings or decisions (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Guba and Lincoln (1981,
1989) refer to these combined qualities as “trustworthiness,” and have in their various writings described how trustworthiness can be assessed and strengthened. Criteria established to define trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Lincoln and Guba define credibility in any inquiry as the degree of confidence in the “truth” that the findings of a particular inquiry has for the subjects with which – and the context within which – the inquiry was carried out (1985, p. 290). Assessment is determined by the individuals of the setting as they determine whether the description developed through inquiry in a particular setting ‘rings true’ (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 30). A credible inquiry often is imprecise in terms of defining boundaries and specific relationships but very rich in providing depth of meaning and richness of understanding (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). However, a major concern of establishing credibility is the interpretation of the constructed realities that exist in the context being studied: Are the results credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research?

In a traditional study it is the obligation of the researcher to ensure that findings can be generalized to the population; in a naturalistic study the obligation for demonstrating transferability belongs to those who would apply it to the receiving context (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 241). However, in teacher action research studies, the generalizability of the studies is based on the findings being intended for application and use within the context in which they were developed. This may be through enhanced conceptual understandings, altered practice, and/or reconstructed curricula. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) argue that research by teachers is a significant way of knowing about teaching, generating both local knowledge and public knowledge about teaching, learning, and schooling. They assert that although it may not be the goal of teacher action research, the transferability of knowledge generated may be used for the teacher’s own knowledge, for the immediate community of teachers, and for the larger community of teachers (p. 44).
According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability of a study can be determined through one properly managed audit. To establish dependability, the auditor examines the process by which the various stages of the study, including analytic techniques, were conducted (Gorski, 1998). The auditor determines whether this process was applicable to the research undertaken and whether it was applied consistently (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the purpose of teacher action research studies, working collaboratively with other teachers, colleagues, or university based researchers will allow for review of the data, methodology, analysis process, and the plan of action generated from the action cycle for consistency and applicability. As a doctoral student, my doctoral committee audited my work throughout my research study. My dependability comes from the oversight that I received from my doctoral committee prior to, during, and after my final dissertations defense.

As defined by Guba and Lincoln (1981), establishing trustworthiness by providing truth value through credibility, applicability through transferability, and consistency through dependability enables a naturalistic study to make a reasonable claim to methodological soundness. To meet these criteria, Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1985) have proposed a series of strategies that include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks. Triangulation of data, member checking, and persistent observation are all strategies that are especially useful for teacher action research studies (Mertler, 2006). The closer a teacher action researcher comes to repetition in noticing themes, items, or patterns that emerge from the study, the closer the study comes to reflecting the local setting.

Quality is another standard of criteria for judging teacher action research. Reason (2003) argues that quality in inquiry comes from awareness and transparency about the choices open to the researcher at all stages of the research process. Quality comes from working collaboratively with others, having them critique and challenge the research. Quality comes from how well the researcher has reflected and critically analyzed the research and through understanding the
choices that have been made about the nature of the knowledge and practice that has been
generated. Thus in the practice of quality inquiry, researchers need to be aware of the choices
open to them and make these choices clear and transparent to themselves and their wider
audience (Reason, 2003, p. 7). It is also important for action researchers to explicitly connect
their own judgments to discussions in current literature. While action researchers address issues
of concern to individuals and communities in the everyday conduct of their lives, their wider
purpose is to connect their work to a larger local, public knowledge as well. (Cochran-Smith &
Lytle, 1993).

**Defining Pedagogy of Place**

A sense of place is defined as being “the pattern of reactions that a setting stimulates for a
person” (Steele, 1981, p. 12). Pedagogy of place is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the
interpretation of school, community, and environment within the teaching/learning process. The
Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Program (1999) define pedagogy of place, or place-
based education, as recontextualizing education locally. It makes education a preparation for
citizenship, both locally and in wider contexts, while also providing a basis for continuing
scholarship.

This pedagogical theory explains that a person’s perception of a place, both conscious
and subconscious, shapes their relationship to that place. While sense of place is enhanced by an
attachment to a home, a school, or a community in general, Wilson (1997) explains that place
does not refer simply to a geographic location but also to the opportunities that are available to
create meaning within a place. As stated by Steele (1981), the notion of “place” itself, “is used
variably as a physical location (what place did you visit?), a psychological state (I’m not in a
very good place right now), social status (people should know their place), the location of
something in one’s mind (I can’t quite place it), a standard for evaluation (there’s a time and
place for everything), and on and on” (p. 5).

Place-based education is an educational philosophy and practice that promotes learning
that is rooted in what is local – the history, culture, and economy of a local place (Sobel, 1994, p.
7). Through the use of the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts
in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum,
place-based education uses the local surroundings as the context for integrating curriculum into a
multidisciplinary approach. However, according to David Sobel, Project Director at Antioch
University New England, place-based education is not simply a way to integrate the curriculum
around a study of place, but a means of inspiring stewardship and an authentic renewal and
revitalization of civic life (Sobel, 1994, p. iii). Additionally, Sobel asserts that place-based
education emphasizes hands-on, real-world learning experiences, thereby, increasing academic
achievement, helping students develop stronger ties to their community, enhancing students’
appreciation for the natural world, and creating heightened commitment to service as active,
contributing citizens (Sobel, 1994, p. 7).

Advocates of place-based education believe that students should first have a grounding in
the history, culture, and ecology of their surrounding environment before moving on to domestic
and international issues. In an increasingly globalized world, there are often pressures for
communities and regions to subordinate themselves to the dominant economic models and to
devalue their local cultural identity, traditions and history in preference to a flashily marketed
homogeneity (Sobel, 1994, p. i). Place-based education is needed due to our ever increasing
globalization and the zeal to produce children who are geared to this. Schools can play a central
role in the process of place-based education by teaching students about their “sense of place.”
The role of school in a place-based educational program

A place-based educational program allows a curriculum to address more than standardized guidelines by inviting teachers to adapt the curriculum to local conditions. According to The Rural Challenge Report (1999), students who undertake selected community projects not only gain important academic knowledge, but also learn valuable new skills. Students engaged in project-based work “did not just learn about history, websites, science, and their communities, they became historians, website developers, scientists, and active citizens” (Rural Challenge, 1999, p. 8). Learning in place-based Rural Challenge programs involved demonstrating student leadership, responding to community needs, making a lasting contribution to a community’s well-being, and changing the expectations of what it means to go to school (p. 8). Place-based education integrates components from the learner-centered curriculum, including beliefs that the curriculum should be one of “discovery” and that the curriculum should be “non-linear, emergent, seemingly unstructured, and often unpredictable” (Ellis, 2004, p. 51). Gruenewald & Smith (2008) believe that place-based educators do not wish to replace standards-based schooling, but rather to make this powerful approach to learning available part of the time to learners in all communities.

New views about human learning are a typical part of the rationale for place-based studies (Theobald & Siskar, 2008, p. 214). Researchers Paul Theobald and John Siskar believe that a place-based education curriculum is inherent within constructivist pedagogical processes that are social, democratic, and inclusive of critical inquiry (2008). Their belief is that schools can make a legitimate, though partial, contribution to societal ways by involving the nation’s citizens, developing healthy communities, and promoting an embrace of diverse ways of life and living. Theobald & Siskar (2008) believe that learning, like other distinctly human traits, is largely a social undertaking, thus the popularity of the phrase “social constructivism.”
Place-based education can increase the intensity of civic involvement in a local community as well as the civic capacity of the community. For our communities to grow and remain strong, we need educated citizens to use the resources, experiences, knowledge, and skills available in the school and larger community to meet the needs of every child. Place-based education supports students’ efforts to learn or study outside of the classroom. It has been a longstanding goal of a democratic education process to have all members of the community involved in processes that help to build a stronger educational system that serves all children in the community. Place-based education can help increase the community engagement that is necessary to bring people together to talk, listen, learn, and decide to act on meeting the needs of schools and students.

The Annenberg Rural Challenge locates and funds exemplary rural public school programs to serve as models for rural education reform. The guiding theory of the Rural Challenge is that when rural schools base their teaching on the economy, ecology, history, and culture of their communities while fully engaging the community in the school’s work, schools and communities will improve together (Rural Challenge, 1999). A four-year evaluation of the Rural Challenge’s effectiveness concluded that: (1) place-based education increased student appreciation of their histories and communities and increased community participation and resources; (2) participation in community-based work instilled valuable new skills in addition to academic understanding; and (3) learning in the community involved demonstrating student leadership, responding to community needs, contributing to community well-being, and changing expectations of what it means to attend school (Rural Challenge, 1999).

Sobel and the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative realize that their aspirations for place-based education go beyond academic achievement. While they started out thinking that their focus was on school improvement and academic achievement, they have come to realize that their focus includes creating vital communities and preserving the quality of the
environment (Sobel, 1994). Furthermore, Sobel and his partners realized that they also needed to actively engage the community to garner the budget support and human capital necessary for success. For this reason, Sobel asserts that “a three-legged stool of academic achievement, social capital, and environmental quality is necessary for place-based education to succeed” (p. 36).

Amy Powers, a co-founder of and evaluation co-director for Program Evaluation and Educational Research Associates, has worked to create a public research network for place-based education. Two of the main goals of this research consortium are to discover links to theories behind the instructional approach, and to work with an evolving theoretical model to add support to the integration of place-based education into general curricular models. A present theory contends that “when one has developed an attachment to one’s place, and one has the skills to proceed, an individual will become a more active participant in his or her community. When this civic engagement increases in a community, social capital – the invisible web of relationship - broadens and deepens. Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 2001, p. 22). In other words, social capital is defined as Putnam’s term for willingness and capacity of individuals to work for the collective good of a community. Increased social capital leads to a greater sense of personal well-being amongst citizens, which ultimately translates into economic well-being for their communities (Sobel, 1994, p. 37). The improvement of a community’s social capital leads, in the long run, to a healthier community, both natural and social. This construct is an essential part of the theory of change behind each of the Place-Based Education Evaluation Consortium program’s endeavors (Powers, 2004, p. 19).

Just as place-based education supports students’ efforts to learn or study outside of the classroom, lessons taught in our schools are just as valuable towards the preparation of citizens. Some reformers, scholars, and foundation leaders are now looking for ways to reassert the democratic purposes of schooling (Gibson & Levine, 2003). Those promoting democratic
priorities want students to develop the skills and commitments that children need in order to be concerned for the well-being of others (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). I believe that one of the best ways to promote the kinds of commitment to civic participation is by educating our students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for democratic citizenship. Local History, an example of place-based education, can help increase the student and community engagement that is necessary for democratic participation.

**Defining Civic Mindedness**

According to Cynthia Gibson and Peter Levine (2003), civic mindedness is defined as attention to and concern for public affairs. This definition includes having, showing, or actively carrying out (which I call civic engagement) one’s concern for the condition and affairs of one’s community. Civic mindedness includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are necessary to become an active citizen in our democratic nation.

Studies by the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (2004), Carnegie Corporation of New York (2002), The Center for Civic Education (2004), Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2002), and Education Commission of the States (2006) all suggest that students should be taught the skills, knowledge, and values and/or dispositions necessary for democratic participation. As used with this study, these competencies are necessary for students to become civically minded and, as a result, civically engaged.

To function effectively as citizens, it is essential that students understand and value the roles, rights, and responsibilities that citizens must play. It is through citizens’ knowledge and exercise of these rights and responsibilities that the constitutional democracy of the United States is preserved and strengthened. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (2003) identifies civic content knowledge as:
• The core roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship.

• Key historical periods, episodes, cases, themes, and experiences of individual groups in U.S. history

• Principles, documents, and ideas essential to constitutional democracy

• Structures, processes, and functions of government; powers of branches of the government

• Structural analysis of social problems and systematic solutions to making changes

As a social studies teacher, I would also recognize the relationship among and between any of the above items of importance with knowledge necessary to participate in civic life.

As citizens of a constitutional democracy, there are certain skills necessary for participation in our government. Researchers Rick Battistoni (1997) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004) in their studies of civic participation have found that the items below are civic skills needed for democratic participation in our democratic government:

• ability to explain and analyze information about civic and political life

• ability to apply knowledge to defend circumstances and settings

• ability to evaluate, take and defend positions on public issues

• ability to monitor and influence civic life by working with others

• ability to express ideas and manage conflict

The third aspect of civic mindedness is civic dispositions. The National Center for Learning and Citizenship identifies core civic dispositions as motivations for behavior and values/attitudes that can include support for justice and equality and a sense of personal responsibility (Torney-Purta & Lopez, 2006). As set forth by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) (2006) and the National Council for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) (2004), civic dispositions encompass interpersonal and intrapersonal values, virtues, and ethics such as:
• Tolerance and respect
• Appreciation of difference
• Concern with the rights and welfare of others
• Personal efficacy
• Sense of belonging to a group
• Desire for community involvement
• Attentiveness to civic matters
• Confidence to participate in civic life.

The combination of civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions aids in fostering the growth required for competent civic engagement. They represent competencies or themes of accepted sets of standards, such as those of the Center for Civic Education (CCE), National Standards for Civics and Government (1994), and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) (Creating Effective Citizens Position Statement, 2001), as well as a number of individual state standards.

**Defining Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement is understood as those activities that reflect civic skills, inspire engaged citizenship, and result in individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern (Battistoni, 2002; Ehrlich, 2000, Engle & Ochoa, 1988). Using Thomas Ehrlich’s words, civic engagement is defined as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference” (Ehrlich, 2000, p. 2). Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities, from individual volunteerism and organizational involvement to electoral participation (Carpini, 2006). It can include working in a soup kitchen, serving on a
neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official, or voting (National Alliance for Civic Education, 2007).

Volunteerism, service learning activities, and community involvement all develop civic skills and inspire civic engagement. The Local History course was designed with these ideals in mind. The overarching goal of the course was to teach students the core roles, rights, and responsibilities of individual citizens and more importantly, to prepare students to actively participate in community affairs. Examples of civic engagement include:

- attending and/or participating in local events such as carnivals, festivals, historical events, school and community sponsored activities;
- attending and/or participating in school and/or community sponsored clubs, as well as holding a position of leadership in these clubs; and
- participating in extracurricular school and community activities such as band, chorus, Volunteer Fire Company, clubs, and sports’ teams, as well as social and cultural organizations outside of school.

**Teaching Civic Mindedness to Encourage Civic Engagement**

Our representative democracy depends upon ideas of civic mindedness and civic engagement taught in the schools. However, since the incorporation of *No Child Left Behind* legislation, the instructional time allotted for social studies instruction has decreased. Recent attention in our own school district’s instructional time for opportunities in civics education has allowed me to consider various approaches to teaching civic mindedness.

Traditionally, the core purpose of social studies education has been to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to become effective citizens. As defined by *The Social Studies in Secondary Education Report Bulletin No. 28 of 1916*, social
studies education was that whose subject matter related directly to the organization and development of human society and to man (sic) as a member of groups (Nelson, 1994, p. 22). In his book, *Changing Course: American Curriculum Reform in the 20th Century*, Kliebard (2002) discusses the creation of a new social studies curriculum that was consistent with the overall thrust of the *Cardinal Principles*. *The Cardinal Principles Report of Secondary Education* was issued in 1918 by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. As a whole, this report essentially endorsed a curriculum tied directly to the social functions that future citizens would perform (Kliebard, 2002, p. 34). These changes clearly placed civics as the centerpiece of the new social studies with emphasis on social uplift and social science, and correspondingly less emphasis in the academic study of history (p. 34). More specifically, the purpose of social studies in the American high school at that time should have for its conscious and constant purpose the cultivation of good citizenship. Being a ‘good citizen’ of a neighborhood was identified as being a thoroughly efficient member of that neighborhood, characterized by, among other things, a loyalty and a sense of obligation to the city, state, and nation as political units (Nelson, 1994, p. 17).

Since the advent of social studies education, students have been taught to become ‘good citizens’ through social studies courses in the elementary and middle schools. Courses such as Civics and Citizenship were specifically designed to teach high school students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for their role in American society.

There are multiple interpretations of civic education. For the purpose of this investigation, I relied upon the National Alliance for Civic Education definition of civic education as the multiple processes through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are needed for democratic citizenship (*The Importance of Civic Education*, 2007, p. 61). Through civic education courses, students are taught about American constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values on which it rests, the skills necessary to
participate as effective and responsible citizens, and the dispositions to use democratic knowledge and skills to make decisions and manage conflict.

Similarly, citizenship education is defined as the teaching and learning of values, knowledge, skills, and a sense of efficacy and commitment that define an active and principled citizen (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Citizenship education is a more recent term used to refer to social studies efforts that include a specific citizenship focus beyond the study of the facts and concepts of social sciences, history, and civics. Citizenship education can include instruction in history and government, civics lessons on the rights and duties of citizens in a democracy, discussion of current events, service-learning, mock trials and elections, character education, and more (Helping state leaders shape education policy, 2006). Citizenship education also takes place through involvement in student government, extracurricular and co-curricular activities, and by involving students in school, district, and community decision making.

It is evident that social studies, civics, and citizenship courses are designed to teach the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become civically minded. However, I believe that high school students are more apt to learn the same knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for democratic participation in a “place-based” Local History course that engages them with the local community through direct, constructivist-based activities. It is the local connection to one’s own community that makes a Local History course as the best choice for teaching civic mindedness. The importance of this study lies in the purposeful intentions and action research efforts of a place-based, constructivist-oriented course, carefully designed to teach students to become civic minded.
Constructivism, Civic Mindedness, and Place-based Education

I believe that one of the best methods for teaching local history is through an approach to learning and teaching that is grounded in place and deeply rooted in cognitive psychology, or constructivism. According to Marlowe and Page (2005, p. 7), learning in constructivist terms is:

- The process and the result of questioning, interpreting, and analyzing information;
- Using this information and thinking process to develop, build, and alter our meaning and understanding of concepts and ideas; and
- Integrating current experiences with our past experiences and what we already know about a given subject.

Every person constructs his/her own meaning about issues, problems, and topics. Because no one has had the exact same experiences as anyone else, our understandings, interpretations, and our schemata of any concept or experience cannot be exactly the same as anyone else’s (Marlowe & Page, 2005, p. 8). Our prior experiences, knowledge, and learning affect how we interpret and experience new events; our interpretations, in turn, affect construction of our knowledge structures and define our new learning (p. 8).

People differ on details of the concept of learning. According to Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, human beings construct knowledge. Piaget uses the term schemata, which refers to knowledge structures or constructs and ways of perceiving, understanding, and thinking about the world. His works inspired the transformation of American education from theory to practice in a more ‘child-centered’ approach. Piaget’s concept of the learner is that of an active creator of knowledge (Perkinson, 1984, p. 48). People create knowledge through the actions they perform – sensory-motor acts, language acts, and logical acts (p. 48). Piaget believed the two main functions of intelligence were to invent and to understand (Piaget, 1967, p. 213). Therefore, the actions that people perform create or invent schemata and concepts. People then use these
schemata and concepts in constructing their subsequent understandings of the situations they encounter (Perkinson, 1984).

Piaget’s contribution to a constructivist theory of learning also included his description of mental development (learning) as a process of equilibrium in response to external stimuli (Marlowe & Page, 2005, p. 12). That is, during interaction with the environment, Piaget theorized, the student assimilates complementary components of the external world into his/her existing cognitive structures (schemata): if new experiences do not fit these existing knowledge structures, the learner will change or alter those structures to accommodate the new information. According to Piaget, assimilation and accommodation are directed at a balance between the structure of the mind and the environment, or a certain congruency between the two. This ideal state is what Piaget refers to as equilibrium (Piaget, 1967). At different periods in life, assimilation and accommodation dominate one another and within periods of relative equilibrium. Hence, Piaget’s stages of cognitive development developed.

Extending Piaget’s theory of personal constructivism, social constructivism relies on the research of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky emphasized the social nature of learning as children interact with teachers, parents, and peers while attempting to gain new skills and understand new knowledge (Danker, 2005, p. 22). He stressed the need for situated learning that engaged learners in authentic, real-life tasks and promoted “explorations in the community” (Slavin, 1997, p. 271). Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this social understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). Thus, from the social constructivist viewpoint, it is important to take into account the backgrounds and cultures of the learners throughout the learning process. These backgrounds also help to shape the knowledge and truth that learners’ create, discover, and attain in the learning process. Connecting these social activities to students’ ‘place’ only enhances their learning opportunities.
Although constructivism began as a theory of learning, it has progressively expanded its
dominion as a theory of teaching. Constructivist pedagogy incorporates two premises that
parallel those of constructivist learning theory: 1) instruction must take as its starting point the
knowledge, attitudes, and interests students bring to the learning situation; and 2) instruction must
be designed so as to provide experiences that effectively interact with these characteristics of
students so they may construct their own new knowledge (Howe & Berv, 2000). Accordingly,
Gabler and Schroeder (2003) suggest that a constructivist teacher recognizes the following:

- Learners of any age make sense of new experiences by relating them to their own
  previous experiences;
- Memorizing facts and reproducing information on tests is not the path to developing a
depth, flexible understanding of any subject. Although it may be necessary to memorize
certain facts as part of a learning experience, deeper learning involves active cognitive
restructuring on the part of the student;
- Learning is something that the learner does, not something that is done to the learner.
  Because meaningful learning involves active cognitive restructuring, students must be
  involved in the learning process, making their own inferences and experiences and
  resolving cognitive dissonance. The teacher is the stage setter and the facilitator of this
  active learning process.
- Deeper understanding includes gaining insights into the connections between disciplines
  and knowledge of the ways of thinking within them;
- Learning must be a continuous process that involves building connections from lesson to
  lesson and from the classroom to the outside world, namely a students’ place or locale;
- Continual reflection on practice is a vital part of teaching effectively, an activity that
  promotes the learning of students and the empowerment of teachers as professionals; and
• The value of teachers collaborating with students, colleagues, parents, and the community at large (p. 15).

Additionally, Gabler and Schroeder (2003) assert that a constructivist classroom must be an active classroom that features the following dimensions:

• Discussion about prior knowledge, attitudes, and interests that students have about topics of study;

• Assessment through performance, using a wide range of assessment methods;

• Curricula that emphasize big ideas, depth over breadth, and interdisciplinary;

• Teacher as a guide or facilitator and student as a worker and independent thinker;

• Interaction, with value placed on teacher and student generated questions, and consistent use of methods that promote student-student interactions; and

• Variety in teaching methods, even within a single class period (p. 18).

One of the arguments for implementing a constructivist approach to teaching is that it can foster the development of good citizens, which is the bottom line of all social studies education (Jadullah, 2000). Through student choice and control of their learning, constructivist classrooms invite active student participation, decision-making, and responsibility, all attributes of a good citizen (Danker, 2005). Using various pedagogical activities such as research projects, field trips, and class discussions, the Local History classroom promotes the mastery of concepts rather than the rote memorization of facts. Using pedagogy of place makes education a preparation for citizenship, providing a base for scholarship.

The teacher, as the facilitator, provides guidelines and creates the environment for the learner to arrive at his or her own conclusions. The facilitator is in continuous dialogue with the learners, asking questions and supporting their inquiries. In most pedagogies based on constructivism, the teachers’ role is not only to observe and assess but also to engage with the students while they are completing activities. Engaging in classroom activities related to these
and other social studies concepts by linking them to community history and local issues, problems, conflicts, and celebrations, can help students develop fundamental understandings necessary to reflective, informed, and active citizenship (Danker, 2005, p. 23).

An aspect of constructivist theory that is particularly pertinent to the use of local people, places, and events, both past and present, in the teaching of social studies concepts is the idea of scaffolding (Danker, 2005). As a classroom practice, scaffolding involves having a teacher provide a great deal of structure when students are first introduced to new material and then gradually turn more and more of the responsibility for learning over to the students themselves as they become more competent and confident in the process (Slavin, 1997). Scaffolding refers to the idea that specialized instructional supports need to be in place in order to best facilitate learning when students are first introduced to a new subject. These techniques can include visual aids, activating prior knowledge, modeling and activity beforehand, or motivational activities to pique student interest.

In the context of the place-based Local History course, this was the general format of the course. As we studied a unit, larger conceptual topics were introduced and students were encouraged to become actively involved in the study of each of these topics, using inquiry based questions as a major means for exploring each area of study. By using a place-based educational program, the curriculum that I used allowed me to address more than standardized guidelines by adapting the curriculum to local conditions.
Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My overall action research study employed the following forms of intervention:

1. Identify questions or problems.
2. Develop a plan of action.
3. Enact and observe the effects of the plan within context.
4. Reflect upon and change plan where necessary.

I will use these questions as a framework for organizing and discussing my overall research design and methodology choices below.

Identify Questions or Problems

In order to study my course on Local History I set out to explore three action research questions: 1.) What were the key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced the design of a Local History course that was intended to promote civic engagement and civic mindedness on the part of high school students? 2.) As the Local History class unfolded, what events and activities were perceived by the student and the teacher as being the most powerful in impacting their ‘civic’ thinking and beliefs? and 3.) What evidence, if any, suggests that the Local History course actually influenced students to develop greater civic mindedness or become more civically engaged?
This course was originally based on the belief that through the study of their local surroundings, students would take ownership of their learning and develop a deeper relevance of history. My goal was for students to develop a bond with their classmates, their school, and their local communities as they learned about the people and places in our school and district. Over the years of teaching the course, my desires and intentions for student involvement and interaction in the school and community began to increase. I began to think of ways that students could make a difference in their community, develop a deeper level of respect for, and become more involved in school and community affairs. With each unit of study, much thought was placed on how students could develop a deeper sense of civic mindedness or become more involved in community affairs. The course became even more student-centered as students were given more choice and constructivist teaching strategies became a cornerstone of the class. I wanted the students to feel ownership not only for their own learning, but also for the class, school, and community at large. And through this ownership, I wanted to inspire them to become more civically aware of their surroundings and their engagement in the community. My “problem,” then, became how to accomplish all of this.

Develop a Plan of Action

As I revised my syllabus for the 2006-07 Local History course, I selected instructional strategies that reflected a constructivist and place-based pedagogy with the greater goal of enhanced civic mindedness and engagement. From experience, I knew that previous students had gained a better appreciation of the study of local history, but for this one last section of the course I wanted to examine the course content and pedagogy relative to how the Local History course might actually influence students to develop greater civic mindedness and become more civically engaged.
The summer prior to teaching Local History for the possible last time, I kept asking myself how I might teach this course in a way that might better promote civic mindedness or engagement. I knew that local content was key to a place-based educational curriculum. Curricular units of study already included the physical, political, historical, and cultural geography of the East Lysock School District, highlights in Pennsylvania history, Lysock County, and surrounding communities and topics related to the history, culture, and people of our community. As per the syllabus, instruction was aimed at: 1.) teaching students the core roles, rights, and responsibilities of individual citizens; 2.) providing students with an understanding and appreciation of the history of the East Lysock School District and its surrounding communities; 3.) comparing and contrasting the lifestyles of today with those of past years; 4.) allowing students to develop a relationship with older members of our community; 5.) locating and identifying the physical features, as well as the history and government of the state of Pennsylvania; 6.) studying current events in our local and state communities; 7.) allowing students opportunity to discover changes close at hand and relate history through their own families; and 8.) providing meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities. Over the span of eight years teaching this course, the above goals had changed little. My aims of instruction remained the same, yet for this study, my desire to have students connect more directly to my new purposes of enhancing a deeper level of civic mindedness and engagement took center stage. With each unit of study, I thought of additional ways to involve the students in community affairs. I attempted to inspire them to not only develop an appreciation and concern for, but also to recognize, pay attention to, and participate in many of these civic events.

Pedagogically speaking, these topical units and instructional goals governed the overall way in which field trips, guest speakers, student and teacher discourse, and final projects all played into individual units of study. As I had from day one of the class, I contacted local
historical societies and people of interest to line up guest speakers and provide artifacts related to each topic of study on display. However, for this semester, I spent more time reflecting upon my aims and objectives regarding civic mindedness and engagement. For example, when studying about the Lumber Capital of the World in the 19th Century, I invited local authors and historians to share their memorabilia and recollections with the students. Lysock County celebrates its lumber heritage through displays and speakers at local historical societies, river festival activities, paddleboat tours, and a Victorian Days’ celebration. As part of field trips to the surrounding communities, I arranged for the students to visit the county historical society to learn the history of the Lumbering Industry, the region's major economic enterprise in the 19th century. It was my hope that the field trips and speakers would inspire students to participate more frequently in the above-mentioned community events.

A new practice that I believed would help me stress the importance of school and community events was a current events bulletin board used solely to advertise upcoming events. Items posted included school sports, academic, art and musical schedules, as well as community affairs such as, historical reenactments, speakers, archaeological digs, church and town related bazaars, carnivals and parades, and local historical society meeting dates and times.

Even more so for this last course, I built in flex time to accommodate events of interest that occurred in the community. As opportunities for student involvement in the community arose, I wanted to be sure that students were made aware of such events and encouraged to participate. Students were given credit for attending historical related events and community affairs and sharing their activities with their peers. I also left more time for sharing and discussing local news. It was often by discussing these spontaneous events that students could learn the knowledge, skills, and values and/or dispositions necessary for democratic participation and develop a sense of belonging to a group and develop a desire for community involvement and/or attentiveness to civic matters.
Enact and Observe the Effects of the Plan within Context

Beyond my actual course plans, I had to prepare to actually study the course itself through action research. Toward this end, I made decisions about my research design and methods, as explained below. In accordance with qualitative research traditions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998), multiple data sources such as surveys, student work, class artifacts, and student interviews were collected from the 4th period Local History class. In order to holistically investigate the effects of a student becoming more ‘civic’ through the study of local history, I gathered these data, both formally and informally, throughout (and following) the semester-long course. Reflection was an important part of the data collection for this study. Additional research data included artifacts, such as student work, lesson plans, course syllabi and objectives, class handouts, and lecture materials. Furthermore, I gathered PRE - and POST - course surveys from all students enrolled in the Local History course, interviews from a majority of the students in the three months following the class, and additional survey data from 24 of the 31 students from that 4th period class more than a year later.

Reflections

While revising the syllabus and course content for the 2006-07 semester, I recognized several advantages that I had as the instructor of this course. As the only teacher in our school assigned to teach the Local History class and the person who developed the course, I knew the course material like the back of my hand. As a member of a large family from our community and a ‘home-town’ girl, I knew the people and places in the community that I wanted the students to meet and investigate, and moreover, I knew most of the students who were signed up for the 4th period class from having already taught them in a 7th grade social studies class. These advantages
would serve their purpose in helping me establish a safe, warm, and inviting classroom environment in which students quickly became a part of.

One of my responsibilities as an educator is facilitating the learning process to create a positive classroom environment. Every year, while preparing to meet my new group of Local History students, I set high priorities for creating this environment. This year I paid even closer attention to make sure that the students felt a sense of belonging to the class and developed an appreciation for diversity with a desire for community involvement. Tables and chairs were arranged in patterns that allowed students and teacher freedom of movement, a variety of resources were chosen to spark student interest, and posters were placed on the walls to evoke students’ thoughts. However, the element of the classroom environment that I wanted to be assured influenced students’ learning was teacher-student communication.

One necessary ingredient to hold this two-way communication together is the freedom given to the student to express him- or herself. I wanted students to believe from the first day they entered my classroom that their voice and input was valued. Allowing time for discussion, involving students’ feelings, giving praise and encouragement, accepting student ideas, and encouraging them to ask questions were all areas that I wanted to stress in order to invoke total student interaction and ownership of the classroom and their learning.

As teachers pursue their wonderings, asking and answering questions about learning, they evolve as researchers transforming the way they view themselves in the classroom. For me, these wonderings came as I reflected upon the key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced my design of the Local History course as it unfolded: what events and activities were perceived by the students and the teacher as being the most powerful in impacting their ‘civic’ thinking, beliefs, and actions? I gathered and interpreted data to better understand the development and teaching of the course. I critically analyzed ways to improve my own teaching that would encourage students to become more ‘civic’ through the study of local history. And I thought
about what the students would want to learn and how having control of their own learning would encourage them to develop a greater sense of civic mindedness and more so, become more involved in the class, school, and community at large.

People tell me that I think about things way too much, so it was not uncommon for me to think about what happened in the Local History class each day. I found myself reflecting on the topics taught, the field trips, the guest speakers, or activities that occurred in class, as well as student reactions to each of these. With each guest speaker, the class debriefed on the topic presented and the value of this person sharing his/her memories to the subject.

This focused reflection was most evident as I recorded grades. During these times in particular, I thought about the assessment in terms of what students gained during their time spent on the material. More than a grade, I tried to understand what students took with them as part of their life-long learning and growth. As a social studies teacher, fostering the growth of civic values has always been a class priority, but this time, educating my students to become engaged citizens in their community was my top priority.

**Artifacts**

The main advantage of artifact data collection is that it does not influence the social setting being examined (Hatch, 2002, p. 25). Artifact collection is a less intrusive method of collecting data and can provide detail and evidence of corroboration or contradiction when compared to other collected data (Merriam, 1998), although Yin (2003) cautions that while gleaning material from artifacts, researchers must recall that these artifacts were designed for purposes other than research, and therefore, should be used wisely. The major disadvantage of artifact data collection is that interpreting the meaning and significance of objects is difficult because connecting them to relevant contexts is highly inferential.
The collection of unobtrusive artifact data is a part of many qualitative research projects, but it is unusual for artifacts to be used as the primary data source (Hatch, 2002). Hence, I used artifact collection as a secondary source of data, but one that could lead to insights into the ways in which the Local History class met its new goals. For this study, artifacts include routine student work, student grades, lesson plans, course syllabus and objectives, class handouts, and lecture materials.

Surveys

This action research study also employed survey data. A survey provides a quantitative or numeric description of a population or some fraction or sample of the population through the process of asking questions of people (Fowler, 1998). My study used a longitudinal design in which I administered a PRE -, a POST I -, and a POST II - course survey to my 4th period Local History students. This perspective allowed me to follow the same participants over an eighteen month period of time.

On August 27, 2006 (at the start of the class) I surveyed these 31 students concerning their involvement in high school and community affairs (see Appendix A). At the end of the semester-long course (January 2007), these same 31 students were asked to fill out the same survey (POST I - course survey). The course objectives (see Appendix E) and course syllabus (see Appendix F) attest to the goals and desired outcomes of the study of local history, and the surveys were designed with these goals and outcomes in mind.

To learn more about their actual levels of civic engagement, I created a similar POST II - course survey (see Appendix D) that was completed by 24 of the original 31 students (7 students were unreachable for various reasons) from my 4th period Local History course in March 2008 – fourteen months after the students completed the course.
These surveys were analyzed sequentially. I used comparative responses from the PRE- and POST I-course surveys to look for evidence regarding civic mindedness. I viewed responses from the POST II-course survey in comparison to earlier survey data to establish an understanding of the extent of students’ civic engagement. Finally, these three sets of survey data helped me to better understand which aspects of the course seemed to connect to students’ sense of place, which forms of civic mindedness or civic engagement seemed prominent, and which particular students seemed to appear more “civic.”

**Interviews**

Within three months following the course, I had the opportunity to contact and interview 24 of the 31 Local History students (the remaining seven were unavailable due to scheduling conflicts and absenteeism). These interviews ranged from 15 to 30 minutes, generally occurring during students’ lunch period or study hall.

One important aspect of the course goals was to provide opportunities for students to be part of their school and the local community, and several of the interview questions (see Appendix B) were directly related to these goals. Other questions pertained to course content and activities that they experienced.

The use of interviews is commonplace in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Interviews offer an insider, or emic, perspective regarding the research being studied. Patton (1990) suggests that the use of in-depth interviews encourages capturing respondents’ perceptions in their own words, a desirable strategy in qualitative data collection. While I began each of the semi-structured interviews with preliminary questions based on survey items, new questions emerged during the interviews, as is often the case with qualitative methodology (Emerson, 1995). Using a semi-structured protocol allowed me
to follow up on unexpected topics or individual differences that emerged from the set of responses to the core questions asked.

Another factor that I found beneficial was the dynamics of the interview process. According to Patton (1990), the interviewer becomes an attentive listener who shapes the process into a familiar and comfortable form of social engagement – a conversation – and the quality of the information obtained is largely dependent on the interviewer’s skills and personality. This is the type of interview session that I conducted with my students. The students were given a pass from their lunch periods or study halls to come to my office, in the high school library, where we would meet and conduct the interview. The nonthreatening environment of my office and the relationship that I had established with my students throughout the course allowed for a very relaxed and comfortable setting for the interview to occur. All 24 interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

With my new goals in mind, my revised syllabus in hand, and my basic research plan established, I set out to teach what became my last Local History course in the spirit of an action research project. That is, I taught the course ever mindful of what was going on with the students and me concerning the goals of promoting civic mindedness and civic engagement.

Reflect Upon and Change Plan Where Necessary

The final intervention of my action research plan is represented in this dissertation: Becoming more civic through the study of local history. While I no longer teach the Local History course at Hugeville High School, the course is still offered as an elective class for juniors and seniors. The popularity of the course remains high with three sections being taught by Brad, a former colleague of mine in the Social Studies Department. Although his focus may not be
civic mindedness and engagement (like this study), his course syllabus, objectives, and pedagogical activities are similar to mine. After completion of this dissertation, I will encourage Brad to read the study.

Methodological notes

As with any action research project, I was concerned with trustworthiness and quality throughout. I review these efforts below.

Trustworthiness

As an action researcher, I was concerned about whether knowledge generated from this research was trustworthy and whether the intended outcomes (enhanced levels of civic mindedness and engagement, or students becoming more ‘civic’ through the study of local history) resulted from the knowledge generated. Trustworthiness was established by examining the credibility, transferability, and dependability of my data. To help ensure the trustworthiness of my data, I used triangulation and persistent observation.

Credibility

To assess credibility, I used data from my own reflections, student and course artifacts, surveys, and interviews. In particular, during the interviews I talked specifically with students
about the course. I had developed a clear perception about what I thought the course accomplished and I found a good deal of credibility for those perceptions when, two months later, students often reinforced them during the interviews. Similar supportive comments were shared fourteen months later when I administered the POST II – course surveys and I chatted with the students informally. These conversations led me to further recognize ways in which my own perceptions of the course coincide in various ways with those of different students. In short, while I was not able to share actual draft segments of this dissertation with my Local History students, their comments during interviews and informal conversations allowed me to believe that much of what I think I understand about the course is consistent with their own understandings.

**Transferability**

The basis of transferability for this study lies in its detailed description of the context, activities, and events of this Local History course – that its events may be carefully, if somewhat differentially, explored and potentially relevant elsewhere. Toward this end, I have tried to provide both the contextual and specific details and narrative description of the course necessary for an interested reader to develop a similar course.

A good action research project is also generalizable within its own context (same community, locale, students, etc.). It is my hope that if this course is continued at Hugeville High School, findings from this study might be used to make it stronger. If others, elsewhere, benefit from this study on teaching local history, I would be excited, but my hopes have always been to have this work benefit future classes of Local History taught at Hugeville High School.

**Dependability**
The need for me to carefully account for the ever-changing context within which this research occurred contributes to the trustworthiness of this study. I have tried to provide detailed description of the procedures that I followed as well as the bases for judging their importance. I have also attempted to properly manage an audit throughout the various stages of the study. This included examining the steps I took to analyze and triangulate data and watch for themes or patterns that emerged from the data.

Quality

The quality of this teacher action research stems from awareness and reasoning about my choices, as the researcher, at all stages of the research process. As such, I used the feedback provided by my doctoral committee members prior to, during, and after my study, to continuously maintain quality. Working collaboratively with faculty and having them critique and challenge my work helps me to believe that my study is one of sufficient quality.

The Locale

Located in the eastern part of Lysock County, the East Lysock School District (ELSD) is comprised of seven townships, two boroughs, and several villages. The largest of these municipalities is the borough of Hugeville, population of approximately 2,500 people (Fought, 2006) and home of the Hugeville Jr/Sr High School (HHS). The ELSD is served by three elementary schools and one junior/senior high school. The district enrollment is approximately 1700 students. The three elementary schools enroll approximately 860 students and the junior/senior high school enrolls 830 students in grades 7 – 12. The district’s percentage of low-
income families is near 29%. The district administration includes one superintendent, one assistant superintendent/curriculum coordinator, two elementary principals (who serve three buildings), one senior high principal, and one junior high principal. Attendance in the district meets the state goal of 95% or more and the graduation rate is 96%. All of the teachers in the district are considered highly qualified, which means they hold at least a bachelor’s degree, a teaching certificate in the discipline in which they are teaching, and are content knowledgeable. As of the 2008-2009 academic year, the district had fewer than 27 students in each of the following subgroups: non-Caucasian race and limited English proficiency.

Hugeville in the first half of the 20th Century

After interviewing senior citizens and conducting archival research prior to creating the course under study here, it appears to me as though Hugeville, during the first half of the 20th Century, was the essence of community allegiance, participation, and engagement. On any given Saturday night the town would be bustling with people from the surrounding communities who came to town to complete their weekly shopping in one of the fifty-five family owned businesses. Children would attend the locally owned movie theatre for a ten cent black and white flick, while their parents visited the general stores to gather their weekly needs and share time and talk with friends and neighbors. Civic-oriented activities that occurred beyond the classroom through less formal curricula were just as critical as the formal curriculum that was being espoused by educational leaders and the professional literature of the Progressive era. Schools were the magnet of civic life, and like much of small town America, Hugeville’s citizens – young and old alike – appear to have had a strong sense and appreciation of this place. During much of the 20th century, schools were vital community institutions, reflecting the mores of parents and churches; events at the local school, such as spelling bees, musical exhibitions, and speaking contests, were
often community events (Ravitch, 2001, p. 21). This was true in Hugeville as evidenced in the local papers, *The Hugeville Mail* and *The Minci Luminary*, which regularly reported such activities occurring at the high school, inviting the public’s attendance and support.

**Late 20th and early 21st Century changes to Hugeville**

The globalized market economy of the 21st Century has made its way to the small, rural community of Hugeville, Pennsylvania. The fifty-five family owned businesses that lined Main Street between the 1920’s to the 1950’s have long disappeared as larger chain stores moved into the surrounding communities. The friendly, one-to-one service that you could count on, where everyone knew your name and your family, has been replaced with the local Wal-Mart greeter issuing the standard “Hello, welcome to Wal-Mart” greeting to each customer.

Our nation’s schools continue to become more standardized in relation to national and state standards, as well as uniform in relation to their teaching and testing controls, and those in Hugeville are no exception. The push for each student to meet prescribed standards and to pass state tests has taken over through decontextualized classroom instruction. Today, the seldom-questioned underlying assumption about the purpose of schooling is to prepare the next generation to compete and succeed in the global economy (Gruenewald, D.A. & Smith, G.A., 2008, p. xiv). This inevitably raises the question of how to involve the school in the quest to reconnect with the local community. I argue that in our age of standardization, accountability, and global completion, place-based education and/or the study of place may be part of the answer. A Local History course presents the knowledge, skills, and dispositions underlying civic mindedness and engagement while strengthening the bonds between school and the community.
Community

One of the most common sociological definitions of community tends to focus on community as an aggregate of people who share a common interest in a particular locality (Bender, 1978, p. 5). Territorially based social organizations and social activity thus define a community (i.e., municipalities, neighborhoods, planned communities). However, Americans have more than just a locality in mind attached to the word community. There is an expectation of a special quality of human relationship in a community, and this experiential dimension is crucial to its definition (Bender, 1978, p. 6). Consequently, it is the relationships formed between people that help define a community as a group of people with a common identity other than location.

Subsequent work that supported Bender’s working definition of community as a shared or community identity included the 1986 seminal study by McMillan and Chavis. McMillan and Chavis define Sense of Community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that member matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment together” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 2). The authors propose that Sense of Community is composed of four elements, including (1) membership, (2) influence, (3) integration and fulfillment of needs, and (4) shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). McMillan and Chavis conclude that the fourth element, a shared emotional connection, or “the definitive element for true community” (1986, p. 14), includes shared history and shared participation, or at least identification with the history.

Schools can play a role in the promotion, or regrettably, the dissolution of community. Paul Theobald (1997) argues that wherever a school exists, the professionals who work within it must focus their pedagogical energy on the immediate place inhabited by the school; that is, these educators must make the word ‘local’ in the phrase ‘local school’ mean something if they are ever
to be successful at elevating a sense of community in this society. Theobald suggests that schools need to foster a sense that community is a valuable societal asset, something to be promoted rather than destroyed. Contrary to popular cultural beliefs, Theobald believes that the restoration of community must take place on an educational rather than, as in the past, an economic foundation. He calls for restoration of community and instilling a sense of belonging for ourselves and especially for our children.

The core purpose of educating for civic mindedness is to help students “develop the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to become effective citizens. Throughout the curriculum at every grade level, students should have the opportunities to apply their civic knowledge, values and skills, as they work to solve real problems, in their schools, community, nation, and world” (Creating Effective Citizens, 2001, p. 15). If we want our students to “embrace core democratic values and strive to live by them,” we must provide them with opportunities to experience democracy as a way of life in our classrooms and schools. If we want our students to “actively participate in civic and community life,” we must link classroom learning to the public square (Thieman & Hart, 2007, p. 39). As Thieman and Hart suggest in their address to social studies educators, it is the teacher’s responsibility to provide opportunities for students to be part of the school and local community, encouraging students to become active participants in their place.

I argue that schools can foster this sense of community as a societal asset through the study of local history, rekindling community allegiance. The study of local history provides both inspiration and example needed to help restore a democratic and moral purpose to the education of our children. Through this connection to their local surroundings, students can better understand and apply information learned, rather than just memorize material for the test. I propose that the purposeful intentions of the Local History course in support of greater civic mindedness and engagement of the students aid in the production of responsible citizens.
This proposition is similar to Proposition 6 of the *Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools* Report (2005). Proposition 6 calls for “an action plan” to provide a clear path for educators to link academic subjects with service-learning and character education, or other strategies, in support of greater civic knowledge and engagement experiences for students. My decision to research the Local History class was prompted by my sincere belief that this class could be just such an “action plan.”
Chapter 4

THE STORY OF THE COURSE

Local History

The semester long Local History elective course for high school juniors and seniors in the East Lysock School District (ELSD) was first taught in the fall 1998 semester and has served over 600 students since then. This course was originally based on the belief that when students discover changes in their community and can relate history through their own surroundings, they will take ownership of their learning and history will have a deeper relevance. Sharing the same sentiment as advocates of place-based education, I viewed the Local History course as a catalyst in strengthening the bonds between the high school where I taught and its local communities.

In order to meet the state required curriculum mandates for social studies, students at Hugeville High School (HHS) have the opportunity to select four or more semester long courses offered by the social studies department during their junior and senior years of high school. Local History was one of these courses of choice. The goal of the Local History course was to teach students the core roles, rights, and responsibilities of individual citizenship and more importantly, to prepare students to build an appreciation of and a connection with their local community. Students embarked on a journey to study the physical, political, and cultural geography of their place, to learn the history of their school district, and to engage in a final project, either a service learning activity or an oral history research project. Some students chose
to do some combination of service learning and oral history research for their final project, but most stuck to either one or the other.

The Local History class also aimed to set expectations for both program and student performance regarding civic education that were clearly related to state or district standards and assessment. A system wide accountability plan that included meaningful assessments of both student outcomes and opportunities to learn was established, and a collaborative relationship between the school and the community began.

**Developing the course**

Professionally speaking, my first year of teaching Local History (1998 –1999) was full of trial and error. Not only was I teaching a course that I had recently developed, I was also teaching high school juniors and seniors for the first time. My teaching style changed to include more discourse, but I also adapted many of the pedagogical activities that I used with 7th grade. My undergraduate degree was in history, with certification in social studies, and the spring prior to teaching Local History, I graduated with my master’s degree in Reading from a local university. Pedagogically, I was eager to implement many of the reading and writing strategies that I had learned within my new course.

As I selected the resources to use for the class, I aimed at providing activities and sources that would help students build an appreciation of and connection to their community. In doing so, I wanted to provide opportunities for students to become active participants in the class, school, and local community. From my experience with adolescents, I knew the importance and value of creating classroom community and strived to create this same bond with my senior high students. I wanted the students to see that the connection we built in the classroom could be extended
beyond the walls of the class. I openly supported student participation in school and community events. I encouraged students to attend athletic games, musical, art, and academic related events, and be active in school clubs and activities. As we studied about our local villages and boroughs, I encouraged students to participate in the local civic community events, such as a festival or heritage days.

The summer prior to the first class, I spent countless hours researching our local school district and county in our school, borough, and county libraries. I soon discovered that local history is found not only in books and magazines, but more so, in the areas that we would seldom think to explore: the minds of local senior citizens, historical societies, and people’s attics and old barns. I found that local history is carried out in individual communities, regions and states and was easy to access. It was the history of the everyday people and their lives - contributions of ordinary people and the cultural group inhabiting our locale at various times. Local history is all around us – the local library, historical society, town hall, or Main Street. In this sense, local history belonged to the students and to the residents of their community who came before them. My goal was to have the Local History course help students generate pride and develop a greater appreciation for their community.

I first visited our local town library, the surrounding boroughs’ libraries, and our county library. These turned out to be excellent resources for locating material for local studies. The libraries either had separate rooms or sections displaying collections of primary and secondary sources devoted to the history of the community. The trained librarians were excited about this opportunity for students to have a course devoted to the study of local history and moreover, a course that specifically sought active involvement of the youth in our communities.

Our school is located in a community that has a local historical society. After looking in local libraries for information, I found that our local historical society, the East Lysock Historical Society (ELHS) was an excellent starting place for developing lessons and units that highlighted
outstanding citizens, cultural groups, and the contributions of residents to the major events in U.S. history. I visited the historical society many times to research the collection in order to identify appropriate topics connected to state standards. Our ELHS was generous in sharing their artifacts, letters, and important documents. I also visited the surrounding boroughs’ historical societies and the Lysock County Historical Society. I eagerly shared with officials at each site how specific information from their collection was going to be used in the Local History class.

I used the houses, streets, parks, statues, monuments, stores, businesses, and churches in our neighborhoods to promote mastery of standards as official landmarks and historical institutions. Students were exposed to these sites through pictures, slides, videos, guest speakers, and walking field trips. Uncovering the local stories and making connections to the larger picture was rewarding for both me and the students. I posed questions for students to explore and often found myself confronting underlying assumptions and values that they held.

A great source of information that I did not find in a textbook came from interviewing four well-known local historians. Each of these individuals, ‘experts’ of their own local village or borough, spent many hours with me sharing stories about the history of the East Lysock School District. I specifically remember sitting on a hay bale on a barn bank one sunny, summer afternoon listening to Oscar recall the history of Penn Township, one of the seven townships that make up our school district. His recollections added color and excitement to the factual information found in the primary and secondary text source that I had used. Another historian shared tales of her forty plus years teaching in one of our district’s elementary schools. She had photos of every class she taught and memories of days gone by in the local borough and at the elementary school. I used these memories and stories to add humor and real life experiences to the places we studied.

Throughout my tenure teaching Local History, my own knowledge and appreciation for the study of local history continued to grow. The selection of content and the pedagogical
activities used in the class was essential to the success of the course and for student learning. I slightly altered the curriculum and my pedagogical activities each year I taught the course, but overall, the key content and teaching tools remained the same. Instructional activities such as oral histories, service learning projects, guest speakers, and field trips were interactive tools that enhanced student appreciation and relationships with Lysock County and the East Lysock School District (ELSD).

Key Content and Pedagogical Activities 1998 - Present

Instruction in the Local History class was aimed at providing students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to become active, responsible citizens through an appreciation and concern for Lysock County and the East Lysock School District. Unit titles included Highlights in Pennsylvania History; The History of Lysock County; The Physical, Historical, Political and Cultural Geography of the ELSD; The History of the Wacovia and North Branch Railroad; The History of country ‘general’ stores; The Value of the local grist mill to a community; Life on the home-front during WWII; and The Underground Railroad in Lysock County. Students learned about key historical periods, episodes, cases, themes, and experiences of individual groups during their study of the early settlement of the Shequin Valley.

Formative and summative assessment of the Local History curriculum came from classroom discourse, quizzes, tests, written reactions, oral history research presentations, and student selected research and/or service learning projects. Assessment in the course was a continuous and interactive process that measured the achievement of the learners. Formative assessment included writing logs (journals), quizzes, discussions, deadlines associated with the oral interviews and service learning project, reactions to guest speakers, historical narrative
papers, and teacher made tests. Summative assessment was evaluated through a student’s final project.

During our study of how to complete an oral history and service learning activity, students were taught the skills needed to conduct an interview and how to work with others, express ideas, and evaluate, take, and defend, if necessary, positions on public issues. Throughout this process and their acquisition of skills, it was my hope that students developed the dispositions of tolerance and respect, as well as an appreciation of differences while working with others on civic issues. With each unit of study, at least one guest speaker knowledgeable on that particular topic was invited to our classroom. The guest speaker(s) often brought in primary documents related to the topic, as well as artifacts and hands-on activities for students.

**Oral history projects**

One of the major goals of the Local History course was the completion of the oral history interview as part of the established service learning and/or oral history research project. During the course, students learned the steps necessary to complete an oral history project by first being taught the knowledge and skills on which to base their oral history. As part of the process, students were taught the necessary contextual background on which their oral history would be based, as well as interview skills. Of critical importance was practicing the art of interviewing in class before students went out and questioned their interviewees. Students would spend several class periods developing interview questions and then practicing our interview techniques with each other.
Service learning

Service learning is a pedagogical model that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic course learning. Service learning is an important pedagogy for promoting civic responsibility, especially when used with collaborative learning and problem-based learning, two modes of active learning (Ehrlich, 2000). The goal of building service learning into the curriculum through innovative and unique programs is to introduce the value of service to the community.

Rahima Wade (2000), a nationally recognized service learning advocate and social studies professor, defines service learning as a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in carefully thought out, organized service experiences that meet community needs, which are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community and are integrated into each young person’s academic curriculum. Combining service with learning makes learning relevant, enhances education, and gives students hands-on experience with their knowledge (Helping state leaders shape education policy, 2006). By learning firsthand and actively participating in community events, students are connecting and finding relevance between their classroom studies and their community.

In the Local History course, integration of the service experience into the curriculum with academic skills, content, and structured reflection allowed students to build personal knowledge of the topic being studied. Students selected a topic, and developed, and implemented partnerships with the local community by actively participating in an organized service experience coordinated between the school and community. The service learning activity was integrated into students’ academic curriculum through oral histories, oral presentations, and writing activities. I believe students were committed to the project because they had a say into
what topics they studied and because they recognized learning was relevant through student choice.

**Guest speakers**

Guest speakers were an integral part of the Local History course. Integration of guest speakers was based on my belief that by bringing real people into the classroom to share their life stories and memories, students would have a better appreciation and understanding of the event being discussed. Through personal communication, students are affected differently than if they read the same information from a book. As an advocate of place-based education, I believe that students develop a stronger tie to their community by having a grounding in the history and culture of their surroundings.

Preparation for the speakers was essential. After careful consideration as to what material I hoped students might gain from the guest speakers, presenters were invited in as part of the course units being studied. Prior to their arrival, class time was utilized to gauge student background knowledge on the topic. Students were urged to prepare questions, since a question/answer session was included as part of the presentation. Likewise, evaluation and assessment techniques were planned. Journals, time for reflection, follow up activities for debriefing, and general discussion sessions were all utilized as a means for students to synthesize the speakers’ stories. Students were encouraged to be respectful, tolerant, and attentive to the speakers, as each was giving of his/her own free time to share stories and/or memories with the class.

It was not uncommon for me bring in a speaker to discuss a ‘hot’ topic that was occurring in our community. For example, during one semester I brought in an impromptu guest speaker
whose house was scheduled to be demolished through the state’s right of eminent domain in order to begin a bridge and road expansion project. My students rallied behind this elderly lady and wrote letters to our state representatives in support of her family home. Another ‘teachable moment’ happened when we were researching the history of one of the local boroughs and I realized that the substitute teacher next door to my classroom was a native son from that community and lived in one of the oldest residences in the borough. His ancestors founded one of the oldest businesses in a surrounding borough and had played a major role in the development of our school district. I asked the substitute if he would switch classes with me and speak to my Local History students about his family, stressing the importance of giving back to the community.

Field trips

Another major part of the Local History course that addressed content through pedagogical activity was the use of field trips. I remain convinced one of the best ways to teach and learn local history is through field trips. Field trips provide an opportunity for students to get out and walk around where “the stuff of the past happened.” The energy level of students is contagious, as field trips offer chances for bonds to be formed between the teacher and students. Time spent on the trips puts me in better touch with my students. Moreover, field trips build bonds with the larger community and within our classroom community.

However, field trips are not easy activities to add to a curriculum. Actually, every year I added more and more places to visit, but before my classes went anywhere, I had to be sure that the trip was well planned and organized. Prior to our walking field trips and our all day trips, I visited each site so I knew exactly what I wanted to highlight. Class time was then spent
preparing students for the trip, either with pre-visit materials or through classroom discussion. I made sure that the field trips supported the main goals of my instruction and worked as an enrichment activity for the class. Students kept journals and completed research assignments for assessment after each trip.

Field trips were an integral part of the curriculum. On two separate occasions, students experienced day-long field trips to various sites of interest. Of particular interest and excitement to the students was participation in an archaeological dig at the site of a 19th Century Pennsylvania canal stop and participation in a living history museum of a 19th Century one-room school. Many students chose to return to the archaeological dig after the field trip and participate in future digs at this site. Lastly, the students partook in several walking field trips (conducted during class time) around the borough of Hugeville in which they visited local churches, businesses, and historical landmarks (see Appendix F).

Oral histories, service learning activities, guest speakers, and field trips were the key pedagogical activities that I used every year I taught the Local History course. In their own way, each of these instructional tools assisted students’ learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of active citizenship through the study of and appreciation of local history.

Pedagogically, I tried to stay abreast of the latest teaching strategies and instructional tools. In doing so, my class was ever changing to best meet the needs of the students and the curriculum.

As well as slight changes to my curriculum, the status of my own teaching career began to change. I entered a doctoral program in curriculum and instruction at a large, research-based university and was taking many classes in educational leadership. I enjoyed teaching middle and high school students, but the culture of higher education began to draw me in. I began to envision myself joining the world of academia and I wanted to investigate this further. I knew that after
twelve years in the classroom, I was ready for a change - this change came in the form of a sabbatical request to satisfy my doctoral program residency requirement.

**Sabbatical and Literacy Coaching**

On sabbatical from my classroom teaching duties during the 2005-2006 academic year, I spent the year as a full-time doctoral student, taking a total of nine courses throughout the year while teaching an undergraduate course in social studies methods to pre-service teachers. These courses in educational leadership and the experience gained teaching a college course reinforced my aspirations of wanting to teach at the collegiate level.

The following year, upon returning to my school district, I was assigned a new role in our school that utilized many of the leadership skills addressed in my program of study. This position, a Literacy (Reading) Coach for Hugeville Jr/Sr High School, was to provide leadership for school, district, and state level reading programs.

According to *The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States* (International Reading Association, 2004), a position statement of the International Reading Association, the primary role of a Literacy/Reading Coach is to provide support to classroom teachers for classroom reading instruction. To achieve success, it is essential that the Literacy Coach be an excellent classroom teacher with successful teaching experiences at the levels of the teachers they will coach. I had taught social studies to all level 7 – 12 graders and received various student nominated awards and district wide recognition for my teaching.

A second requirement endorsed by the International Reading Association (2004) is that reading coaches have in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction. This knowledge could be gained in many different ways, including completion of a
master’s degree in reading that leads to reading specialist certification (which I had done in 1997), ongoing professional development work (which I completed annually), and/or intensive, yearlong training for newly employed reading coaches in a school district, which was part of my first year professional development as the Literacy Coach.

A third requirement is that reading coaches have experience working with teachers to improve their practices (International Reading Association, 2004). In addition, reading coaches should be accustomed to reflecting on their own practices and making adaptations that improve instruction. I met these requirements by participating and presenting at staff development programs and within my current doctoral program of study, where I gained valuable skills on teacher reflection and strategy instruction. From my varied teaching experience in the social studies department, I also understood the differences in literacy strategies needed for multiple grade levels and particular content disciplines.

Finally, reading coaches must have experience or preparation that enables them to master the complexities of observing and modeling in classrooms and providing feedback to teachers. Moreover, reading coaches must be sensitive to the need to develop open, trusting relationships with teachers in order to serve effectively in a coaching role. After teaching for twelve years at the Hugeville Jr/Sr High School, I knew all of the teachers and had established a trusting, working relationship with many of them. Many of them were my dear friends while others were colleagues I greatly respected. The teachers did not see me as a threat, or as an administrator evaluating them. Rather, I used knowledge and skills that I gained in my doctoral studies to help teachers reach their capabilities and strive for teacher and student success.
Teaching Local History for the Last Time

While I was excited (and a little nervous) about my new leadership position at the Jr/Sr high school, I was also saddened that I would not be teaching my regularly scheduled courses, particularly the Local History course. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that in order to keep a level of respect from the teachers, I needed to be in the classroom, teaching at least one course and practicing the strategies that I was developing and implementing with them. I approached my superintendent, asking permission to teach at least one section of Local History. He permitted me to be the teacher of record for one of the three Local History classes scheduled for the Fall 2006 semester.

As part of my continued doctoral studies, I was working on my comprehensive examinations and developing a topic for my dissertation. Knowing that there was a possibility that I would not teach the Local History course again, I asked my doctoral advisor how he felt about me conducting a study in that class. I remember early on in my doctoral candidacy stage, a professor gave me the advice “to be sure to choose a topic to research that you are passionate about and one that offers value to the educational world.” I specifically remember thinking, well, this is easy - I love teaching the Local History class and I truly enjoy studying and learning about our local communities. Nailing down the topic of my dissertation, the study of local history was easy; figuring out how to actually study the class was more difficult.

By the summer of 2006, I knew several things for sure about teaching the Local History class. I knew that I enjoyed teaching this subject matter. I knew that the content and pedagogical strategies used in the class worked well. And I knew that I would know most of the students enrolled in the class, as I had them as their 7th grade Geography teacher. I also knew that I had written a paper on the connection between civic engagement and the Local History class for one of my doctoral classes and had come to appreciate the whole idea of civic engagement (and civic
mindedness). I thought about ways in which I could push the Local History course in ways to promote connections among civic mindedness, civic engagement, and local history. I realized that I would have to adjust ways that I think about the course and my larger goals for the students. I still wanted students to gain a better appreciation and respect for their local communities, but now I would focus on ways to promote civic mindedness and hopefully lead students to become involved in community affairs.

Once I developed the connection between civic mindedness, civic engagement, and place-based education (local history), I knew that I had to pay careful attention to course activities and pedagogical strategies with this new focus. Could the oral history projects, the service learning projects, guest speakers, and field trips promote civic mindedness and engagement? If so, how did each of these activities and a constructivist teaching philosophy convey civic mindedness and engagement? From my past, I knew that many of these students were already civic minded and civically engaged. However, others were not. My attention would focus on this latter group. What could I do to build connections between them and their local community? How could I be sure that just because someone was in the volunteer fire department, they were doing this because they felt the need to become involved and be active, not just to be popular and important?

In order to investigate holistically the effects of a student becoming more ‘civic’ through the study of local history, I first had to look at the key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced my course design. In doing so, I researched the literature on pedagogy of place and the use of community-based constructivist philosophy to promote civic mindedness and civic engagement on the part of high school students. For this one final class, I wanted my students not only to study the history and physical geography of our local community, but also to appreciate people and their local culture in ways that might lead students to want to make a difference in their community.
Pedagogical approaches to teaching civic mindedness through local history

The course curriculum clearly stated what students were expected to learn and how they would accomplish this learning. Active learning within the Local History course required students to make use of research, critical thinking, problem solving, writing, and technology skills. Pedagogical activities that specifically addressed these elements of active learning could help students to become more civic minded. As the teacher I cannot assume that I am the giver of knowledge; I can only be confident knowing that I am the facilitator of understanding, the presenter of an opportunity to explore, discover, and compile knowledge. Students need to be actively involved in their learning. Interested and enthusiastic students are more willing learners, and I wanted to inspire the students to become active participants in their own learning.

Engaging students in one of the most public places in a democracy, the public schools, provides opportunities that can foster increased participation in community affairs. Through the pedagogy of place, students create ownership of their learning through selection of course topics as well as their topic for service learning and/or research projects. When students have a voice in what they are studying, they are more willing to explore and discover new knowledge related to the topic. Sergiovanni (1999) believes that a constructivist paradigm implies a community of learners where students and teachers engage in dialogue to create opportunities for learning. As a social studies educator developing future citizens, I felt a need to involve students in the learning process. I believed that having an active role in their learning process, students would become more interested and use critical thinking skills to question the material at hand.

Motivating our future citizens to be active participants in civic activities, as well as historical researchers and thinkers, is a major goal for me as an educator. The distinguishing feature is not the activities in which students participate, but rather that the students move from being mere recipients of information into a new, active role in the learning process. This new
role as an active learner, one who has a voice in his or her learning, is significant to the students and the community: it strengthens students’ skills, knowledge, values, and intellect and allows reflective opportunities for thinking.

The 2006 - 2007 Local History Course

The 2006 – 2007, 4th period Local History class, consisted of 31 students, with a male to female ratio of 13 to 18. As an elective course, any level student could enroll in the class. Five of the students were in the top fifteen percent of their class and four students had an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for reading comprehension. Additionally, one student was from the high school’s Life Skills class. Because I work well with special needs students, our high school guidance counselor and a special education teacher asked me to allow Rhonda, a life skills student, into the class. They were thinking of the social skills that she would acquire while working with groups and out in the community. Rhonda far surpassed the expectations of her teachers and classmates through her endless effort and ambition towards her work. Nine students earned an A for the semester long course, eight earned a B, ten students received a C, and four warranted a D. The average score for this class was an 84.4%.

Overall, the ELSD has little in the way of racial diversity. Most students were Caucasian who could trace their ancestors back to Western European heritage. Some could trace their heritage to the founding families of our local community. However, this class was enhanced by two students of African-American descent whose families were recent additions to the community. Regardless of their family background, all of the students worked cooperatively on many occasions, respecting and appreciating each others’ opinions and heritage.
The life experiences students brought to the class were many and varied. Ten of the 31 were multi-sport athletes involved in soccer, football, tennis, wrestling, golf, and softball. Membership in club activities was just as popular. One young lady was a student government officer, another served as president of National Honor Society, and yet another, as Varsity Club vice-president. Other club memberships included Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Student Council, National Honor Society, Varsity Club, Calculus Club, Biology Club, and Local Career and Technology Center (CTC). One of the girls arrived a few minutes late to my class three days a week because she was taking an Introduction to Psychology course at a local university in the morning before her high school classes. Two of the students, one boy and one girl, left directly after this class as part of the School-to-Work initiative sponsored by the CTC. Another student in this same School-to-Work program left school to work on his family’s farm directly after my 4th period class. One young lady was balancing work, school, and being a young mother at the age of 18. Another young man was so technology savvy that for two periods of the school day he helped the school district’s technology department work on computer programming.

The students were involved in out of school activities just as much as in school activities. Four of the students were volunteer fire fighters who had to leave class occasionally to go fight grass and house fires in the surrounding community. Over half of the class held jobs outside of school. Some were clerks at the retail mall stores and local grocery markets. Others were employed by local restaurants as waitresses and dishwashers. Three held jobs at the local McDonald’s. One young man, in his spare time, was on a bowling league, where he successfully bowled a perfect game during the course of our class. Another was a member of a power lifting team that won a national title in bench pressing. Still another young lady participated in 4-H events, showing her horse and placing at statewide competitions. My twin nieces who were in the class participated on two different club soccer teams across the state.
In short, I knew that many of these students were already very active in school and community affairs. It was my hope that this course would encourage those students who were not as civically engaged to become more so and inspire the already active ones to continue to remain civically involved in school and community affairs.

**PRE-Course Survey**

The first day of the Local History class was spent distributing and discussing the course syllabus and objectives, classroom rules, walking-field trip permission slips, and Pennsylvania Academic Standards. It was nice to reconnect with many familiar faces in this class. As I took attendance on this first day, I recalled easily many of students from being their teacher in junior high and joked with them about how much they had ‘grown up’ since 7th grade.

On August 27, 2006, the second day of class, I surveyed the 31 students concerning their involvement in high school and community affairs (see Appendix A). Results of this survey confirmed my suspicions that many seemed civically minded and engaged. The demographic data for the students is shown in Table 4-1.
Table 4 - 1: PRE-course and POST I-course survey demographic information of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Class percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Residence</td>
<td>less than 15 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 – 18 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-High School Plans</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exploring civic mindedness

I understand the concepts of civic mindedness and civic engagement differently. Whereas civic mindedness is understood as the attention to and concern for public affairs, civic engagement is understood as actions undertaken to identify and address issues of public concern.

To try and gauge levels of civic mindedness, I translated the three optional responses on the surveys (in the classroom, during extracurricular activities, on your own time) into different numerical values (1, 2, and 3 respectively). I assigned these numbers with the belief that responding to an item by checking “in the classroom” indicated an easier, or less valuable activity than “during extracurricular activities,” which requires participation outside of the classroom. “On your own time,” in turn, received the greatest value of the three options because these actions are removed from the school context. On the PRE and POST I survey, these “civic mindedness”
questions were numbers 9 – 15. Using Microsoft Office Excel 2007, I determined the sum, median, and range of each student’s and each groups’ responses. Additionally, I assigned the same values of 1, 2, and 3 to the later survey responses (items 16 -25), the bulk of which required a response of never, sometimes, and always. In the last section of the surveys (items 26 – 45), I assigned numerical values of 0 and 1 to match whether the students ‘did not check’ or ‘checked’ each response, respectively. These specific items became critical in my eventual “measures” of civic mindedness below.

PRE –course survey (August 2006) results

Class totals on the PRE-course survey ranged from 13 to 46 with a 28.5 median. This median is six points below the possible response median of 34.5. Analysis focused on the following four variables (each having two groups): Gender (male and female), Grade (junior and senior), Residence (less than 15 years and 16 – 18 years), and Post-High School Plans (college [PHS/C] and other [PHS/O]). [Note: The term “residence” refers to the number of years a student has lived in the geographic area, while “post-high school” plans reflect choices to attend a four-year college/university or not.] The two variables that stand out on this first survey are Post-High School and Grade level. The two most notable groups due to their lowest and highest median scores were PHS/O and Seniors, respectively.

- The lowest group, PHS/O, had a range of 16 - 28 with a median score of 23. This median is 5.5 points lower than the class median of 28.5.

- The highest group, Seniors, had a range of 25 - 43 with a 42 median score. This median is 13.5 higher than the 28.5 class median score.

The PHS/O and the Seniors’ are without question the least like each other when it comes to their range and median responses to the PRE-course survey data collected at the start of class.
At the same time, I do not place too much emphasis on their differences with regard to the class because these are the smallest groups, in numbers, within the analysis (see Figure 4 - 1).

The five-member PHS/O group held but a single senior, while five of the seven seniors were female. As such, the single PHS/O senior, Sally, was the only student represented in both groups. Sally planned on working at her family’s business after high school. She had the highest median score (28) among the group of five PHS/O students and the second lowest median score (28) among the seven Seniors, though she scored close to the overall median (29.5) for Females in the PRE-survey. These results show that Sally was unlike most of her PHS/O and Seniors group members, though not unlike her female classmates as a whole.
As Figure 4 - 2 illustrates, most students enrolled in Local History appeared to be somewhat civically minded that fall. What we can see from these PRE-course survey results, however, is that the PHS/O group had the most ground to cover in this respect during the class. Recognizing this, as the teacher (and researcher), I had to pay particular attention to those five in my efforts to promote civic mindedness. As I tell the story of the Local History course below, I attempt to bring four of these five students into that narrative throughout. [Note: The fifth member of this PHS/O group, Pam, is not discussed individually.]

The Fall, 2006 Local History Class

I organized this section of the chapter using those key elements that proved crucial to the Local History course, and that I reviewed at the onset of Chapter 4: oral history projects, guest
speakers, and field trips. Central to our success was the need to establish a classroom environment that supported a community relationship.

My means for achieving a student-centered class included instructional activities and my own open attitudes toward teaching, learning, and the study of local history. From the outset, I wanted students to recognize the importance of belonging to a group (community) and see that the connections they built in the classroom could extend beyond the walls of the school.

Local History class began each Monday with a recap of the previous week’s athletic, academic, cultural (art or music related), and surrounding community updates. In the first week of class, most of this information came from me (e.g., sharing an announcement for a local historical reenactment (see Figure 4 - 3) or a school sports-related activity). Within two weeks, this teacher-focused activity began to change as students began sharing information related to school or community events. I set aside fifteen minutes at the beginning of each week for this time of community building. As a class, if students were not open to sharing, I asked questions to get conversation started.

Figure 4 - 3: One of my students participating in a local historical reenactment
Related to these sessions, I set aside a bulletin board in the classroom for school and community affairs that slowly began to fill up as students brought in flyers and/or athletic postings of their respective teams’ scores. During her study hall period, Melissa, one of the students in the class, would visit my classroom and assist in any way possible: organizing material and creating bulletin boards were her specialty areas. Melissa agreed to keep the bulletin board updated weekly and remove flyers as they became outdated.

When I first looked over the student roster for my 4th period Local History class, I was a little apprehensive to see that Sally and Char were enrolled in this oversubscribed class. Five years prior, I had found Sally to be a loud, rather boisterous 7th grader who wanted to be anywhere but in school. Char was not much different then; she had a tendency to speak out of turn and did not exhibit a great deal of respect for authority figures. The key to my success with Sally and Char was to help them see relevance in what they were studying. That was quite challenging in 7th grade World Geography and I was hoping I would have an easier time with them in Local History.

With 31 students in the class, it was critical that we used our instructional time constructively. Within the first two days, however, I realized that Sally and Char still enjoyed being the center of attention. Whether it was Sally’s large, flowing handwriting on quizzes and tests or the loud, distinctive tone and pitch of her voice, Sally still liked to draw attention to herself. Char still spoke out of turn and continued to have side conversations while her classmates were talking.

During the first week of class, I allowed students to select their seats. This seemed to work well with most students, but I reserved the right to move them if their choice of seating did not work out. After going over the classroom rules and stressing the importance of respect for the rules and each other, I had a feeling that problems might arise with the back row seating arrangement chosen by Sally and Char. My concern with their choice of seating had to do with
our unstructured classroom activity time, during which I expected students to listen politely to each other and offer responses/ideas/thoughts. Although I was present for these discussions, students would lead the sharing sessions.

Throughout the first several Mondays, Sally and Char showed no interest in listening to their peers (or me) share local ‘tidbits’ and were vocal in letting us know. On one such occasion, Char told the class that she “had better things to do than sit here and listen to the jocks talk about their sporting events.” After a quick comeback from a senior football ‘jock’ (as she would later call him), I immediately stepped in and reminded the entire class about our rules (respect) and the purpose of these discussions (to share ALL types of information). I also invited Char to join her classmates during this time and share items she found to be interesting. The week after her outburst (jock comment), she chose to sit and ‘zone out’ during our Monday morning recaps.

However, by the fifth week of class, her interest in this activity changed. And even more incredibly, Sally’s did too. Char and Sally had become regular participants in Monday discussions, sharing items of interest dealing with local tractor pulls, demolition derbies, and 4-H state horseshow competitions. In late October, for example, Sally showed one of her horses in the state 4-H competition at our state capital. In the weeks leading up to the event, Sally regularly shared information as her classmates listened attentively and asked questions about how she had made it this far with her horse. It was clear that the two young ladies who had initially sat uninterested in the back of the room, attempting to hold their own side conversation, had become active listeners and participants in this routine classroom activity.

As the semester progressed, Sally’s behavior began to change even more. At the beginning of the year, as Sally passed her papers forward, I had no doubt which one was hers. Her overly large, cursive writing was her signature statement. Literally, her writing was so big that she could not fit it on the spaces left available for responses to test and quiz questions. After several weeks of trying to decipher what she had written, I began returning assignments to her,
asking her to rewrite them so that I could read her responses. At first, she was not happy with my request and was vocal in letting me know this (in a joking way). By week five, however, her writing had become more detailed and concise.

Sally’s ‘new’ sense of membership in class also became content focused, showing her appreciation and interest in local topics. For example, the questions and stories she shared in class began to change from what she did the night before to ones that involved events that happened in the community or some particular knowledge and memory of a certain place that we were discussing as a class. By the week five deadline, Sally had chosen to do her final topic on a local man who opened up a farm museum in our local community. By week eleven, as we were studying about the history of farming in our community, Sally provided a wealth of information on this topic. By this time, her overall demeanor in class had become much more pleasant and collaborative.

Monday morning discussion time opened up lines of communication with many students. Sean, a junior, was a shy, soft spoken baseball player who had lived in the East Lycoming School District (ELSD) his entire life. I had Sean in 7th grade, but remembered little about him beyond his quiet nature. At the beginning of the school year Sean rarely participated during class discussion time, sitting back and listening to others share news and community updates instead. After about a month of class, Sean began to open up, not to the entire class, but to me. Our course content during that time focused on ‘local’ topics (such as the ELSD) and our class discussions focused on the villages and boroughs throughout the district. Before class one day, Sean approached me with the news that he had recently found out from his mom that he and I were distantly related through my father’s side of the family. As he told me this, I jokingly said, “Now, you know this means you are somehow related to half of Hugeville. Make sure your wife someday is not from this area.” Of course, I had to ask my mom (who was infamous for knowing who was related to whom in our community) how far back our lineage went. The family
relationship that Sean and I now shared was the turning point in our relationship. Our after-class visits became more frequent as he shared stories about our distant relatives. One day in mid-October, my twin nieces also stayed after class to talk with me (I had lunch right after 4th period and the classroom was empty, so students could stick around and talk). Sean was telling me a story about his mom’s family (her father was a first cousin to my grandfather) and I invited my nieces, who were also in the 4th period class, into the conversation. From that point on, I would see Sean talking more often to the twins – his new cousins.

I vividly remember one day in mid-November when Sean came in with great news: “Mrs. Rogers, I got a perfect score in bowling last night.” Now, I am not much of a bowler and I had no idea what a perfect score was in bowling, but I did know that high scores were good. I had never seen Sean so excited about anything, and I asked him if I could please let the rest of the class in on his thrilling news. After a bit of arm twisting, Sean sheepishly agreed. Sean quietly took his seat as I shared this news with the class. I was proud of his classmates as they clapped for him and his remarkable feat. From that point on, Sean became our class bowling expert and students went to him with questions about bowling and the bowling schedule at our local alley. Weekly, I asked him (during class discussion time) about his league scores and he openly shared this news and more. Our one-to-one conversations eventually became part of the larger class discussion time. This rather shy young man slowly opened up, and by Thanksgiving break, he was sharing personal information with the whole group during discussion time. His after class visits with me continued, but less often.

Nurturing an environment of shared respect and community values proved especially important for Rhonda, a higher functioning life skills student. Rhonda’s life skills teacher had contacted me at the end of the previous school year about Rhonda enrolling in my Local History class. She felt that this class would benefit Rhonda because of its social and local community foci, a decision that I fully supported. That fall, Local History was the only regular education
course that Rhonda attended throughout the day. Besides lunch, Rhonda had little interaction with “regular” education students. According to her Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Rhonda’s main goal for this class was to gain social skills.

From day one, Rhonda was an active participant in class, volunteering to read, answering questions, and assisting me with passing out or collecting papers. Unlike some students in class, each Monday she readily shared information on local news and updates. Most times, this information was relevant, but occasionally I had to monitor Rhonda’s use of talk time. When we first began our Monday discussion times, Rhonda would share what movie she saw that weekend or where she went with her parents. It was during these moments that I observed a few boys in the back of the room rolling their eyes and talking when Rhonda was sharing her news. However, during the fifth week of class, when final project topics were due, Rhonda shared progress about her interviewee and topic with the class, while several of her classmates had yet to secure these required details. The fact that Rhonda had not only met this deadline but seemed to have a firm grasp of where she was heading with her project had an obvious positive impact on her class peers. From that point on, I observed the class becoming more respectful of Rhonda, especially during Monday morning discussion times.

But that’s not all. During our first two walking field trips, Rhonda chose to shadow me, talking non-stop along the way. As we started out on our third walking field trip (week three), I noticed that Rhonda was not with me. Turning, I saw her walking (and talking) to a group of four seniors. These four students included the twins (my nieces) and two of their close friends, all of whom were active in school and community activities. One club that they all belonged to was called Big Buddy, a program that allowed students to “buddy up” with elementary school students, and perhaps their involvement in that program prompted them to befriend Rhonda. Whatever their motivation, subsequent walking field trips for the rest of the class found Rhonda walking (and talking) with these same four students - almost as though they were her personal
tour guides, pointing out items of interest along the way and answering her many questions. This acceptance of Rhonda by the Big Buddy students was not limited to walking field trips. During class time, these same students asked Rhonda to join their small groups for in-class activities. Throughout the remainder of the course, these and other students asked Rhonda to join their group discussions. During a class exercise in week 11 where students practiced their interview skills, her partners listened attentively and offered feedback and suggestions for Rhonda’s interview questions.

From that week on, I knew that Rhonda had been accepted into the class community. No longer was she the special needs student who, when she first participated in class activities, received a few loud sighs and rolled eyes from classmates; she had become, within our class community, a senior who wanted to learn about local history. This change was most evident during her final presentation. Rhonda chose to interview our school guidance counselor and research information on his 19th Century, Victorian style home. As part of her presentation, she invited Mr. Brown to class to watch and offer support when necessary. After her poster board presentation, Rhonda fielded student questions and did not need Mr. Brown’s assistance. She clearly understood her research topic and impressed Mr. Brown with her knowledge of his house. He later shared: “It gives me great pleasure to see how accepting the class is of Rhonda and her comfort level with the students. I knew when I signed her up for this class she would make out just fine in here with you and your students.”

Small group discussions provided me with a great deal of evidence that our classroom was indeed becoming a community. Of the 31 students enrolled in the Local History class, Matt, a junior, was one of only three who did not have me as a teacher in 7th grade. One of the five students in the PHS/O group, Matt moved from a neighboring school district his sophomore year, and after one year at HHS he was still somewhat of a loner. This could be attributed to his quiet nature or it may relate to his adjustment after transferring high schools. Matt did not actively
participate in any extracurricular clubs or activities at HHS. I would see him attending school-related events early that fall, but usually by himself.

Matt, an academically solid student, was always polite, and said hello when he saw me outside of class. The class was less than two weeks old when he began stopping by our room or my office in the library to converse about his class work. As I noted at the time, this relationship that Matt established with me outside of class indicated that he was comfortable asking questions, and he soon began to open up to me privately about his academic work and personal life outside of school. In addition to our conversations about class work, he shared that he did not feel like he fit in with, or was accepted by, the other students because they had all grown up together and knew each other so well. In the Local History class, one of the two students that he often paired up with for group work and walked with on the field trips was a student who had also moved into the district within the last year.

It was clear to me that Matt was “apart” from the others and rarely participated in class activities unless called upon. It took me more than three weeks, but I soon discovered that Matt worked well in small group activities. As I circulated around the room during small group work, I noticed Matt sharing his opinions with the group and working as a team member to answer questions. Often, after a small-group activity, each group would report back to the class with its findings. Week five of class found students learning about the settlement of Minci and vicinity. After reading a chapter from the book, Where Wigwams Stood (Yurchak, 1994), Matt volunteered to be the member who reported back to the entire class following his small group’s discussion. After class, I asked Matt about his role as the reporter of his group’s activities. Matt explained that fitting into his new school was something he always wanted to do. Addressing the class and answering their questions was something he had decided to try that might help him, and the others, feel like he “belonged.”
Guest speakers

Knowing this could be my last time teaching the course, I tried to insert as many guest speaker sessions as possible into the syllabus. Like other years, student reactions to guest speakers were mixed. Don’t get me wrong - students were always respectful, attentive, and polite, but depending on the person or the topic presented, the amount and quality of student generated questions and discussion varied.

One guest speaker session stands out in my study for multiple reasons. During week six, we studied the history of the Underground Railroad. I was fortunate to procure a local historian, Mamie Sweeting Diggs, to speak to all three sections of Local History about her research on her grandfather’s role as a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad. Ms. Diggs is a well-known historian from the Wacovia area who often speaks to local historical groups and school students about the history of the Underground Railroad in Lysock County. Typically, our guest speakers set up in the classroom where Local History was held daily. However, for this presentation (to the entire group of eighty students from all three sections of the course), I reserved the auditorium. As the students arrived, Mamie had her artifacts and memorabilia on display and her poster boards ready to share.

As I recall Mamie’s presentation, I immediately think of Robbie, one of the two African-American students in our class. Robbie moved into the ELSD during the third week of Local History, and within two weeks he had become quite popular with the other students. His sense of humor and quirky remarks kept students laughing and me reminding him that we were in school. For example, Robbie had a tendency to wear his pants baggy and low on his hips. Often, his boxer shorts stuck out and he enjoyed showing the girls in class the boxers he had on that day. I would say, “Robbie, I have no desire to see your boxers, and these young ladies don’t want to either!” Jokingly, he would respond, “Oh, Mrs. Rogers, you know you want to guess what color I
am wearing today.” My standard come back was, “Robbie, I am going to buy you a belt. Now hike up your pants.”

Within this same brief period, Robbie opened up to our class, sharing his feelings about being a minority at Hugeville High School. During his first month with us, I noted that Robbie sometimes arrived at class upset about verbal altercation he had had with another student during his morning math class. I recall him saying: “I don’t feel liked in this school, but in this class, you don’t stare at me like I am an outsider. At least in this class, people listen to what I have to say.” Many students told Robbie to shake it off and let it go. One young lady said: “This is just the way it is in this town. Some people are just racist and some are not.” My favorite remark came from Janelle, the other African-American student in class: “This is the way it is here. Some people accept you, others don’t. I’ve lived here my entire life and sometimes I feel like I still don’t fit in.”

Few will forget Robbie’s reaction when he walked into the auditorium two weeks later and saw that Ms. Diggs and her son (who brought her to the school) were African-Americans. He was so surprised to see other African-Americans in the auditorium that he exclaimed “There are more brothers in the house!” in a voice loud enough to be heard by the entire auditorium. After a round of laughter from the students, Ms. Diggs addressed Robbie’s comment and used it as a teachable moment to begin her presentation. She noted that it shouldn’t matter what color someone’s skin is, or whether there were “more brothers in the house.” She went on to speak about how fortunate we are today to live in a society that accepts others, regardless of their skin color, unlike that of her great-grandfather’s lifetime. With this spontaneous introduction, Ms. Diggs began her formal presentation about the Underground Railroad.

Ms. Diggs had an unmistakably positive impact on my students. For weeks afterwards, they couldn’t seem to stop talking, in our Monday discussions, about her presentation and making connections between her talk and the homes in our local area that were stops on the Underground
Railroad. Whenever someone went to the mall, for example, they realized that they were passing many of those homes. Amy, a junior who worked at the mall, shared one Monday during discussion time: “My mom wants to take a class on local history because whenever she takes me to work, I tell her about the homes along the way.”

Like all others, this unit’s assessment came in multiple forms. Students had a writing exercise, a journal activity, a quiz, and a unit test to gauge their knowledge. Anyone who looked at my grade book would be able to identify the set of scores for the Underground Railroad, compared to the other unit scores, because they were clearly the strongest (see Table 4 -2).

Table 4 -2: Unit test scores from 1st nine weeks

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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pa Test</th>
<th>Local Natives</th>
<th>Early Settlement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total points</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Amy</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Points/ Percentage</td>
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was no different. Throughout the years, his sessions covered such topics as The Great Runaway, Highlights of Hugeville, History of Lysock County Fairgrounds, J.K. Rishel Factory and Fire, Hugeville during the Great Depression and WWII, Wacovia and North Branch Railroad, and the Country General Store. Spellbound by his storytelling capability, students typically got caught up in each anecdote he shared. He made the stories come alive as he brought students back in time.

Mr. Wright was losing his vision and, as such, needed assistance getting from the parking lot (where his wife dropped him off) to our classroom. Following his first visit, students eagerly volunteered for this chance to spend extra time with Mr. Wright. After class, it was not uncommon to see students seeking to introduce themselves to Mr. Wright and asking him if he remembered their parents from when he had them in school. Mr. Wright, with his amazing memory, responded with a personal anecdote about each student’s parent.

During his fourth presentation (week 12) on the History of the Lysock County Fairgrounds (located in the borough of Hugeville), students were amazed to learn that Hugeville, back in the 1930’s and 40’s, was a stop on the sprint car racing circuit. Let me note that beyond the Lysock County Fair, Hugeville is not known for much else these days. Therefore, to learn that Hugeville was once a stop on a regional, multi-state sprint car circuit, and that some of the biggest names in racing at that time raced here, was a big deal to most students. Even more spectacular was learning that Mr. Wright had purchased and restored one of these now vintage sprint cars (see Figure 4 - 4). As soon as the students learned of this, they virtually begged permission for our class to take a walking field trip to Mr. Wright’s house (for this class, I had intended to keep my syllabus flexible for just such opportunities). Fortunately for us all, he lived within eight blocks of the school (the boundaries within which we were permitted to roam), and the next day the students and I headed out to his house.

Normally on walking field trips I am in the front of the group (often telling people to walk faster). This was not the case on the way to Mr. Wright’s house, as I literally had to keep up
with the students. Mr. Wright and his adult son were waiting for us at his garage. I will always remember the looks on students’ faces as his son lifted the garage doors and revealed the sprint car. Eyes widened and mouths fell open when Mr. Wright rolled the car out of the garage.

The day after our trip to see the car, Ben, a student from class who followed NASCAR, came to class with a drawing and a personalized thank-you note for Mr. Wright. Ben, enthralled by Mr. Wright’s presentation and car, had drawn a picture of the car with Mr. Wright in the drivers’ seat. Excited by Ben’s note and picture, I shared it with the entire class. Several girls, inspired by Ben’s thoughtfulness, asked if they, too, could write thank-you notes. I was thrilled at this request because up to this point, it was me who wrote these notes to each guest speaker.

Figure 4 - 4: Mr. Wright and his sprint car.
My action research project made it clear that certain pedagogical approaches were more engaging than others, and the use of guest speakers was one of them. The visitors helped move students towards a greater appreciation of their surrounding communities. As I note later, many students spoke of these personal connections during our course interviews.

**Field trips**

Field trips were an integral approach to encouraging student engagement. In addition to the many walking field trips, Local History students went on two different day-long field trips. During week eight, the combined Local History classes (80 students) took their first of these trips to the Wacovia area, as a culminating activity for our study of Lysock County. In week 14, as part of our unit on the history of Minci and Hugeville, the three Local History classes traveled together to the Minci vicinity. I discuss this second day’s trip below.

After much preparation and scheduling we were ready to embark on our trip that would include five stops in the Minci area. With 80 students to accommodate, I arranged for two busses and planned two separate itineraries, one bus following Itinerary A and the other following Itinerary B. Brant, the other Local History teacher, traveled on Bus #1 with his 3rd period class (28 students), 11 students from his 9th period class, and three parent chaperones. I rode on Bus #2 with my 31 students, 10 students from Brant’s 9th period class, and three other parent chaperones. The stories below focus on the 31 students in my class and their experiences at three of the five stops that day.
Bus #2’s first stop was at the Eight Square School - a replica one-room school in our district (see Figure 4 - 5). I explained to the students that I would take about half of the group and spend the first part of our morning in the one-room school while the remaining students, with the three parent chaperones, traveled to the 2nd stop on our itinerary, the oldest mill in Lysock County. I recall saying to the students before we split up: “A lot of different people spent a great deal of time and effort preparing for today’s living history experience. I encourage you to participate when called upon and, as always, be respectful and attentive to the speakers.” As my group of twenty students approached the multi-grade one-room school, we were welcomed by the schoolmarm (see Figure 4 - 6), dressed in 19th Century apparel, ringing the wrought iron school bell. We later found out that the schoolmarm was a volunteer from the local historical society who played this role often to groups of visiting students.
Entering the school, students were told to have a seat in one of the rows of desks. I noted students trying to fit their legs and bodies into the desks with difficulty and laughing when a few of their peers would not fit. When they were settled, the teacher came around with a tin bucket and had the students spit their gum into it, saying: “The boys and girls who attended this school would not have been chewing gum, and I ask that you do not either.” This action, of course, received a few rolled eyes and loud sighs, but thankfully, each of the students did as requested.

The schoolmarm moved to the piano and began playing the National Anthem. She followed by having students recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Students then practiced their lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic (on their slate boards), and memorized a small poem to recite when their ‘grade’ was called to the recitation bench.

Ms. Temple (the schoolmarm) called the ‘5th grade’ group to the recitation bench for their lessons in spelling and penmanship. Using words taken from the McGuffey Eclectic Speller, the
seven students practiced by spelling *controversial* and *independent*. As these ‘5th grade’ students stood to answer each question, the rest of the class watched curiously from their seats to hear if their peers spelled the words correctly. When a student spelled a word correctly, Ms. Temple moved onto another word. If the word was spelled incorrectly, the person moved to the end of the recitation bench and Ms. Temple asked the next person in line to spell the word (see Figure 4 - 7). Naturally, snickers and giggles from the other students (back at their seats) were heard, to which Ms. Temple replied: “I can find you more work to do if you don’t have enough.”
After an hour and a half at the school, it was time for the groups from Bus #2 to switch locations. I hoped that the second group coming to the school would be as actively involved (at their desks and the recitation bench) as the first group. As our group was leaving the school, Kelsey, an honors-level junior, shared: “It was cool being here today and acting like a student from back in the day. It makes me appreciate our school so much more. I’m just glad I didn’t go to school then.” Another student, Chloe, asked: “Who takes care of this school? and When did they restore it?” I told her that I would address her questions on our way to the next stop.

At 11:00 am, we regrouped and headed to our next stop on the itinerary, the Minci Historical Society (the organization responsible for restoration and upkeep of the Eight Square School). As promised, I spoke to the bus full of 41 students, answering Cloe’s questions about restoration and upkeep of the school. This was an opportune time to distribute brochures from the historical society. I later learned that one student from our 4th period class (not Chloe) and one of the parent chaperones joined the historical society shortly after our field trip.

Our visit to the Minci Historical Society was not as well received by the students as I had hoped. The museum, located in a house that was a known stop on the Underground Railroad, was not big enough to have 41 students move through together. For this reason, I once again split the bus into two groups: one group starting upstairs and the second starting downstairs. Members of the society led each group on an hour-long tour through the rooms, explaining artifacts and memorabilia (see Figure 4-8). Students had to be reminded several times NOT to touch anything. Amber, a junior, who was walking beside me, turned to me and said: “I feel like I’m 10 years old again. If the tour guide tells us one more time to ‘look with your eyes, not your hands,’ I’m going to scream.”
Following the trip, Brad (the other Local History teacher), and I pondered the success of this stop. Certainly, if we were to return to the historical museum, more time would be needed to tour the exhibits. However, in discussion with my students, one young lady, who seemed to be expressing the sentiment of many other students, suggested that we cut this stop entirely from the schedule. “The parts of the trip I enjoyed most were when we could actually participate,” she shared. “Standing in a room, listening to a man talk about every piece of furniture and artifact in it, was not that interesting.” As I noted at the time, it seemed to be the passive nature in which students toured the museum that caused them not to connect (nor like) this part of the field trip.

During our discussion the day after our Minci trip, John, a soft-spoken senior, inquired about the one-room school that our district owned: “What does our school district do with that school?” The next fifteen minutes of class was spent explaining to students that the ELSD did indeed own a one-room school, called the Newman School that was used mainly as a storage
facility (see Figure 4-9). Conversation quickly began about ways that our class could become involved with restoring it and/or at least visiting it (it was not close enough for a walking field trip). “Let’s restore it like the Eight Square,” several suggested. I recalled my joy when Sally said: “I maybe can get my Pap to help fix it up.” Tyler, also a PHS/O member like Sally, added: “Maybe the Lysock Career and Technology Center (LCTC) could help fix it up too.” Listening to these remarks, I commented that at one time, when I first developed the course, I shared their excitement for fixing it up and wanted to plan a class trip to the school. This idea fell to the wayside, however, once I started working with the Minci Historical Society and learned about class trips (living history experiences) at the Eight Square school. Although it was too late in the semester for this class, I made note of student interest in the Newman School as a choice for future service learning and/or final project topics. For me, students’ enthusiasm for turning our local one-room school into a learning site similar to the Eight Square School was “hard evidence” of their civic interest and willingness to become engaged – particularly with respect to Sally and Tyler.

Figure 4-9: The Newman School – Hugeville
As shown above, increased levels of classroom participation depended upon the types of instructional opportunities and activities available. I can best illustrate this by recalling the actions of Tyler, a student who was not a regular participant in class activities, but who, during field trips (walking and day long), became one of our most active class members. I especially remember Tyler’s interest in the site of a 19th Century Pennsylvania Canal basin during our day long field trip to the Minci area (week 14 of class). After touring the canal basin, locks, and holding ponds, our tour guide led us to the lockkeeper’s house where an archaeological dig was underway.

Mr. Poltin, our historical society tour guide, asked for volunteers to enter the excavation pit and help with the dig. Immediately, Tyler and his friend, Chad, stepped forward and were the first two in the pit, learning how to carefully gather dirt before sifting and sorting for artifacts (see Figure 4 - 10). Each student had the opportunity to participate in some aspect of the dig, whether digging, sifting, washing, or carrying artifacts back and forth to the main gate. On the way home from our day in Minci, I sat with Tyler on the bus and thanked him for always being so involved in and enthusiastic about our field trips. “I’m not a school person Mrs. Rogers,” he replied. “Being outside is where I’m most comfortable. I like to have fun and still play in the dirt. This was the best. I could use my hands, not a book, and still learn.”
Oral history projects

Besides guest speakers and field trips, many other pedagogical activities were designed to encourage active learning. Part of establishing a student-centered classroom hinged on student participation and ownership of their learning. Most students appreciated the opportunity to have choices and be active participants in their learning – though not to the extent that Tyler seemed to appreciate it. Some students, however, did not readily accept this responsibility.

In hopes of boosting student scores on the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment (PSSA) Reading and Writing tests, the Social Studies Department at HHS required that all
courses have at least one “formal” research paper per semester. During week six of Local History, I assigned a three-week research project, ending with a formal paper, on the Early Settlement of Lysock County. Students could choose any topic that pertained to information and materials explored during the first six weeks of class. The assignment required students to use primary documents when reaching conclusions that recognized the relationship between local and national events. Multiple checkpoints for student-teacher communication were built into the assessment.

On Monday of week seven, students handed in paragraph-long descriptions of their topic choices for my approval. After reading and offering feedback on each of them that night, I returned their papers on Tuesday while students were in class researching and conferencing with me. Students had the choice to use the classroom set of laptops for internet research, go to the school library to access its resources on local history, or use our readily available class resources. The following week (week eight), Tuesday and Wednesday were set aside for research and writing, and by Friday of that week, students were to bring their rough drafts to class for a writing activity. During that Friday’s writer’s workshop, student’s selected two peers to edit their developing essays. This seemed like a great idea, until students come to class without their rough drafts. Out of 31 students, ten came to class empty handed. As I circulated around the room, I spoke with all students about their work, or lack thereof. I noted students who were not prepared and marked a zero in the grade book for class participation for that day’s assignment.

One student in particular, Steve, caused concern with this assignment. Steve was a senior, active in school clubs and sports, who readily participated in class activities. However, as much as I encouraged Steve to stay on schedule with this assignment, he didn’t. The only deadline Steve met was handing in a choice of topic. During week seven’s class time, Steve appeared to work on his research, but when it came time to meet week eight’s deadline and share his progress, he failed to hand in a rough draft and asked for an extension.
After collecting the peer reviewed drafts (with student signatures at the bottom) at the end of week eight, I spent the weekend reading through them, adding comments and suggestions where needed. On Monday of week nine, I distributed the papers and spoke with students who had not handed in their drafts. I also spent time working with students who needed extra help on the assignment. There were some students in class, who I knew from past assignments, were not strong writers, but they, unlike Steve, were putting forth effort to complete the work. By Wednesday of week nine, all but Steve had handed in their rough drafts, and some students were turning in their final essays. That night, I added comments to the late assignments and handed them back on Thursday in the hope that all would meet the Friday, final copy deadline. When I collected the final research papers on Friday, six students had not met the deadline (Steve included) and were now subject to a five-point-per-day penalty.

On Monday (of week ten and the week grades for the 1st nine weeks were due), Steve showed up for class without his paper (the other five tardy students had turned theirs in). I asked Steve to please stay and talk after class. As was my habit in situations like this, I asked him what he thought his grade for the nine weeks would be without the assignment. “At least a 70%,” he responded. At this point I took out my grade book, averaged his grades, and let him in know that if he chose not do the paper, he would get no higher than a 51% for the 1st nine weeks. After a moment of silence, Steve chose the ‘with paper’ option and assured me that I would have a copy of his paper that Wednesday (two days before my 1st nine weeks grades were due). On Wednesday, I had a copy of Steve’s historical research essay in my hands.

Giving it a quick glance that evening, I immediately suspected that this was not Steve’s work based upon his writing from previous assignments. Therefore, I chose to run sections of the paper through turnitin.com and found my suspicions confirmed: much of his paper was plagiarized directly from an internet site (with no citations to accompany it). Steve, who was already facing a 15 point penalty, now faced plagiarism charges and a zero on the assignment.
After a phone call to his parents and a meeting with the guidance counselor, Steve and I met the next day to discuss his latest ‘dilemma.’ When I confronted Steve about the paper he immediately confessed to lifting much of it directly from a website. At that point, I asked our high school guidance counselor to come in and conference with us about the problem. We decided that Steve could redo the entire paper and receive no higher than a 50% on the assignment –which he did. Ultimately, his 1st nine week grade was reduced to 64% as a result of the consequences of his choices and actions. “No offense to you Mrs. Rogers,” he later told me; “I just couldn’t get into this assignment because I’m such a poor writer.”

From prior assessment and class activities, I knew that Steve was not the only weak writer (or reader) in the class. At the beginning of each unit, I gauged student background knowledge through discussion and various other pedagogical strategies. One of my favorite reading and writing activities was “3-2-1,” an approach that involves students directly in the reading assignment by having them write three things they learned from the reading, two connections they made with the reading, and one question that they still had from the reading or topic being studied. This approach worked well because it allowed all levels of students to make connections with the assignment. Rhonda, for example, may not have gained the same level of understanding that Karina (an honors’ level student)did, but both girls completed the assignment and participated in class discussion surrounding the topic.

Of course, not all students enjoyed the reading assignments for our Local History class. Because of the nature of the course, students had no single textbook to use. Rather, primary and secondary sources were the cornerstone of our curricular materials. One book that I had used regularly was written by an older woman in our community, Ms. Yurchak. Many of our units included readings from her book, *Where Wigwams Stood* (Yurchak, 1994), and with each assignment, several students (often Tyler and Chad) complained about these readings.
It was during week six, while studying the early settlement of Lysock County, that these two boys became more tolerant (and less vocal) of these reading assignments – Ms. Yurchak spoke to our class. As Ms. Yurchak told about the history of her home and how she had almost lost it to the state through the right of eminent domain (a bridge expansion project was designed to be built right in front of her home), the boys’ interest level rose. Typically following a guest speaker, time was spent the next day in class debriefing the presentation and, more importantly, the material presented. When I asked Chad about his thoughts on the previous day’s lecturer, I remember him saying: “It was nice to be able to put a face with the author of that book we read for class. It made it more bearable and I actually learned more about our local community from her stories. If her house was still going to be torn down, I would help her fight for it.”

A core part of the second nine weeks related to the final project and its related presentation of student work. Beginning in mid-November, class time was devoted to working on these final projects. Besides initial conferencing about these topics during the fifth week of class, little time had been spent on this assignment. During that earlier student-teacher conference, students shared their topic choices, a rough outline to research, and who they were considering to interview. It was not until the eleventh week of class, however, that we got serious about researching these projects.

That entire week was set aside for work on establishing the basic rules and suggestions for a successful oral history interview. That Monday entailed discussion around the requirements for the final project. Individual student-teacher conferences and time for development of interview questions was the agenda for Tuesday and Wednesday of that week. By the end of Wednesday’s class, I had determined that students grasped the importance of explaining the purpose of the assignment, being prepared for the interview, and understanding what was required of the interview process. To my dismay, Thursday and Friday went astray. I had dedicated those two days to students’ practicing ‘mock’ interviews with at least two others in the
class. After twenty minutes of this activity on Thursday, it was apparent to me that students were not at all committed to this role-playing activity. As I circulated around the room, I picked up side conversations focused on the football playoff game and the first week of basketball pre-season, NOT their interview questions.

Disappointed and upset, I revised my plans and discontinued the activity for Friday. Instead, students used laptops to complete an in-class assignment using the Minci Historical Society’s interactive website. What frustrated me most, at the time, was that my students did not recognize the value that I saw in practicing their oral history questions. Rather than re-teaching the activity (which, in retrospect, I should have done), I allowed my anger at the students (for not following directions) to take over. Upon reflection, much of my frustration could have been alleviated by better planning on my part. I knew better than to think that students were going to stay focused for an entire (45 minute) class period practicing interview questions for two straight days. I now realize that I should have built the ‘mock’ interview activity into BOTH days, but no more than twenty minutes each day. This, accompanied by another activity during the same period, might have kept the students on task. I could have also asked students to model a ‘mock’ interview in front of the class or to share their interview questions with the entire group. These options mirror my typical style of teaching – having several instructional activities planned for one class period.

A major goal of a constructivist classroom is to involve student choice. In this case, student choice would be most important with regard to final project topic choices that students found meaningful, topics they were willing to explore and discover with genuine personal interest. Justin, a senior (one of the students who befriended Rhonda), had a hard time deciding on a final topic to investigate. From the onset of the project in week five, Justin told me he did not want to study anything in particular about the history of Hugeville or do a genealogy on his family. However by end of that week, Justin had selected something that he truly enjoyed and
wanted to learn more about: the history of our school’s football program. He spent the next ten weeks of the class speaking to and interviewing numerous people in the community about the school’s football program. I suggested that he add one more interviewee to his list - Mr. Nice, a former teacher and football coach at Hugeville High School (HHS). Mr. Nice turned out to be a goldmine, sharing information from his self-produced personal memoir (mainly about coaching football at HHS) and giving Justin a copy of this text to use as part of his presentation.

Justin’s final project and oral presentation were both excellent. His oral presentation showcased accolades of our high school football team’s outstanding seasons, focusing on the topic at hand - the history of the program and the people who introduced football as a recognized athletic program to HHS. Justin invited his football coach to this presentation and afterwards presented him with a photocopy of Mr. Nice’s book on the history of Hugeville’s football program. Justin was kind enough to donate the copy Mr. Nice had given him to the Local History class resource collection.

The importance of student choice was also evident in Tyler’s topic for his final project. PRE – course survey results indicated that Tyler, as a member of the PHS/O group, showed little evidence of civic mindedness and engagement. From the opening weeks of class, I knew Tyler was not an active participant in class activities, but was quite interactive during our walking and full – day field trips. In week five, Tyler and I first met to discuss his choice of topic for the final research project. He knew right away what he wanted to investigate – the history and people on Biddle Road, the road he lived on.

From his interview with his grandfather and aunt, Tyler discovered that Biddle Road was actually named after his great-grandfather. More importantly to Tyler, he discovered a wealth of information about a place where he spent a large chunk of time, his grandfather’s farm. It was during the oral history presentation that Tyler really opened up with his classmates, and his knowledge about his ‘local’ community and family history poured forth. Tyler shared what is
was about the farm that was so special - the times he spent there with his grandfather farming, hunting, and fishing. It was during this presentation, I noted, that students saw Tyler in a different light: not just the farm boy who didn’t pay much attention in class, but a boy who was deeply committed to his family and their livelihood. When he finished, it was Steve, who sat in the back of the room near Tyler, who said: “Hey Tyler, you really know what you’re talking about with the history of your pap’s farm.” Tyler sheepishly grinned, replying: “The whole project wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be. I never thought I would be able to talk for fifteen minutes in front of the class, but once I started, it just came out.”

Several students chose to present for more than the required fifteen minutes on their final project. The longest (and one of the best) presentations came from Melissa (the bulletin board minder) who presented on the Underground Railroad in Lysock County. From the time her choice of topic was due (week five), Melissa knew that she wanted to use our school’s digital camera and camcorder to make a video (iMovie). For the next three months, she spent countless hours interviewing many community members on the homes in our local area that were stops on the Underground Railroad. As luck would have it, I had a family friend who lived in one of these homes, and had an open invitation to come visit. I called my friend, told her about Melissa’s final project, and asked if I could bring Melissa and another guest along. Mrs. Wagner, a paraprofessional who worked with a special needs student in Brad’s 3rd period Local History class, asked if she could bring along her son, Kyle - a student in Brad’s 9th period Local History class.
Figure 4-11: John Adlum House – Known stop on the Underground Railroad

Together, we had a great time exploring the houses one Saturday in November (see Figure 4-11). Melissa videotaped parts of our tour and took dozens of pictures of the home and the ‘hiding places’ where the passengers (slaves) remained as they waited to be passed on to the next safe house (station).

This footage was incorporated into Melissa’s final presentation as part of her video, allowing students to revisit our Underground Railroad unit. Melissa’s presentation lasted a full thirty minutes. She not only highlighted the homes through her video, but also through clips of her interviews and pictures. Melissa’s presentation warranted a number of questions from her peers. Students were curious how they, too, could get a tour of some of these homes. Captivating
disbelief was expressed by Robbie: “How do you know slaves really hid in these cubby holes?” (see Figure 4 - 12).

Figure 4 - 12: Hiding (safe) spot in the John Adlum House.

For the past five years, the East Lysock Historical Society has asked me to select five to six outstanding student projects from this course for presentation at a historical society meeting. In January 2007, when they phoned about students for their April meeting, I immediately thought of Melissa’s presentation. I contacted Melissa and five other students and asked for their help with this request (see Figure 4 – 13). As with other years, I was like a proud mother! Student topics ranged from the Underground Railroad to the history of the Hess family and the history of our local Grange. After their April presentations, the six students lined up with their visual
displays and answered questions from the audience. The historical society asked Melissa for a copy of her video to keep for their artifacts and she gladly agreed. After the April meeting, I received a thank you note from the secretary of the society that read:

“Dear Amy,

My sincere thanks for sharing some of your students from the Local History class for the program at the East Lysock Historical Society. The projects are proof that history can be fun and our youth are actively involved in our local community. Keep up the good work.”

Figure 4 - 13: April, 2007 Historical Society meeting – student presenters

Another final project that I remember well was Logan’s. Logan, a senior, was a proud junior volunteer firefighter who sometimes left school to participate in calls. As soon as I told the class about the final project and the oral history interview, Logan knew what he wanted to
investigate: the history of the Hugeville Fire Department. Throughout the semester, Logan worked diligently on his project, keeping me updated along the way.

Final presentations always began the second day back from Christmas break, and this year was no different. Logan had volunteered to go first. He was all smiles as we grabbed our jackets and headed the five blocks to the Hugeville Volunteer Fire Department. Logan had pre-arranged to have the Fire Chief meet our 4th period class at the station to help answer questions. Logan’s excitement was contagious as we arrived to find that four other volunteer firefighters had come to assist Logan with giving the tour and sharing memorabilia about the fire station with the students. As Logan addressed the class and allowed students to try on a firefighter’s suit, his pride for the fire department was evident. It was during this ‘show-and-tell’ session that Logan became someone more than the kid in class who left when his pager went off: we now had a clearer understanding of Logan’s dedication to the fire company. His voluntary participation inspired one of his peers to ask how to join the fire company or become an EMT. All of us that day at the fire station not only gained a better appreciation for the volunteer fire company, but also for their community they had right there at the station. These men and women who voluntarily give their time to help others share a special bond, a bond that was clearly evident that January morning though their support of Logan and the smiles on their faces as he presented to his classmates.

Don’t get me wrong: not all students experienced success with the final project. Blaine, another member of the PHS/O group, was an intelligent young man who put forth little to no effort outside of class on his school work. Blaine had a gift: he could hear about an issue or topic, listen to and participate in class discussion, spend little to no effort studying (or doing homework) yet gets by as a student. During class, Blaine, a junior, was cordial and participated when called upon. At the week five deadline, Blaine told me that he wanted to research the history of Lairdsville, one of the villages in our district. He asked me if I knew someone he could
interview, and over the next few weeks, I put him in contact with an older gentlemen who lived in Lairdsville. Blaine completed the interview questions during week eleven - but this was as far as his effort on this project went. During December, when we spent class time working on our projects, I noted him working on his project. He assured me that he was going to get together with his interviewee over Christmas vacation and conduct an interview. However, when the day came for his final presentation, Blaine was absent. And the next day, and the next. Actually, Blaine missed that entire week of school in January. When he finally returned to class, he offered the following explanation: “I don’t do homework, Mrs. Rogers. I know we had class time, but there was a lot that I needed to do at home.”

Blaine’s confession came as somewhat of a surprise to me because he had come to me for resources on his topic and kept me updated on his progress throughout – right up to Christmas break when he told me he was going to conduct an interview. Initially, I thought that Blaine was enthusiastic about his research project, choosing one of the villages in the ELSD and showing interest in interviewing an elderly man who had lived there his entire life. He had had received full credit for all assignments associated with the oral history project and was on track to finish his research. But I was wrong. Two weeks following the date that the final project was due, Blaine presented a hastily completed project that consisted of photocopies of old photos randomly attached on a poster board. His final grade on the project reflected his effort and he ended up with a 60% on the project, which lowered his final class average to a 82%.
These stories, guest speakers, field trips, and oral history projects—all data about the class—illustrate how a Local History class with a strong sense of classroom community influenced students’ sense of civic mindedness and moved them to become more civically engaged. In the next section, I will look at data from the POST I-course surveys to add more evidence in support of this claim.

**POST I – Course Survey Results**

At the end of the semester-long course (January 2007), 4th period Local History students completed the same survey as they had on the second day of class. Results from this survey reveal that all groups improved their scores. The actual class median (35) was .5 points above the possible class median and an increase of 6.5 points above the actual PRE-course median score (see Figure 4 - 14).

![Figure 4 - 14: PRE and POST I class median scores](image)

PRE Range: 23 – 42       POST I Range: 28 - 45
The two variables that stand out in this second survey are again Post-High School and Grade level, and the two most notable groups due to their lowest and highest median scores are, again, PHS/O and Seniors, respectively.

- The lowest group, PHS/O, had a range of 18 – 35 with a median score of 28. This median score is 7 points lower than the class median.
- The highest group, Seniors, had a range of 33 – 48 with a median score of 45. This median score is 10 points higher than the class median.

Figure 4 - 15: POST 1 – course survey lowest and highest group median scores

Aware of the pre-course differences between these two groups and having paid considerable time and attention to the students identified as “Post-High School/Other,” I will focus my comments below on the survey data as they pertain to those students who seemed least civically minded at the onset of the course (PHS/O).
PHS/O movement statements between PRE - and POST I - course surveys

From the stories presented above, it appears that the Local History class did seem to help promote students’ sense of civic mindedness. To the extent that my surveys served as a way for a new teacher researcher to gauge overall progress (without making claims to instrumental validity or reliability), the numbers suggest that the PHS/O group became more civic minded, increasing their group median score five points (a greater increase than the Seniors group).

In relation to these survey data, Sally remains interesting. As the single PHS/O senior, she again has the highest median score (35) among the five PHS/O students and the second lowest median score (35) among the Seniors, though she scored lower than before among the Females’ median score by 4.5 points in the POST –course survey. Sally’s numerical gains slightly exceed the average median gain for the whole class.

Despite the minimal rise in the median score of the Males group, Matt’s POST I – survey score jumped nine points from his PRE -course survey median score. Matt, the lowest scoring student at the outset of the class, scored the 2nd lowest on the POST I – course survey. In comparison to his classmates, Matt’s POST I survey score suggests that the class did little to enhance his civic mindedness. However, his individual gain of nine points suggests just the opposite: that he appeared more civic minded.

Tyler’s one point gain between the PRE - and POST I – course surveys suggests that the class did not accomplish much in terms of enhancing his sense of civic mindedness. His POST I – course score still placed him far below the Junior’s median of 33, 13 points below the Residence less than 15 years, and 6 points below the PHS/O median of 28 (see Table 4 - 3).

Blaine was unlike his classmates as a whole, scoring noticeably below the median on both the PRE- and POST I-course surveys. Blaine had the lowest posting in the class on the POST I-course survey, 17 points below the class median, 15 points below the Junior’s median of
33, 10 points below the Residence 16 – 18 years, and 11 points below the PHS/O median of 28.

Like Matt and Tyler, Blaine’s “numbers” suggest that he developed little sense of civic
mindedness after spending a semester in Local History.
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<td>+11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-10.5</td>
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<td>-1.5</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler</td>
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<td>-7.5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-12.5</td>
<td>-13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-10.5</td>
<td>-9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the PRE and POST I-course survey data, I gathered interview data from most of the 4th period Local History students. In the following section, I share these data in an effort to have the students, themselves, speak directly to ways in which our Local History class helped them to become more civic minded.

**Interviews**

This section of the chapter brings students’ voices directly into the research as I share selections from their student-teacher interviews. The interview data illustrate that the Local History class succeeded in enhancing many students’ relationships with their classroom, school, and surrounding communities. Moreover, these data make clear that purposeful instructional strategies and pedagogical activities did indeed promote students’ sense of place, civic mindedness, and civic engagement.

To begin, the twenty-four interviews completed soon after the class ended provide straightforward evidence that the students in the 4th period Local History class built communal connections with their classmates. Twenty students (83%) drew attention to the sense of community they felt as members of the 4th period Local History class. One student commented that the Local History class was “a community within the community of the school,” while another highlighted that “we had our own separate bond in this class compared to other classes. I am sure other classes have their own bonds, but we [the 4th period class] formed a bond that was different from my other classes.” A third student remarked: “I liked this class better than most because I got to meet and become friends with people that I would not have normally engaged
with outside of school.” In the words of a fourth student: “A community involves everyone helping everyone else out, and our class was a community because we all worked together, learned together, and thought of ways we could help the [larger] community.”

The final project seemed to highlight this community sentiment. One student revealed that “the students got to know each other through the independent projects and then sharing them with each other. When a person presented on their family history, I felt like I actually knew their grandparents.” After explaining his perspective of what constituted a community, another student added that his belief in the class as a community was affected by “everyone getting to know one another through the independent projects.” In their words, the students in the 4th period Local History class truly became a community of learners.

Twelve students (50%) made reference to the larger school community in their post – course interviews. “A lot of us are involved in the community, or in school events, or play sports, or attend sporting events,” explained one student. “Often we go just to watch [these events] to support one another.” To me, this states what I saw during my research project: that students built a sense of community not only within the class, but also to the school as well. This sentiment of school community was expressed by many classmates. One telling remark, offered by a young lady, was that when she initially reflected on the word community, she thought of the high school [HHS] because this is the group of students she is connected to and works with the most. As she explained: “In school, I participate in sports, clubs, and read to the elementary school students.” Yet another student asserted that her definition of community [“people working together with other people, keeping the traditions alive, passing down stories to generations so that people don’t forget what happened”] helped her stay connected to the high school because in the Local History class, she learned about the history of our school from listening to stories passed down from others. That 50% of students made mention of their school as a community leads me to believe that the Local History class had an impact on these perceptions.
This action research project also suggests that the Local History class also helped students better connect with the surrounding communities at large. Thirteen of twenty-four (54%) students made specific reference to the community at large in their post-course interviews. One young man said: “I think the class does inspire us to be involved in the community. We go on the walking field trips so we got to see everything.” Another disclosed: “Because we go around the community and see how it is, I want to do more to make the community look better.” Indicative of this connection to the community at large was the following statement: “I liked that we learned about the boroughs and villages that made up the ELSD. I knew where these places were, but I didn’t really know anything about the history of each of these places. Once I learned about the people who still lived there and the help they needed in sustaining these communities, it made me want to help more.” Another student reiterates this perspective: “We [the students] worked together, we learned facts about the community, we walked around the borough of Hugeville, and participated in events. When we came back to the classroom and discussed what we had seen, it made me want to figure out ways to help the community.” This connection with and desire to help the community is appreciated by yet another student as seen in the following remark: “I really like that people kind of help the community. By learning about our past and our origins, it helps me want to participate and help out more myself.” As a researcher, remarks such as these from almost 60% of the students suggest to me that our study of place successfully connected students to their surrounding communities.

One result of the research that I found particularly interesting was that five of the thirty-one students in the Local History class were members of a volunteer fire department (or became members within the time frame of this study). This number, 16% of 4th period class, is a fairly large percentage considering the commitment, time, and effort put forth by a volunteer firefighter. I discovered that the students became involved in the fire departments for several reasons. One
young man asserted: “I joined the fire department because I want to go inside burning buildings, save houses, and help people.” Another student mentioned: “I want to be a nurse someday and volunteering on the ambulance crew gives me experience with this. Also, our fire department is like a family.” Indicative of their understanding of community was another student who commented that “the fire hall is like a community. You get to meet new people and associate with them.” This same young man had written in his POST I survey that a community is defined by “a group of people that you know or are associated with for a long time and are comfortable with, so you can just relax.” Whether these students joined for the excitement, the call to duty, or the feeling of family and community offered by the fire departments, each was definitely engaged in community affairs and exhibiting civic responsibility.

While I am convinced from these data that the Local History class did succeed in enhancing most students’ sense of place and appreciation for belonging to a community, these positive results were not expressed by all of the students. Three students mentioned in the post-course interview that although they enjoyed the course, they did not believe it had any effect on their appreciation of community. One young lady remarked that “the study of local history did not really change my belief in the community.” Interestingly, the young lady who believed that the fire department was like her family shared that she thought our school (HHS) was a community, but not the 4th period Local History class. The connection to the class, school, and surrounding communities may have reached many students in the Local History class, but it did not reach them all.

Beyond evidence of deeper appreciation of community, findings from this project reveal that using constructivist approaches to teaching and learning to instill a sense of place appeared to be successful. Students brought their own knowledge, attitudes, and skills into the course and further constructed their own knowledge as teaching and learning occurred. This assertion is bolstered by interview comments about course discussion. Six students, approximately 25% of
those I interviewed, commented specifically about our class discussions. One student disclosed that “we would talk about a topic, share our own views, and then you [the teacher] would encourage us to investigate the topic further.” Another young lady commented that “they [other students] present information on a topic and it made me want to go and research it more myself. Like the one-room schools. I am really interested in this topic and want to learn about more of it and the people who went there.”

My data also suggests that the use of guest speakers played a critical role in helping students establish, understand, and appreciate their own current and future roles in the community. In the post – course interviews, 14 (of 24) students mentioned how much they enjoyed guest speakers. One senior girl observed that “having other people come in, other than your teacher, and talk about the event - people who were actually there - helped me understand it better.” More telling signs of this “real life perspective” came from another student’s remark: “The guest speakers teach me what they actually experienced. Hearing their story is like being there yourself.” Melissa shared her unforgettable image of how the borough of Hugeville used to be a hangout for young people on any given Saturday night. Hearing stories from local residents about “coming to town on a Saturday night to catch a movie, gossip with friends, and shop at the local general stores” made a great impression on her. She disclosed during her interview that “by connecting to the past through oral histories, I gained a better appreciation of what it used to be …back in the day.”

It was more than just the guest speakers that helped the students connect to the community - also included was students’ actual preparation for the speakers. Gauging student background knowledge, preparing questions for the speaker, and presenting follow up activities for debriefing and general discussion were all important pedagogical activities utilized in class for students to synthesize the information presented. One young lady shared that this particular aspect of the course gave relevance to her: “The time we spent in class debriefing about people
and places helped me understand the topic better.” Another commented: “This time helped us, as a class, to better understand our community, and made us want to become more involved in our community.”

While guest speakers made a difference, 18 of 24 students referred, in their interviews, to our field trips as an aspect of the class that they either enjoyed or learned from. Two students’ sentiments are captured in the following statement: “It’s a lot easier to learn when you’re not just sitting in a desk.” Another added that “taking the tours around town gave us better knowledge of who founded the area and makes us appreciate it more. Now when we look around town at buildings, we know what they once were.” Memories of the field trips were common and often associated with specific experiences: “The field trip to Minci had an effect on me because the class kind of learned about the archaeological dig and how the people there were trying to help the community by finding out the origins of the community.”

Sally revealed that her most memorable events from the class involved field trips to the local one-room schoolhouse and the Minci Historical Society. Sally shared that she “really enjoyed the field trips because by visiting the places that we were learning about and interviewing people who grew up during this time period, it made me want to become more involved in the community.” Matt reiterated this point: “Local History class was fun, especially since I am not from around here …We got to go and visit many of the places we were talking about in class. I liked all the field trips and especially walking around the town of Hugeville, going to the churches and businesses.” These comments make clear that the constructivist philosophy of learning indeed worked with the 4th period class in what one student called the “hands-on, no textbook way of learning.”

As described above, this study revealed that through the pedagogy of place, most of the Local History students took ownership of their learning though the selection and pursuit of topics for their oral history project. I attempted to give effective and accurate feedback to students and
encourage them to do the same to each other as they helped set appropriate goals for their research topics.

The oral history projects were the capstone of the course. In the post – course interview, students were asked “What aspect of the local history course encouraged you to become more involved in the community?” Ten of 24 students made specific reference to the oral history project. “I liked going out and hearing what other people have to say,” said one student. “I also liked listening to the other students talk about what they’re doing for their projects.” Another student responded: “I think the final projects [really encouraged us to become involved] because I had to go out and find someone to interview, …” Yet another stated that his desire to be involved in the community came from “being able to see what our area used to be like, and actually wanting to speak with older people who lived during that time.” As one student put it: “I can sit down and talk with that person. Since they were there during [that] time, they can really relate to what I am talking about.” During these interviews, two students specifically mentioned Melissa’s final presentation as one that helped them connect to the community and want to be more active in studying the Underground Railroad, one of whom contacted a member of the Quaker Church (a stop along the way) to gather more information.

Aside from the apparent influence of the project content, itself, my research revealed that the students gained value from interacting with each other in relation to these projects. Once more, this is evidenced in the post – course interviews when fourteen of twenty-four students (59%) called attention to finding value in learning from other students’ presentations of their final class projects. A telling remark shared by one student in this regard was that “not only did I learn about what I did in my own project, but I also learned about other people’s projects. It is so much more than just what the teacher taught: you learn everyone else’s community and what they [the student presenters] learned. I had no idea there was a village in our school district called Opp, and
at one time Opp had its own school, general store, gas station, and church. And better yet, I pass by this place every day on my way to school.”

The accuracy of this statement reflects the emphasis that I, as the teacher, placed on learning from each other in the class. Prior to and during the oral history project presentations, I spoke often to the students about the importance of learning from each other. Apparently, my point was taken, as noted in the following comment: “We learned about our own projects and everyone else’s. I really liked listening to everybody else’s and researching my own. Before, it was just basically a town that everyone lives in, but when you [the student] learn about the history of it and how far it has come in just a matter of a couple of decades, and you learn how much people play a role in the community, you want to be involved.” Evidently, the Local History class encouraged students to learn from each other and spark interest in further interest in local issues.

I offer these interview data excerpts to suggest how our Local History class succeeded in enhancing many students’ relationships with their classroom, school, and surrounding communities. At the same time, it is important that I recognize the longstanding relationships between the surrounding communities and the school in terms of how students might otherwise developed their attitudes and values related to community. Because ours was a rural school district, many of the Local History students knew one another and had been in the same classes together since kindergarten. Moreover, many students were related to each other, or had families who were friends with other students’ families. These factors probably played some role in the development of students’ sense of community. Nonetheless, my data suggest that the Local History course did have some influence on students’ relationships with their communities through the study of place and the pedagogical activities associated with this course.
POST II Results

For purposes of ascertaining the extent to which students’ civic engagement efforts might have been impacted by the Local History course, I sought out the original 31 students from my 4\textsuperscript{th} period class in March of 2008. I wanted to have them complete a slightly different version of my PRE – and POST I – course action research survey to see how what they were doing now compared with what they looked forward to doing 14 months earlier in terms of civic activities. Over a two day span, I went back to Hugeville High School and administered this POST II - course survey to 17 students who were now seniors in high school. I was also able to locate and gather survey responses from all seven students from the original Seniors group. In all, I gathered data from 24 of the original students.

The two variables that stand out in this third survey are again Post-High School and Grade level, and the two most notable groups due to their lowest and highest median scores are, again, PHS/O and Seniors, respectively. (See Figure 4 - 16)

- The lowest group, PHS/O, had a POST II survey range of 24 - 42 with a median score of 31. Overall survey scores for the PHS/O group had actually risen from their end-of-class scores (most group scores declined slightly).

- The Seniors again registered the strongest median score, although, like most other groups, this was a slight decrease from their end-of-class median score.
Figure 4 - POST II-course survey lowest and highest group median scores

Of note, the two lowest scoring groups across all three surveys, Males and PHS/O were the only groups among the eight to post median score gains in both the January 2007 and March 2008 surveys.

To the extent that these survey results can be seen as suggestive, Sally’s civic mindedness grew during the course. She posted a 14 point increase across the three data sets. Blaine’s survey numbers rose from the beginning to the end of class, and were even higher 14 months later, although he remained among the lowest scoring students on all three surveys.

According to the numbers, Tyler and Matt changed little across the study. Despite an increase in their median score across all three surveys, both consistently scored near the bottom in relation to the entire class median results, suggesting little progress in their sense of civic mindedness.
Capturing Civic Engagement

One data sub-set designed specifically to measure civic engagement was Section IV on the surveys. (Note: Items 17 – 36 on the POST II instrument [see Appendix D] were created to match items 26 – 45 on the PRE and POST I instruments [see Appendix A], and each item was scored a “0” [did not answer] or “1” [did answer]. Although each section contained 20 items, I later decided not to use three of these items in my analysis. As a result, each of these data sets includes a possible range of 0 – 17, and a possible median score of 8.5).

The language of Section IV in the PRE and POST I – course surveys differs importantly from the POST II - course survey in that the PRE and POST I surveys were designed to gauge students’ intentions to become civically engaged in the future, whereas Section IV of the POST II document sought to capture the actuality of civic engagement in the present. Said differently, while questions in the PRE and POST I such as “I can imagine myself participating in the following activities after high school” asked students to speculate, the same POST II questions asked whether or not students had actually participated in any of these activities over the past 14 months. As much as I wanted the Local History class to impact students’ civic mindedness and appreciation for local history, what I really hoped was that they would become more responsible, educated citizens through their activities in the community.

Many of the questions in Section IV were designed specifically to address students’ involvement in their local community. During our Local History class, students were encouraged to learn or study outside of the classroom, upholding the long standing goal of a democratic education process to have all members of the community involved in processes that help to build a stronger educational system that serves all children in the community. Other questions in Section IV were created to represent ways that students could learn to function effectively as citizens, understanding and valuing the roles, rights, and responsibilities that active citizens must
play. It was my hope that the Local History class supported the primary mission of schools to enhance the commitment to the basic ideas of democracy by bringing civic education to young people.

Table 4 - 4: Class results across data collection points measuring Section IV responses

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sub Group</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Variance</th>
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<th>Variance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>High</td>
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<td>12.5</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 – 18 years</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Movement between the PRE and POST I Section IV sections make it clear that students’ levels of intentions regarding civic engagement grew noticeably - from an average score of 7.5 to 11.5 (see Table 4 - 4).

The slight class drop in median score from 11.5 to 11 between the POST I - to the POST II - course surveys suggests that as a class, the students seemed to be about as engaged in March
2008 as they had hoped to be in January 2007. The students – whether seniors in high school, freshmen in college, or participating members of the workforce - were just about as active in their respective communities as they had hoped to be more than a year earlier.

This effort to determine subsequent civic engagement proved especially interesting with respect to the original PHS/O group members. Sally, the lone senior and PHS/O student, continued to post the top score (14) in the PHS/O group (see Table 4 - 6). Matt, Blaine, and Tyler posted gains of three and four points, respectively, in their median scores between the POST I and POST II Section IV survey results (see Table 4 - 5). This increase implies that the majority of the PHS/O members were more engaged in March 2008 fourteen months after the Local History class was over.

Table 4 - 5: PHS/O member scores across all surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST I</th>
<th>POST II</th>
<th>POSTI-POST II Gain</th>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Blaine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
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### Table 4-6: Student results across all surveys Section IV

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<th>Raw Score</th>
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<td>.5</td>
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<tr>
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</table>
Definitions of Community

The PRE -, POST I -, and POST II – course surveys do little to shed light on what I felt to be one of the most important results of this study – the personal relationships that students developed with their communities. A community is defined by the relationships formed between and among people. As noted in Chapter 2, a community can be based on place, experiences, family units, groups of friends, or educational setting (Bender, 1978). McMillan and Chavis (1986) define sense of community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment together” (p.2). Below, I address the extent to which the Local History course appears to have impacted students’ sense of “community” based upon their definitions of the term.

These data stem from a single item found on each of the three course surveys that asked: “How do you define community?” I asked this same question to students during their post-course interviews. Of the 24 students, all but six definitions of community (responses in students own words), are given across all four data collection points. These definitions indicate that across time (19 months), many students’ definitions of community had become somewhat more elaborate (see Appendix H). My basic codes for the 24 student responses used three colors: Green denotes a rather simplistic definition of community as a place; Blue suggests a more elaborate definition connecting place with people; and Red represents an even more sophisticated definition that includes a place in which people work together. I analyzed these data by laying out all student definitions of community, color coding these responses, and creating a chart with student definitions of community over four episodic points, grouping them at the pre-course collection point by colors (eight red responses, 13 blue responses, and three green responses). Later, I added a fourth color category (purple) representing a newer more elaborate definition of
community that involved people working together for a common purpose. After careful review, I decided to employ italics to signify that a student recognized that a community is understood in multiple ways (class, school, communities at large).

Appendix H shows that by the end of the course nearly two-thirds of the students’ characterizations of community had became somewhat more elaborate (i.e., shifted color from green to blue or blue to red or purple). With one exception, the eight students whose pre-course definitions were coded red (people working together) maintained these understandings across the following three data collection points. [Note: Several of these student responses were coded purple and/or italics as well.]

This pattern of consistently elaborate definitions was not as strong among the remaining 16 students, a number of whose post-course definitions appeared less elaborate across the remaining two collection points (interview and POST II – course survey). In other words, their understanding moved from blue to red or purple by the end of the course but dropped back to blue at one or both of the remaining data points. At the same time, six of these 16 students offered definitions of community that were sufficiently insightful to receive either purple or italics code across time.

We see an example of this with Blaine, who began the course with a common understanding of community (people sharing living space). At the end of the course Blaine added that in a community, these people “help each other” – an addition that earned his definition a red code. During his interview, however, the “helping” aspect disappears, so his color code reverts to its original blue (and remains blue for his POST II – course response). However what Blaine does in his interview definition is give three different examples of “community” – thus earning an italics code.

Like Blaine, Sally’s end-of-course definition is much more sophisticated than her original, earning her a purple code because of her mention of both people helping each other and “shares
common interest.” Of note is that Sally is one of only seven students (among the 24) who speaks of “common interest” when defining community – a notion that seems linked to the recently completed course, since she does not return to it (or to the idea of “helping each other”) again in the following data points.

Like Sally and Blain, Tyler’s definition of community became more personable and purposeful between the beginning and end of the course. This red coded understanding of people working together and helping each other remains in place from then on. In the POST II – course survey, Tyler and Pam (the fifth PHS/O group member), are the only two students that define community as “civic engagement.” This response was coded red based on their previous understanding of community as people working together.

Matt differs from his PHS/O group members when it comes to these data because he is among the eight students (of 24) whose initial or pre-course definitions of community included people who worked together. He remained consistent in this understanding across the 19 – month span these data represent.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter of my action research study represents the fourth stage of intervention: “reflect upon and change.” I also identify potential limitations of the study and recommendations for future research and professional actions. I begin, below, with the various action research interventions I pursued.

Identify Questions or Problems

In order to holistically investigate whether and how students become more ‘civic’ through the study of local history, I revisited my research questions that guided this study. These questions were:

1. What were the key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced the initial design of a local history course that was intended to promote civic engagement and civic mindedness on the part of high school students?
2. As the Local History course unfolded, what events and activities were perceived by the student and the teacher as being the most powerful in impacting their ‘civic’ thinking and beliefs?
3. What evidence, if any, suggests that the Local History course actually influenced students to develop greater civic mindedness or become more civically engaged?
Develop a Plan of Action

The summer prior to teaching Local History for what turned out to be my last semester, I revised my syllabus to highlight instructional strategies that reflected a place-based pedagogy with the greater goals of enhanced civic mindedness and engagement. My first task involved detailing the key content and pedagogical concepts that influenced the initial design of the course. After researching the literature on pedagogy of place and the use of community-based constructivist philosophy to promote civic mindedness and civic engagement on the part of high school students, I refocused my course goals to include civic mindedness and engagement and paid particular attention to specific pedagogical activities that were more likely to aid students in gaining an appreciation and better understanding of the local community. I set out to teach the 2006-2007 Local History course with these goals and activities in mind.

Enact and Observe

This section will serve as a review of the findings reported in Chapter 4 with respect to the 4th period Local History course. During the semester, course and teacher artifacts, as well as survey and interview data provided evidence supporting specific events and activities as being important in impacting “civic” thinking and beliefs, through: classroom community; guest speakers; field trips; and the oral history project. I use assertions to organize this review.

Assertion #1: The classroom became a meaningful and supportive community

My data indicate that many students who might not otherwise have done so became active and welcome members of our classroom community. This is evident in Rhonda’s
acceptance by her classmates and Sean’s eventual comfort level with the entire class. Additional
evidence is found in tales about Char and Sally’s eventual participation in Monday discussions,
Robbie’s sharing his feelings about being a minority at HHS, Matt’s participation during whole
class discussions, and our “Local Events” bulletin board filling with upcoming events throughout
the course.

Students also demonstrated this sense of community through their involvement in
classroom activities (discussion, students sharing the importance of learning from each other, and
interacting with guest speakers). The strongest data supporting this assertion come from the
mouths of students: “We had our own separate bond in this class compared to other classes. I am
sure other classes have their own bonds, but we [the 4th period class] formed a bond that was
different from other classes;” and “I liked this class better than most because I got to meet and
become friends with people that I would not have normally engaged with outside of school.”

Assertion #2: Students developed a more elaborate sense of community

Students developed a larger sense of community (especially, multiple communities) as a
result of the Local History class. Several forms of data support this assertion: Tyler’s presentation
on Biddle Road resulting in the open interaction following it; Megan and Kyle touring homes on
the Underground Railroad on a Saturday; students’ realization of Luke’s dedication to the fire
company and the sense of community that the firefighters had at the station; Justin inviting his
football coach to his project presentation; many students (including three of the five PHS/O
members) providing more elaborate definitions of community following the conclusion of the
course; and numerous statements from students’ interviews such as: “A community involves
everyone helping everyone else out,” and “A lot of us are involved in the community, or in school events, or play sports, or attend sporting events.”

**Assertion #3: Students expressed a willingness to become civically engaged**

Various forms of data provide evidence suggesting that the Local History course influenced students’ desire to become more civically engaged. Examples from my research include: Students presenting their final projects to the East Lysock Historical Society; one student and parent chaperone joining the Minci Historical Society and another student joining the volunteer fire company; students deciding to write guest speaker thank you notes; and students imagining they could restore the Newman School. Results of the POST II – course survey Section IV, designed to register Local History students’ actual activities long after the course, reveal that a large number of students had become involved in civic life, supporting their intentions to do so in previous surveys.

**Assertion #4: Students in the Post-High School Others (PHS/O) group changed**

As my narrative in Chapter 4 suggests, course activities, particularly the oral history projects, guest speakers, and field trips, appeared to promote greater levels of civic mindedness and engagement amongst four featured students in the PHS/O group. This group of students, although small in numbers, posted the lowest group median scores across all three surveys. Nonetheless, after analyzing four of the five members’ data, interesting claims can be made about their enhanced sense of civic mindedness and eventual engagement.
Sally

As the lone senior PHS/O group member, Sally’s data show that she became part of the class community, had positive experiences with guest speakers, and actively participated in field trips. Over the semester, Sally’s grades fluctuated in terms of her test and quiz scores, yet her participation and authentic assessment scores remained strong throughout. It was in her interview that Sally really opened up, confirming my suspicions that she had grown in her sense of civic mindedness and engagement. “Through class discussions, guest speakers, and field trips, I was encouraged to become involved in the community and learned the importance of preserving our area. … by visiting the places that we were learning about in class and interviewing the people who grew up during this time period, I wanted to become more involved in the community.” Sally’s POST II, Section IV survey results suggest that she had done so: Fourteen months after the class ended, she was attending town meetings and supporting local merchants, and patronizing the local library.

Matt

The Local History course helped make each of the students new to the school more comfortable. Matt, for example, wanted to belong to a community of learners. Matt’s definitional, interview, and narrative data suggest that he experienced success with the course in terms of his appreciation for the class and local communities. During his post – class interview, Matt shared that the Local History class was “fun, especially since I am not from around here and we got to go and visit many of the places we were talking about in class. Matt posted engagement gains between the POST I and POST II – Section IV survey results. I attribute this
increase in his civic engagement from intentions to actions to Matt’s learning the value of engagement for the sustainability of a community.

Tyler

In addition to his being a PHS/O, Tyler was one of a small group of low scoring students across all three surveys. Similarities shared among this group include below average academic grades, minimal effort in class, family ties to the community, and post high – school plans that do not include attending college. Together, these characteristics set Tyler apart from most students in the Local History class and in the school-wide community. For Tyler, however, Local History seemed much like the vo- tech classes he took as part of his enrollment in the Career and Technical Center (CTC) program. Tyler was not a strong test taker or writer; his lowest grades in the course resulted from the research essay assignment and unit test scores.

My data suggests that the Local History class enabled Tyler to recognize that many of the folks who helped to build and sustain the larger community were a lot like him - hard working people who made something of themselves and their community without excelling in high school or getting an advanced degree. In his PRE course survey Tyler defined community as “the people around you who you work with.” In his post –course interview, Tyler saw things differently: “Learning how to be part of the community was one of the greatest impacts the class had on me. Before, it [our community] was just basically a town that everyone lives in, but when I learned about the history of it and how far it has come in just a couple of decades, I learned how much people play a role in the community. I understand my community role better now.”
Blaine

Blaine, like Tyler, put little effort into school work and activities, was not planning to attend college after graduation, and had deep family roots in the ELSD community. Blaine was a strong quiz and test taker; his low performance grades came from his routine lack of effort on his homework and the research paper due at the end of the first nine weeks. His noticeable increase of 12 points between the POST I and POST II surveys sets Blaine apart from others.

Despite his lack of effort in class, Blaine was positive during his post – course interview: “In the oral history, I got to see other people’s viewpoints and it helped me to better understand [the past] by having someone who was actually there to talk about it.” Even more surprising, in light of his lack of work on the final project, was his comment that one of his class highlights was “the walking field trips and the fact that I got to learn from everyone else’s topic about the way it was back in the day.” From conversations during our time in class, I learned that Blaine enjoyed the study of history, especially our local community history – but not enough for him to pursue and complete his final project well.

I doubt that this class had much of an effect on Blaine in terms of his civic engagement and mindedness. Through his active volunteerism at the fire company, serving the needs of others, Local History seems to have been little more than a social studies elective course for Blaine.

Reflect Upon and Change

With the study well behind me and the Local History course that I created and taught for so many years in someone else’s hands, I offer the following reflections and recommendations.
Study limitations

This study has several limitations. My life history as a doctoral student has produced its own limitations. Full-time teaching, considerable travel distance to the university, and family/civic responsibilities meant that I was not a typical graduate student working on her Ph.D. All of these factors, plus a career change mid-way through my doctoral program, led to inevitable shortcomings in this research. Aside from my year in residence at the university, I could not commit the time that many of my full-time doctoral student friends and peers gave to reading, attending academic roundtable discussions with other graduate students, and the like. While family priorities, including a husband and three active children, kept me busy, their support was phenomenal.

As I acknowledged in Chapter 4, the survey instrument I used to gauge civic mindedness and civic engagement was weak. Actually, my original research intentions were to study how civic engagement might prompt new and creative explorations of social capital, and how the role of public schools promotes civic engagement through the study of local history. Therefore, when I developed the survey and basic interview questions, I was thinking of the role that community and social capital played in students’ lives. Later, my research focus changed to include whether and how the Local History course influenced students’ consciousness of place along with their stronger awareness of (mindedness) and eventual participation in (engagement) civic life. These conceptual changes altered the way in which I could use meaningfully my original data collected from the surveys and interview questions. In short, I had to determine legitimate ways in which my original plans for an intervention study could be translated into an action research study that relied upon a variety of different data sets to examine how the Local History class influenced students’ civic awareness and involvement.
In a study like this, credibility comes in large part from feedback received from the study’s participants. Due to the circumstances in which I conducted this action research study (in particular, the amount of time that passed between teaching the course and writing this dissertation), the opportunity did not present itself for participants to check my work. By the end of the school year, I had resigned my job within the district and taken a position in teacher education at a near-by college. Furthermore, I did not seriously begin to analyze my action research data until more than two years after the Local History course ended. By the time I arrived at this particular stage of my work (July, 2009), the students in our 4th period Local History class had moved on.

Interviewer naïveté proved to be another limitation to this study. Although I had a genuine interest in learning more about how our Local History course had served its goals, I recognize now that I should have talked less, listened more, and posed questions that were far more open-ended in nature. In retrospect, I see that I should have asked for more detail, explored particular word use, and above all, avoided leading questions.

A related limitation is the extent to which the course goals (enhanced civic mindedness and civic engagement) were adequately defined to permit me to “see” evidence of them – especially within this context. The ELSD serves a small, rural area where many families know each other and where many students entered the course already exhibiting ‘civic’ virtues. This leaves me wondering whether a study like this would play out differently in an entirely different region or school district.

Similarly, I had to keep in mind that I was both the teacher and the researcher in this study. Since I designed and taught the course (and had taught the course for seven years), the personal connection I had with the students and the curriculum, as well as my desire to see the course and the study succeed, is certainly a limitation. Although I was careful to recognize bias and to make claims only when data seemed clear and sufficient, I maintained an overarching
desire to see positive results from this study. This personal investment perspective leads me to wonder what another researcher, with no preconceived notions or prior history with the class might have learned.

**Recommendations**

Having a curriculum that encourages civic awareness using multiple processes through which students acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for democratic participation is vital to our American way of life. However, public high schools have become less attentive to their civic purpose of educating our young people about their rights and responsibilities as American citizens. Therefore, as a result of this study, I would like to see more high schools across the United States offer courses based on the pedagogy of place as a vehicle to enhance student civic awareness and engagement. I have provided rich descriptions of course content, curricular goals, and objectives related to pedagogy of place in the hopes that others might use this with applying these same concepts of a constructivist philosophy of education in other contexts to educate students about their responsibilities as American citizens.

Secondly, I would like the East Lysock School District to continue offering the Local History course as a social studies elective at Hugeville High School. As my narrative suggests, course activities - particularly the oral history projects, guest speakers, and field trips - promote greater levels of civic mindedness and engagement among many students should remain an integral part of the curriculum.

Finally, I recommend that all social studies teachers adopt a constructivist philosophy of pedagogy. It is essential for a classroom to be a true community of learners in which all voices are heard. The best way for students to become active learners is through student choice and
control of their learning, supported by a facilitating teacher encouraging students to question, interpret, and analyze information.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

PRE - and POST I -course survey questions

Local History Fall 2007
I. Background Information
   1. Number of years you have lived in the East Lysock School District?_______
   2. Number of years you have attended Hugeville High School?___________
   3. Plans after graduation (please check only one):
      ______attend college/university
      ______join military
      ______attend trade or professional school
      ______go to work
      ______other (please explain)

   4. Male_______ Female_______

   5. How do you define community?

   6. How do you define community service?

   7. Do you think community service should be a mandatory requirement in high school? If yes, please explain why.

   8. How do you define civic engagement?
II. In the following section, place an ‘X’ to acknowledge your participation in each area that applies.

While in junior or senior high school (grades 7-12), did you participate in any of the following?

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<th>During extracurricular activities</th>
<th>On your own time</th>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Any public speaking, demonstration, show and tell, or presentation type activity?</td>
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<td>Meeting and/or interacting with elected officials?</td>
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<td>Officer training or some type program which focused on planning and/or conducting a meeting?</td>
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<td>Event that focused on the roles and responsibilities of a citizen, such as a trip to the State capitol or Washington, DC?</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Community service activities?</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Helped plan or organize fundraising efforts?</td>
<td>_______</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Teaching or mentoring younger people.</td>
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III. In the following section, circle the most appropriate answer.

During your high school years, how often have you:

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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Participated in sports teams?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Participated in clubs?</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Participated in the school?</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>
19. Participated in the band? 1 2 3
20. Participated in chorus? 1 2 3
21. Attended the local library? 1 2 3
22. Participated in a Volunteer Fire Company? 1 2 3
23. Participated in social or cultural organizations outside of high school? (Scouts, 4-H, Civil Air Patrol, dance groups, Library groups) 1 2 3
24. Helped organize or conduct neighborhood or community events (e.g., carnivals, historical society events) 1 2 3
25. Participated in political organizations? 1 2 3

IV. Please check all responses that might interest you.

I can imagine myself participating in the following activities after high school.

26. ______ Registering to vote and actually voting
27. ______ Involved with Kiwanis, Elk, Rotary, Mason’s, Moose, American Legion, Brownies, or Girl/Boy Scouts
28. ______ Active in local historical societies
29. ______ Collecting oral histories from older town residents or family members
30. ______ Attending town meetings
31. ______ Supporting local merchants
32. ______ Joining a group to clean up a local park or cemetery
33. ______ Joining the Volunteer Fire Department
34. ______ Attending your local library
35. ______ Involved in an adult sports club or league, or other outdoor activity
36. ______ Organizing or participating in a sports league
37. ______ Attending your children’s athletic events, plays, and recitals
38. ______ Being active in your children’s events…e.g., working the concession stand, volunteering to coach, being a team mom, volunteering to bring snacks
39. ______ Being active in your child’s school (in their classroom, field trip chaperones)
40. ______ Saying thanks for public servants – police, firefighters, borough workers
41. ______ Going to a local folk or crafts festival
42. ______ Volunteering to help within your neighborhood (watch homes while away, rake and/or shovel a neighbor’s yard/sidewalk
43. ______ Giving to your local food band and/or other charitable organizations
44. ______ Attending Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and other memorable parades
45. ______ Joining groups (e.g., arts, sports, religion) likely to make new friends of different race or ethnicity, different social class, or across other dimensions.
Appendix B

Interview Questions for Local History students

1. Talk to me about the local history course.

2. Tell me 2 – 3 things about the class that really sticks out in your mind.

3. Looking back at the class, what experience had the greatest impact (in terms of you wanting to be a part of the local community)?

4. We talked a lot in the class about becoming involved in the community. Do you think it is your civic responsibility to be active in your community?

5. What does civic engagement mean to you?

6. What does the word community mean to you?

7. Did the local history course effect your beliefs in community?

8. Did the study and research associated with the oral histories encourage you to participate in community events? If so, how was this true?
Appendix C

Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Amy M. Rogers  James Nolan, Ph.D.  J. Dan Marshall, Ph.D.
482 Linvic Drive  204G Rackley Bldg  204E Rackley Bldg
Muncy, Pa  17756  University Park, Pa  16802  University Park, PA
ams340@psu.edu  jinnolan@psu.edu  jdm13@psu.edu
570-321-4312 (w)  814-865-2243  814-865-2239

Dear Local History students,

As you may remember, I am currently studying and researching the effects of a Local History class. As part of the last piece of my research, I am asking for your assistance once more by answering a questionnaire that is very similar to the one that you completed last year as a student in the Local History class.

The study of local history first started as an area of interest to me with an understanding of its importance to the student, the communities of our school district, and the Hugeville High School community. I am asking that you participate in my study for the greater understanding of the impact of a local history course on both the students and the community. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. As a participant, you can stop at any time or choose not to answer certain questions on the questionnaire.

In all written materials and oral presentations in which I use material from the questionnaires, I will not identify participants. Besides using this material for my dissertation studies, I may use the material as part of any of the following: a) journal articles; b) presentations to professional groups; c) instructional formats; or d) a book. If I wish to use the material in any other way, I will ask you for additional written consent.

If you are under 18, I will need you to take this paper home to be signed by your parents prior to any research occurring in the classroom. I am giving you two copies of the consent form, one for you to keep and one for your parents and/or guardians to sign and return to me. Please keep your form for your records or future reference. For those of you over 18 years of age, your signature below will be sufficient.

If you or your parents/guardians have any questions about this research study, you can contact me at the number above. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or general questions about research, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections at (814) 865-1775. You may also call Drs. Nolan or Marshall (see above) if you prefer.
Once again, thank you for your time and consideration in participating in my research. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Warmest regards,

Amy M. Rogers  
Ph.D. Candidate  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Instructor of Education  
Lysock College

__________________________________  ________________________________
Your name (please print)  Your signature  Date

__________________________________  ________________________________
Parent/Guardian Name (please print)  Signature  Date

__________________________________  ________________________________
Amy M. Rogers  Date
Appendix D

POST II - course survey questions

I. Background Information

1. How do you define community?

2. How do you define community service?

3. How do you define civic engagement?

II. In the following section, place an ‘X’ to acknowledge your participation in each area that applies.

During the last 12 months, did you participate in any of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>In the classroom</th>
<th>During extra-curricular activities</th>
<th>On your own time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Any public speaking, demonstration, show and tell, or presentation type activity?</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Meeting and/or interacting with elected officials?</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Officer training or some type program which focused on planning and/or conducting a meeting?</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Community service activities?</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Helped plan or organize fundraising efforts?</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### III  In the following section, circle the most appropriate answer.

**During the last 12 months, how often have you:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Participated in sports teams?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Participated in clubs?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Participated in the band?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Participated in chorus?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Participated in a Volunteer Fire Company?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Participated in social or cultural organizations outside of high school?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Helped organize or conduct neighborhood or community events (e.g., carnivals, historical society events)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Participated in political organizations?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. Please check all responses that pertain to you.

**During the last 12 months, have you participated in any of the following activities?**

- 17. ______Registered to vote
- 18. ______Voted in an election
- 19. ______Active in local historical societies
20. _____ Collected oral histories from older town residents or family members
21. _____ Attended a town meeting
22. _____ Supported local merchants
23. _____ Joined a group to clean up a local park or cemetery
24. _____ Joined the Volunteer Fire Department
25. _____ Attended your local library
26. _____ Involved in an adult sports club or league, or other outdoor activity
27. _____ Organized or participated in a sports league
28. _____ Attended your high schools or alma mater’s athletic events, plays, or concerts.
29. _____ Active in children’s events…e.g., worked a concession stand, volunteered to coach or help out at an event
30. _____ Involved with Kiwanis, Elk, Rotary, Mason’s, Moose, American Legion, Brownies, or Girl/Boy Scouts
31. _____ Thanked a public servants – police, firefighter, borough workers
32. _____ Went to a local folk or crafts festival
33. _____ Volunteered to help within your neighborhood (watch homes while away, Raked and/or shoveled a neighbor’s yard/sidewalk)
34. _____ Gave to your local food band and/or other charitable organizations
35. _____ Attended Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and other memorable parades
36. _____ Joined groups (e.g., arts, sports, religion) likely to make new friends of different race or ethnicity, different social class, or bridging across other dimensions

Thank you for your participation in my research study. If you are comfortable, please print your name below.

Name: ____________________________________________
Appendix E

Local History - Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify the core roles, rights, and responsibilities of individual citizens
- Identify key historical periods, episodes, cases, themes, and experiences of individual groups in U.S. history
- Locate and identify the physical features, as well as the counties of Pennsylvania on an outline map
- Give a brief overview of the following areas in relation to state history:
  - Identify and explain the importance of the various Native American tribes in Pennsylvania prior to European exploration
  - Explain the history of the founding of Pennsylvania
  - Identify major events in the history of Pennsylvania, date them, and explain their significance
  - Explain the structures, processes, and functions of government of Pa, particularly local government
  - Summarize the powers of the branches of government
- Compare and contrast our lifestyles of today with those of the past
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the past and discuss the positive and negative effects of these years
- Explain how the Land, the River, and the People influenced the history of Lysock County
- Locate and identify the municipalities of Lysock County
- Discuss the importance of Williamsport, at one time, The Greatest Lumber Center in the United States
- Describe the history of Hugeville, including when and how our area was developed.
- Provide an understanding of the vast number of businesses and industries that were once associated with the borough of Hugeville
- Explain the development of the East Lysock School District, including the early inhabitants and their historical importance.
 Discuss the development of the public education system and attending a one-room schoolhouse

 Provide an understanding of the brief history of each of the seven townships of the East Lysock School District and the municipalities located within each

 Describe and evaluate the effects of World War II on our local community

 Be able to demonstrate the history of our community through oral history projects

 State the purpose and procedure of an oral history

 Discuss the social and cultural awareness of oral history experiences

 Predict the needs of the community

 Provide suggestions and plans for improvement for the community

 Interpret changes in 20th Century social life in your community

 Analyze, interpret, and conduct research using oral history

 Gain further understanding of course content through service learning activities

 Develop critical thinking skills through service learning activities

 Develop an enhanced sense of civic responsibility

 Develop citizenship skills through service learning
Appendix F

Course Description and Requirements

Local History
1st Semester
Hugeville High School
2006–2007 School Year

1. Course Description

This course studies the physical, historical, political and cultural geography of the East Lysock School District. Highlights in Pennsylvania history, Lysock County, and surrounding communities are also studied. Discussions include the history of the Williamsport and North Branch Railroad, the Development of the Public School System, The Country General Store, the Rural Grist Mill, and the Underground Railroad. Through pedagogical activities, students will be exposed to service learning activities directly connected to the community, as well as complete a major project in this class, which accounts for the Final in the class. This Oral History Project includes going out into the community and ‘adopting’ a person over 65 years ‘young’ or selecting a local topic or site and researching the history of this site.

2. Goals of Instruction

Instruction is aimed at: 1) teaching students the core roles, rights, and responsibilities of individual citizens 2) providing students with an understanding and appreciation of the history of the East Lysock School District and its surrounding communities 3) comparing and contrasting the lifestyles of today with those of past years 4) allowing students to develop a relationship with older members of our community 5) locating and identifying the physical features, as well as the history and government of the state of Pennsylvania 6) studying current events in our local and state communities 7) allowing students opportunity for discovering changes close at hand and relate history through their own families 8) providing meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.

3. Teaching Methods:

Teacher generated lectures, outlines, primary documents, videos, the Internet, hands on activities, student based research projects, reading assignments and various literature selections are used in this course. Power point presentations, slide shows, walking field trips, guest speakers, photos and illustrations are also utilized. Students will be actively participating in classroom activities that are directly connected with helping our surrounding community. Students are expected to take any notes given on the overhead
or through lectures and guest speakers. Please keep your notebook clean and organized. I will be giving you MANY loose sheets of paper. Just remember to place these sheets in your notebook, not on my floor or in the trash can.

4. Grading Procedure

A cumulative point system will be used to determine the marking period grade. The total number of points you have earned will be divided by the total number of points possible. Grades are taken from quizzes, tests, essays, guest speaker reviews, homework, and material brought to class. Other activities may be included.

5. Make-up Work and Homework Policy

Students will be allowed one day to make up work for each day of excused absence. Make-ups will not be allowed for un-excused absences. It is the student’s responsibility to check for work missed during an absence. All assignments will be posted on a calendar or assignment board in the classroom. Points are deducted for each day that a regular assignment is turned in late. Every effort will be made to schedule Local History tests in order to avoid having more than two major tests on the same day. Advance notice will be given for all exams in this course.

6. Standards Addressed in Class:

   Civics and Government 5.1, 5.2, 5.3
   Geography 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4
   History 8.1, 8.2, 8.3
Appendix G

Selected students course marks

Sally’s performance in class:

Sally: 1st 9 weeks – 82%  9 absences  3 additional days for PSSA review

25/25  Pa map - short answer and fill in a blank map of Pa, focusing on Lysock County
7/7  oral discussion of walking purchase - authentic assessment – importance of this to our local history
62/70  PA Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
44/60  Local Native American Test – read and answer comprehension questions, short answer, essay questions, graphic organizer
15/15  Where Wigwam’s Stood Article Review - constructed response to article and response to Guest Speaker, author of the book, Where Wigwam’s Stood
5/10  Pioneer Article: Lysock county – constructed response to article (from Where Wigwam’s Stood)
20/20  Writing: the Big Runaway – Reaction to Guest Speaker
15/15  Rough Draft of writing on Local Settlement - 5 paragraph essay (PSSA style) on forts Lysock County
5/5  Early Settlement – cooperative learning activity in class
5/5  In class work group work and discussion – Early Settlement of Lysock County
37/50  Early Settlement Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
75/100  Early Settlement Research Paper (forts, Great Runaway) local communities – Using Interdisciplinary English Assignment - Research Paper as mandated as part of the Social Studies curriculum

2nd 9 weeks – 87%  7 absences

10/10  Lumber outline – from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
16/20  Lumber Quiz - from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
10/10  Article review on Lysock County – constructed response (PSSA prep)
51/87  Williamsport Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
5/5  Underground Railroad – website searches and report back to class
5/5  3-2-1 Williamsport Information – comprehension strategy for Williamsport info
32/34  Underground Railroad – quiz on Underground Railroad class discussion, guest speakers, website reviews, class notes
15/15  Interview Update: first set of questions; students develop a set of research questions To be administered to their interviewee; practice interviews in class with partner
5/5  Graphic organizer of final project with all information gathered to date
30/30  Hugeville Quiz – identify pictures and discuss orally
20/20  Written quiz of Hugeville
29/32  W & NB quiz – information from guest speaker, class notes and discussion
5/5    Map of ELSD – locate the 7 townships and surrounding villages of the ELSD
53/60  Hugeville Test
15/20  Townships of the ELSD quiz
60/60  10 points each: 6 reactions and write-ups of their peers’ final presentations

Final Project: 92%
Final Grade for the class: 86%
Matt’s performance in class:

Michael: 1st 9 weeks – 84% 0 absences

26/25 Pa map - short answer and fill in a blank map of Pa, focusing on Lysock County
7/7 oral discussion of walking purchase - authentic assessment – importance of this to our local history
67/70 PA Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
32/60 Local Native American Test – read and answer comprehension questions, short answer, essay questions, graphic organizer
15/15 Where Wigwam’s Stood Article Review - constructed response to article and response to Guest Speaker, author of the book, Where Wigwam’s Stood
10/10 Pioneer Article: Lysock county – constructed response to article (from Where Wigwam’s Stood)
18/20 Writing: the Big Runaway – Reaction to Guest Speaker
0/15 Rough Draft of writing on Local Settlement - 5 paragraph essay (PSSA style) on forts Lysock County
5/5 Early Settlement – cooperative learning activity in class
5/5 In class work group work and discussion – Early Settlement of Lysock County
43/50 Early Settlement Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
93/100 Early Settlement Research Paper (forts, Great Runaway) local communities – Using Interdisciplinary English Assignment - Research Paper as mandated as part of the Social Studies curriculum

2nd 9 weeks – 76% 0 absences

0/10 Lumber outline – from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
14/20 Lumber Quiz - from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
10/10 Article review on Lysock County – constructed response (PSSA prep)
59/87 Williamsport Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
0/5 Underground Railroad – website searches and report back to class
5/5 3-2-1 Williamsport Information – comprehension strategy for Williamsport info
24/34 Underground Railroad – quiz on Underground Railroad class discussion, guest speakers, website reviews, class notes
15/15 Interview Update: first set of questions; students develop a set of research questions To be administered to their interviewee; practice interviews in class with partner
5/5 Graphic organizer of final project with all information gathered to date
25/30 Hugeville Quiz – identify pictures and discuss orally
15/20 Written quiz of Hugeville
27/32 W & NB quiz – information from guest speaker, class notes and discussion
5/5 Map of ELSD – locate the 7 townships and surrounding villages of the ELSD
33/60 Hugeville Test
20/20 Townships of the ELSD quiz
60/60 10 points each: 6 reactions and write –ups of their peers’ final presentations

Final Project: 75%
Final Grade for the class: 79%
Tyler’ performance in class:

Tyler: 1st 9 weeks – 75%  3 absences

25/25  Pa map - short answer and fill in a blank map of Pa, focusing on Lysock County
7/7  oral discussion of walking purchase - authentic assessment – importance of this to our local history
56/70  PA Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
42/60  Local Native American Test – read and answer comprehension questions, short answer, essay questions, graphic organizer
15/15  Where Wigwam’s Stood Article Review - constructed response to article and response to Guest Speaker, author of the book, Where Wigwam’s Stood
10/10  Pioneer Article: Lysock county – constructed response to article (from Where Wigwam’s Stood
17/20  Writing: the Big Runaway – Reaction to Guest Speaker
0/15  Rough Draft of writing on Local Settlement - 5 paragraph essay (PSSA style) on forts Lysock County
3/5  Early Settlement – cooperative learning activity in class
5/5  In class work group work and discussion – Early Settlement of Lysock County
29/50  Early Settlement Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
72/100  Early Settlement Research Paper (forts, Great Runaway) local communities
    Using Interdisciplinary English Assignment - Research Paper as mandated as part of the Social Studies curriculum
2nd 9 weeks – 80%  6 absences

0/10  Lumber outline – from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
18/20  Lumber Quiz - from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
10/10  Article review on Lysock County – constructed response (PSSA prep)
64/87  Williamsport Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
5/5  Underground Railroad – website searches and report back to class
5/5  3-2-1 Williamsport Information – comprehension strategy for Williamsport info
30/34  Underground Railroad – quiz on Underground Railroad class discussion, guest speakers, website reviews, class notes
15/15  Interview Update: first set of questions; students develop a set of research questions to be administered to their interviewee; practice interviews in class with partner
5/5  Graphic organizer of final project with all information gathered to date
24/30  Hugeville Quiz – identify pictures and discuss orally
15/20  Written quiz of Hugeville
23/32  W & NB quiz – information from guest speaker, class notes and discussion
5/5  Map of ELSD – locate the 7 townships and surrounding villages of the ELSD
30/60  Hugeville Test
15/20  Townships of the ELSD quiz
60/60  10 points each: 6 reactions and write –ups of their peer’s final presentations

Final Project: 81%
Final Grade for the class: 78%
Blaine’s performance in class:

Blaine: 1st 9 weeks – 84% 1 absence

24/25 Pa map - short answer and fill in a blank map of Pa, focusing on Lysock County
7/7 oral discussion of walking purchase - authentic assessment – importance of this to our local history
64/70 PA Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
56/60 Local Native American Test – read and answer comprehension questions, short answer, essay questions, graphic organizer
15/15 Where Wigwam’s Stood Article Review - constructed response to article and response to Guest Speaker, author of the book, Where Wigwam’s Stood
10/10 Pioneer Article: Lysock county – constructed response to article (from Where Wigwam’s Stood)
19/20 Writing: the Big Runaway – Reaction to Guest Speaker
0/15 Rough Draft of writing on Local Settlement - 5 paragraph essay (PSSA style) on forts Lysock County
5/5 Early Settlement – cooperative learning activity in class
5/5 In class work group work and discussion – Early Settlement of Lysock County
48/50 Early Settlement Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
68/100 Early Settlement Research Paper (forts, Great Runaway) local communities – Using Interdisciplinary English Assignment - Research Paper as mandated as part of the Social Studies curriculum

2nd 9 weeks – 90% 2 absences

4/10 Lumber outline – from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
20/20 Lumber Quiz - from guest speakers (2), class notes, class discussion
10/10 Article review on Lysock County – constructed response (PSSA prep)
70/87 Williamsport Test – short answer, fill in the blank, matching, graphic organizer
5/5 Underground Railroad – website searches and report back to class
5/5 3-2-1 Williamsport Information – comprehension strategy for Williamsport info
29/34 Underground Railroad – quiz on Underground Railroad class discussion, guest speakers, website reviews, class notes
15/15 Interview Update: first set of questions; students develop a set of research questions To be administered to their interviewee; practice interviews in class with partner
5/5 Graphic organizer of final project with all information gathered to date
28/30 Hugeville Quiz – identify pictures and discuss orally
20/20 Written quiz of Hugeville
31/32 W & NB quiz – information from guest speaker, class notes and discussion
5/5 Map of ELSD – locate the 7 townships and surrounding villages of the ELSD
50/60 Hugeville Test
20/20 Townships of the ELSD quiz
60/60 10 points each: 6 reactions and write –ups of their peer’s final presentations

Final Project: 60%
Final Grade for the class: 82%
### Appendix H

#### Student Definitions of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST I</th>
<th>INTERVIEW</th>
<th>POST II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robbie</td>
<td>People and things around you; everybody helps everybody</td>
<td>Group of people you are with; who you work and live with; help each other</td>
<td>Working together with other people in the community, keeping traditions it has and passing it down generations to generation, people fit together as generations go by, they link together so don’t forget about the things that happened</td>
<td>Surrounding of where you live where people help each other out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>The interaction between the people in a town and who make up a community</td>
<td>The people who live and interact together in a town or area</td>
<td>People in a town or an area that helps each other; combined as one group to get things done</td>
<td>Group of people that decide to do things as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Area usually a town, where everyone might know everyone else and try to better the area and each other</td>
<td>An area where everyone might know everyone and try to make the area better and each other better</td>
<td>Everyone in a town or an area that helps each other; combined as one group to get things done</td>
<td>Group of people who share a geographical relationship and join together as one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>People all around you doing things together</td>
<td>Group of people you are with and do things with; your family, friends, sports teams</td>
<td>Getting to know the people and working with the people around you;</td>
<td>People in a town who come together as one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kass</td>
<td>A group of people who live close together and work together when needed</td>
<td>People who come together and work together for a cause</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group of people who live together and work together in a specific area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Group of people living and working together</td>
<td>Group of people who share a common interest; being with these people (town, school) and working together</td>
<td>A group of people that you know and are associated with for a long time and are comfortable with, so you can just relax</td>
<td>People that live, work, and help each other out as a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>People working and talking together</td>
<td>People living, working, and sharing together to get things accomplished; people you are associated with a long time and are comfortable with</td>
<td>People that live in a town or an area, or a group that works together to get things accomplished</td>
<td>Friends and neighbors that live close to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>People working together to help each other out</td>
<td>A group of people who live and work together</td>
<td>Group of people who come together to give each other a helping hand</td>
<td>People living and helping others; Improving and supporting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>POST I</td>
<td>INTERVIEW</td>
<td>POST II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>The people that live in a small town</td>
<td>People around you that you live and work with</td>
<td>Everyone that lives in a certain area; like Hughesville is a community and the Grange is a community; even our class is a small community in itself</td>
<td>Your surroundings of people in a town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaine</td>
<td>People that live in or around a certain area</td>
<td>People that live in and around a certain area where the people help each other</td>
<td>An area and the people and places that make up this area; where you live and work; everyone working together for a common good</td>
<td>People and places that make up the area you live near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peyton</td>
<td>The people and area that surround me</td>
<td>A group of people that you share a common bond with and work together for a cause</td>
<td>A group of people that all live in the same area and come together for a common goal</td>
<td>Group of people with the same sense of what the “town” should be, do, or look like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>Small town where everybody is nice</td>
<td>Group of people in a small town who work together</td>
<td>Group of people around you; local neighborhood or town</td>
<td>People that come together for a cause or event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristie</td>
<td>The people in a development</td>
<td>People who live with, work with</td>
<td></td>
<td>Development of people who live in the same area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>Place where you live and the people that live there</td>
<td>Being active with the people that surround you; your class, school, community events</td>
<td>A group of people who all live in the same area and come together for a common goal</td>
<td>A group of people who live and work together such as your class, your work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>Where a bunch of people live in one community or area</td>
<td>A place for people to live and work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Civic engagement; being involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>The people who live together</td>
<td>People around you, where you live, at school and at work</td>
<td>Group of people that you are involved with that you live and work together with; participate in community events</td>
<td>The people that live together, go to school together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>All the people that live around you</td>
<td>People around you that live and work with</td>
<td></td>
<td>The people in a town working together kind of a like a big family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>The people and places I spend time with and in</td>
<td>The people I spend time with and work together with</td>
<td>The place and the people that surround you</td>
<td>People or places of a town or city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janee</td>
<td>People of your town</td>
<td>Group of people that share the same ideas, values, and norms that you do…have a common bond</td>
<td>Working together; keeping the environment clean; the people together who make up an area and their relationships with each other</td>
<td>People living around each other and getting along. Also everyone helps out and is respectful, have the same values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler</td>
<td>A place where there are lots of houses and people live</td>
<td>Place where you live and work with [others] to make the area better</td>
<td>Basically, the town or area that everybody lives in, the more close you are tighter, the closer your community; everybody helps each other out; doing what they can to help</td>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>A place with a lot people</td>
<td>A place that shares common interests and helps each other</td>
<td>People that live around you and the place where you live</td>
<td>Group of people living together, sharing a similar area with similar ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>POST I</td>
<td>INTERVIEW</td>
<td>POST II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley.</td>
<td>Where you live/ your environment</td>
<td>People and places around you who you communicate with</td>
<td>The area that you are living in, the town, the people, their races and culture; they area they live in, the children they have, the future they provide</td>
<td>Group of people who try to help others around them by doing things such as support others and help when someone is in need. They work together to try to make everything better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Where you live and around you</td>
<td>Where you live and who is around you</td>
<td></td>
<td>The places where you live and who is around you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karina</td>
<td>Place/environment in which I live</td>
<td>People that live in my town</td>
<td>A group of people who share a common bond and becoming involved with these people to help each other out and how you connect to the town and the people in it</td>
<td>A town or same area who share a similar goal or have similar expectations of behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CODES:**
- Green: most simple (place)
- Blue: somewhat more elaborate (place with people)
- Red: most sophisticated (place in which people work together)
- Purple: elaborate (common purpose)
- Italics: multiple understanding
VITA

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EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania
Ph.D. Curriculum & Instruction
Dissertation Title: Becoming more “civic” through the study of local history.

Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania
Masters of Education, Reading, 1997
Specialization: Reading Specialist / Literacy Coach

Lycoming College, Williamsport, Pennsylvania
Bachelor of Arts, History, 1992
Concentration: Secondary Education

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Chair, Department of Education
Lycoming College, Williamsport, PA  July 2008 – present

Instructor, Lycoming College
Lycoming College, Williamsport, PA  August 2007 – present

Literacy Coach and Intervention Coordinator

Classroom Teacher
East Lycoming School District, Hughesville, PA  August 1993 – August 2006

Methods Instructor, Graduate Assistantship

Curriculum Facilitator
East Lycoming School District, Hughesville, PA  August 2000 – August 2005