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Teaching Lincoln K-12 Workshop: Knowledge Gains and Teaching Intentions

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Rationale

Why visit historic sites? Exploring sites (also called place-based education) Gruenewald (2003) writes is a ‘narrative of local and regional politics that is attuned to the particularities of where people actually live (p.3)” which purposefully focuses attention on the impact of particular places on historic decisions (e.g., Berry, 1992). Making these site visits “count,” to be considered useful to teachers (and in turn to their students’ knowledge and perspectives on historic events) requires a coordination of the workshop content, participants’ experience and integration of the actual site visit with teacher knowledge (Coughlin, 2010). In fact, White (2010) notes that it is hard to deny the veracity of visiting historic places and the powerful motive to then teach about them. Some (e.g., Farmer & Knapp, 2008) have documented the importance of participants’ connection to the resource (i.e., historic site), and others note the importance of artifacts, narratives, and re-creation of the past as engaging to learners (Marcus, 2007).

Overview

The workshop has been offered twice each summer, in June and July. It meets for five days, and comprises 15 sessions: seven historical lectures and discussions with content scholars (Lincoln, Civil War, African-American Women’s Experiences, held on campus), four historic site/museum sessions (in Springfield), and four pedagogical sessions (on campus). Hands-on experience with technology was introduced in sessions with SIUE’s Amy Wilkinson from the Teaching with Primary Sources project who teaches use of the digitized collections in the Library of Congress. Dr. Ivy Cooper, art historian, introduced perspectives on the Lincoln era derived from period artworks.

In Springfield, participants visit the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library, the Lincoln home, and law office. Optional sites to visit during independent exploration time include the Old State Capitol, and the reconstructed train station, from which Lincoln departed Springfield in 1861. One evening offers an optional visit to Lincoln’s Tomb and flag ceremony. The following day participants explored Lincoln’s early life in the nearby reconstructed New Salem Village, and investigated Lincoln’s youth, his entry into politics, viewed the setting of Lincoln’s early entry in
entrepreneurship such as his store ownership. The village includes a reconstruction of the mill grist for which the town was noted, and a museum of local artifacts.

Caroline R. Pryor served as the project director and pedagogical expert providing several sessions on developing curriculum, lesson plans and use of national and state teaching standards that align with our workshop. In preparation for these experiences, participants receive an advance list of the required and supplemental readings.

Workshop Context

This Workshop is based on four themes about teaching Lincoln and the Civil War. The first theme, *Lincoln and Nationalism*, examined how historians have portrayed Lincoln over time. The second theme, *Lincoln and Power*, explored the dilemma of how to fight a civil war and preserve civil liberties. The third theme of this Workshop *Lincoln and Freedom*, explored the changes in political freedom wrought by the Civil War. The fourth theme, *Lincoln and Race*, examined the Emancipation Proclamation and the complex issue of race in America.

This Workshop began on the SIUE campus with lectures and interactive discussions with two noted Lincoln era scholars, Stephen L. Hansen and Iver Bernstein. Laura Fowler, historian and museum studies expert, provided information about using museum collections for research. Following these discussions our participants travelled together as a ‘learning community” for a two-day trip to several historic Lincoln landmarks in and around Springfield, Illinois; each foundational to the forging of his character.

Workshop Content

[The text in this section is directly drawn from a 2013 proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a re-grant for this workshop.] Dr. Bernstein’s first presentation is the “stage-setting” session for the Workshop, and bridges several themes. He addresses two questions, which frame the Workshop. First, what were the stakes of the titanic conflicts of Civil War era America—what, at various levels of nation and state, society and culture, were Americans fighting about? Second, what were Lincoln and the antislavery movement up against, considering how deeply entrenched the institution of slavery was in the country’s economy, politics, culture, and psyche. A consideration of Lincoln’s leadership must pay attention to these two questions.

Dr. Bernstein begins the presentation with a close textual analysis of Lincoln’s important but little-attended speech at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, February 22, 1861, a speech Lincoln gave under the very real threat of a proslavery assassination plot. In the speech, Lincoln anticipated his own martyrdom, embraced the Declaration of Independence and its promises of freedom and equality forthrightly, and identifies, albeit covertly, with abolitionists and even fugitive slaves. It is an excellent way to introduce the stakes of the Civil War-to-come and to demonstrate what opposition Lincoln and the antislavery movement faced. Dr. Bernstein’s presentation then moves through an explication of various “traumas” of the Civil War era which have been either silenced or distorted in America’s collective memory of a war that killed more than 620,000 people, and the related,
fundamental trauma of slavery as lived experience for four million enslaved people. He explores the deeply gendered roots of slavery in the long history of the New World, extending, in the North American context, back to the freedom suit of Elizabeth Key, Virginia, 1665 and the institution of the legal principle of *partus sequitur ventrem* (the status of the child follows that of the mother), a defining element of U.S. slavery’s systematized abuse and commodification. He works primarily with visual images, photographs, paintings, and other documents, inviting our discussion.

For the Workshop’s *first* theme, *Lincoln and Nationalism*, Dr. Hansen helped participants examine how historians have portrayed Lincoln over time. For example, late 19th and early 20th century historians stressed Lincoln’s frontier experience, humble origins, and morality. Historians in the middle of the 20th century celebrated Lincoln’s pragmatism and moderation in the face of extremism and dogmatism, while late 20th century historians stressed his humanity as well as his genius. Each historiographic period contributed to the identification of Lincoln with our sense of nationalism.

Primary source readings include Lincoln’s Message to Congress in Special Session (July 4, 1861) which served as a starting point for participants to explore questions such as:

- How did Lincoln use history, especially the American Revolution and the Founding Fathers, to develop his rhetorical defense of the Union and justification for action?
- How do different interpretations over the “cause” of the Civil War shape the meaning of the nation?
- How have historians used Lincoln to reflect the values of the nation over time?

The *second* theme, *Lincoln and Power*, focused on the dilemma of how to fight a civil war and preserve civil liberties. This discussion included an examination of how Lincoln attempted to preserve the Union without sacrificing the Constitution. His suspension of habeas corpus, censorship of the press, declaration of martial law, Emancipation Proclamation, and formation of Reconstruction governments all involved unprecedented use and abuse of presidential power. Discussion of these issues provided an understanding of Lincoln and of the delicate balance of liberty and order in a democratic society.

In this session, Dr. Hansen focused on Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address continuing the theme of nationalism, now drawing on Lincoln’s rationale to accept war rather than let the nation perish. Selected letters that illuminate the theme of *Lincoln and Power* were also discussed, supplemented by the required reading of Donald’s *Lincoln* and David Potter’s 1960 “Jefferson Davis and the Political Factors in Confederate Defeat.”

The *third* theme of this Workshop is *Lincoln and Freedom*. Garry Wills argued that Lincoln changed the meaning of the Constitution with his Gettysburg Address. This change went beyond the relationship between the federal government and the states, to a relationship between the federal government and the individual. This change also meant an expansion in the meaning of freedom: a “new birth of freedom” in Lincoln’s words, that made America different from what it had been prior to the Civil War. The exploration of this theme provided insight into the nature of the Civil
War in America and the significance of Lincoln’s legacy. Led by Dr. Hansen, this session began with the required reading of the Gettysburg Address and selected letters in which Lincoln describes his vision of equality, followed by analysis of Wills’ 1992 article “The Words that Remade America.” Participants explored questions such as:

- How differently did the North and South define freedom?
- How can freedom co-exist with governmental power and how did Lincoln reconcile those traditionally antagonistic forces?
- How is the concept of freedom today different from that of the mid-19th century?

Dr. Ivy Cooper, art historian, lectured on selected works from the Picturing America collection. She focused on artworks directly related to Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War period in U.S. history, such as George Caleb Bingham’s The County Election (1852), Winslow Homer’s Veteran in a New Field (1865), Alexander Gardner’s photographic portrait of Abraham Lincoln (1865), and Augustus Saint-Gaudens’ Robert Shaw Memorial (1884-1897).

Dr. Stacy’s lecture and discussion analyzed the ways in which both Lincoln and Whitman sought to make African American freedom palatable to a suspicious white population. In the decade before the Civil War, Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln - one a Democrat, the other a Republican - struggled with the existence of slavery and the overwhelming racism of their audiences. Although both have become icons of freedom, and though both thought slavery evil and emancipation good, they justified these in terms more acceptable to their audiences: in Lincoln's case, the farmers and independent businessmen of Illinois and the leadership of the new Republican Party; in Whitman's case, the white, working class residents of New York who read his newspaper editorials and, he hoped, his new and strange book of poetry, Leaves of Grass. The presentation also suggested that their definition of freedom is still useful in modern America. Participants examined questions such as:

- Is it possible to believe in black inferiority and Emancipation at the same time?
- What was the meaning of “race” in mid-19th century America?
- How did Lincoln’s ideas on Emancipation evolve?
- What constraints did Lincoln face?

Few sources are more powerful for understanding the expansion of freedom than the African-American experience during, and more importantly before, the Civil War. Political dialogues centrally focused on the future social and economic lives of black populations proved critical to the evolution of American society. Yet what was the social history of captivity within which bonded people navigated and sought to secure their own means of freedom, and thus envision their lives free from the constraints of bondage? Our participants were provided with the opportunity to further explore the theme of Lincoln and Race through lecture, discussion and investigation with historian, Sowande’ Mustakeem. She assigned portions of Vincent Harding’s book There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America, and two of her scholarly articles. Participants considered these four questions:
• How did the institution of slavery align with notions of nationalism?
• Where and how do we see power – along lines of race and gender – mitigate against black populations for economic, political, and social advancement?
* What role did race play in the economic framework of slave trading that carried through into slave societies and the Civil War?
* How did black populations – both enslaved and free – seek to secure their own freedom that in many ways paralleled or even altered political efforts for emancipation?

**Pedagogical Perspectives**

Several serious concerns abound in the teaching of history and social studies in the K-12 classroom. The marginalization of social studies in the elementary classroom is well-documented (e.g., Bolick, Adams, & Willox, 2010). Even in the 6-12 curriculum where social studies (grades 5-8) or history courses (grades 9-12) continue as stand-alone courses, equal in time and breadth to mathematics for example, the actual content taught appears to be narrowed (Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006). In some cases, this narrowing occurs as courses in both the K-5 and 6-12 levels infused with skill-based curricula, such as reading, debate or writing (Passe, 2006).

**Facilitation of Teacher Lesson Plans**

Dr. Caroline Pryor, project director and teacher educator, facilitated the participants’ evaluation of curriculum materials provided during the workshop and development of two lesson plans for their future classroom use. Along with examples from previous participants (lesson plans, video and photo collections), participants are provided laptop computers, and had access to all campus computer labs. On the last day of the workshop, teachers shared and receive feedback about their initial lesson plans. We typically receive teachers’ final plans within two weeks after the end of the Workshop (but no later than the beginning of the coming school year) after which we post curriculum resources, including video and photos and teachers’ lesson plans (by grade level) on our Workshop website: www.siue.edu/education/neh.

**Teacher and Faculty Outcomes**

The most important outcomes are those on teachers and their students. For example, after her participation in the 2010 workshop, Donna Biggers, a grade 3-6 teacher in the Madison Park School, Phoenix, AZ, created an “interactive poster” to show her students her experience in the Workshop (http://donnabiggers.edu.glogster.com/false/). She won a $2,000 grant to develop other Civil War materials for her students. Following her participation in our 2011 Workshop, Deann Fester, an Illinois middle school social studies teacher, received two grants: a 2012 Winnick Family Grant given by the Abraham Lincoln Library-Museum and a 2012 grant from the Target Corporation for student field trips to Springfield and Alton, Illinois. She recently applied for two additional grants to support student field trips to Lincoln historical sites. Examples of work done by students, and e-mail reports of past participants’ grants and awards are found on our website hosted by SIUE (www.siue.edu/education/neh).

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Dr. Caroline R. Pryor was awarded an American Library Association-National Endowment for the Humanities grant to bring the exhibit “Lincoln and the Constitution” to SIUE’s Lovejoy Library in summer 2012.

NEH Workshop Evaluation

NEH conducts a summative online workshop evaluation which asks the participant to rate various aspects of the workshop (e.g., speaker scholarship, importance of historical sites, group dynamics, and satisfaction with the workshop site, hotels and other aspects). It does not, however, investigate teacher knowledge gain or intention to use new knowledge in classroom instruction, which are the emphases of this study.

Participants

Participants were 73 K-12 teachers who had participated in one of the 2010 workshop’s two sessions. They came from 32 different states in the United States. Three of the participants were international teachers—from Ghana, Kenya, and Russia—supported by the U.S. Department of State. Of these, 23.6% were elementary teachers, 16.7% were middle school, 51.4% were secondary teachers, and 8.3% had mixed assignments. Most (76.7%) were attending their first NEH program.

Most of the teachers (30.6%) taught social science/social studies, followed by history/political science/government (26.4%), followed by English/language arts/reading/literacy (23.6%), followed by education/library/media specialist/special education (18.1%), and math/business/technology (1.4%). Most of the teachers (61.4%) held master’s degrees, and nearly a third (31.1%) held a bachelor’s degree, as “current highest degree.” Four teachers held the Ph.D. and one reported “other.” Two thirds of the teachers (66.7%) were female.

Instrument and Procedure

The hard copy questionnaire is composed of 30 bipolar, seven-point scales, one open-ended response format item (asking for the most important Lincoln landmark), and six demographic items. The scales primarily measure three variables: (a) utility for my teaching, (b) knowledge gained in the workshop, and (c) intention to use new knowledge in my teaching.

The questionnaire comprises (a) three content areas (Lincoln, Civil War, African-American Women’s Experiences), (b) two resource areas (Readings, Lincoln Landmarks), and (c) four pedagogical areas (Use of Museums in General, Use of Presidential Museum & Library, Use of Library of Congress, and Lesson Planning). Knowledge gain scores were calculated from the retrospective pretest, posttest measures of knowledge. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were obtained for all scores. Attitude toward having participated in the workshop was regressed on its best predictors to determine which variables were closely related to attitude.

Results and Discussion
Overall mean scores on the primary variables utility for my teaching, knowledge gain, and intention to use in my teaching are reported in Table 1. The highest utility score was for the Content Scholars, followed by Lincoln Landmarks, Museum Scholars, Lesson Planning, and Advance Readings.

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**Table 1**

Mean Scores on Utility for My Teaching, Knowledge Gain, and Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Area</th>
<th>Utility</th>
<th>Knowledge Gain</th>
<th>Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Scholars</strong></td>
<td>2.00 (1.04)</td>
<td>1.57 (1.17)</td>
<td>2.47 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td>1.57 (1.17)</td>
<td>2.47 (1.11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>1.66 (1.25)</td>
<td>2.38 (0.62)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Women's Experiences</td>
<td>2.08 (1.11)</td>
<td>1.75 (1.60)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advance Readings</strong></td>
<td>1.21 (1.37)</td>
<td>1.65 (1.19)</td>
<td>2.17 (1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Museum Scholars</strong></td>
<td>1.80 (1.26)</td>
<td>2.30 (0.89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Museums</td>
<td>1.58 (1.51)</td>
<td>2.30 (0.89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Library of Congress</td>
<td>1.93 (1.61)</td>
<td>2.19 (1.04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Presidential Museum &amp; Library</td>
<td>2.14 (1.65)</td>
<td>2.36 (0.87)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lincoln Landmarks</strong></td>
<td>1.96 (1.15)</td>
<td>2.15 (1.46)</td>
<td>2.43 (0.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson Planning</strong></td>
<td>1.62 (1.44)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Scale scores can range from +3 to -3 through a midpoint of zero. Scores in parentheses are standard deviations.

- **Utility** scores were taken only on major workshop areas.
- Knowledge gain was assessed by a retrospective pretest, posttest measure which asked teachers to rate their knowledge in a given area before the workshop, and then after the workshop.
- Intention was assessed by an item that asked the teachers to rate the likelihood that “... I will use this knowledge in my teaching.”
- Given that most workshop participants are experienced teachers, no measure of knowledge gain or intention to use were considered necessary for this area.

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The areas of largest knowledge gain were Lincoln Landmarks, followed by Use of Presidential Museum and Library, African American Women's Experiences, and Use of Library of Congress. A gain in knowledge, however, does not necessarily mean an increase in intention to use that knowledge in teaching, for a variety of reasons. Intention scores were highest for the Civil War, Lincoln Landmarks, Lincoln, and the Use of the Presidential Museum and Library. The large knowledge gain in African American Women’s Experiences was likely not reflected in a similarly high intention score, because of the limited time provided in most curricula for teaching that subject.

**Knowledge Gain**
Teachers in this study believed they have gained knowledge in the four areas reported above. To apply this knowledge in K-12 classroom however, means they also must believe in the efficacy (as expressed in utility) of teaching this particular content, especially if the content is new or unfamiliar to them. For example, Standard 3, Place and Time (National Council of the Social Studies, ncss.org) can help teachers frame lessons about historical events and the context in which events are taught (Parker, 1996), but many are less familiar with the foundational ideas of some of these events and the critical inquiry needed to teach it well (Gruenewald, 2003). Knowledge gain, therefore, can play a critical role in teachers' future lesson enactment.

One study (Pryor & Pryor, 2005) investigated pre-service teachers’ intentions to become democratic practitioners finding teacher knowledge a predictor of attitude. In this current study knowledge gain is noted in four areas: Landmarks, Museums, African American Experience and the Library of Congress. Gruenewald (2003) noting that place-based education “deepens the challenge [of teaching a genre] by bringing cultural and ecological politics into the center of . . . discourse” (p. 11). In other words, as teachers deepen content knowledge, they are more disposed to centering their discourse with students on: (a) lesser known content topics, such as African-American Women’s Experience or use of the Library of Congress website, and (b) use of a critical or exploratory pedagogical approach to ‘what counts” as knowledge (Gruenewald, 2003).

**Intention to Implement**

Teachers are held accountable for teaching the overt—the clear and expected—content to be taught as district curriculum. Moreover, state standards and testing influences much of what well-intentioned teachers might actually teach in their classrooms. Still, four areas of the workshop were rated significantly high as predictors of intention to teach, and notably, three of these four are topics typically taught in K-12 classrooms. For example, intentions scores were the highest on variables (a) teaching about the Civil War and (b) Lincoln and Lincoln Landmarks (e.g., the Illinois State Teaching Standards, 14-18) and resources, such as text and trade books are commonly devoted to this content.

The Museum Scholars section of the workshop was the third most highly rated of five sections, despite reduced funding for field trips (Stoddard, 2009). These particular sites might be: (a) imbued with emotional connections for teachers (e.g., White, 2010) such as discovering that Mary Todd Lincoln needed to learn how to cook in her Springfield home, or that (b) present opportunities for expanded investigation derived from collective memory (Uhrmacher & Tinkler, 2008), such as wanting to learn more about the Lincoln’s developing oratory skills as he spoke in the Old State Capitol in Springfield, and then viewing his collective papers available in the Library resources.

**Attitude toward Having Participated in the Workshop**

Fishbein (1963) developed and tested a theory that attitude toward an object is formed by a set of beliefs that the object has certain attributes, or characteristics, and an evaluation of each attribute. He later (1967) extended his theory to explain attitude toward a behavior as formed by a set of beliefs about likely outcomes of the behavior, and an evaluation of each outcome. This theory
has been successfully tested in both static and dynamic validation studies (see for reviews: Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Pryor & Pryor, 2010). It has also been applied in studies of teacher education (e.g., Pryor & Pryor, 2005).

It was beyond the scope of this investigation to undertake a complete attitude study. We were interested, however, in which aspects of the workshop would be most closely related to attitude. To determine what variables were the best predictors of attitude toward having participated in the workshop, correlations were performed between attitude and all other scale scores. Attitude was regressed on the most significant ($p < .01$) predictors, as reported in Table 2. Knowledge gain from Advance Readings was clearly the best predictor, as indicated by its beta weight.

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Table 2

Regression of Attitude toward Having Participated in the Workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Correlation with Attitude</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Beta Weights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utility of museum scholars</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
<td>.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge gain—Readings</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility of content scholars</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge gain—Civil War</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility of Lincoln Landmarks</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.223*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The regression and all correlations are significant ($p < .01$). Beta weights are significant ($p < .05$), except as noted. $R^2$ value is adjusted.

* $p = .054$

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Impact on Teachers and Students

Teachers who participated in our workshop reported important outcomes such as receipt of grants to implement curriculum development or field-trips to historic sites; some report that they have received teaching awards for their use or development of materials after participating in the workshop. Below they describe some of the materials they have developed or begun to use.

Teacher 1: Primary Sources, Close Readings and Document Based Questions

I use the primary sources from Lincoln's speeches to do close reading strategies and scaffold DBQ [Document Based Question Lessons] lessons. I use the photos in power points and videos. I have stories and experiences to tell my students (classroom teachers) that I would never have attained without this workshop. [Arizona]

Teacher 2: Curriculum and Artifacts

The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies
Vol. 73, No. 2 (2012)
[I have received] a 2011 Salt River Project Educational Grant of $2000 to create a Civil War Traveling Trunk. [in an interview this teacher showed Caroline Pryor the artifacts she gathered for this trunk, and examples of student work. [Arizona]

Teacher 3: Library Displays and Artifacts

Each year I put up a large Lincoln display with the many things I brought from Springfield and from [the] Picturing America Lincoln portraits. We spent time with each of my classes studying [these] and explaining it according to grade level. With each class I read a different book suitable for grade level and I wear my Lincoln stovepipe hat. I read the book about Grace Beedle because I am from western New York and have been to the places where they took place. [Virginia]

Teacher 4: Curriculum and Digital Field Trips

Since the workshop, I have revised our third grade Illinois Unit. At our school, all four of our classes will participate in a virtual field trip to Abraham Lincoln's House, Presidential Library, Lincoln Tomb, Old and New Capitol Buildings, Lincoln/Herndon Law Offices, and New Salem. [Illinois]

Teacher 5: Curriculum and Advanced Placement-Dual Enrollment Course

I teach both advanced placement and a dual enrollment classes and what the NEH Landmarks seminar on Lincoln did for me was give me additional insight into the complexity of the man … This year when teaching the Civil War I was much more adamant about stressing that much of the initial Republican policy was about [stopping] the expansion of slavery not the abolition. Students need to get that concept! It was also nice to share some stories about Salem, as well as Lincoln the young man and Lincoln the husband. I also . . . [used] the DVD "The Civil War in Four Minutes". [Florida]

Teacher 6: Curriculum and Consulting with Historic Sites

[Since the workshop], I have consulted with the Henry Ford Museum to help them develop lesson plans for the Lincoln Bicentennial called "Lincoln's Legacy of Leadership". [In my own teaching.] I use the documents and the information from the seminar to give my students an in- depth look at Lincoln as a real person. We discuss his strengths and weaknesses and we spend time discussing the mythical Lincoln as well. My students can defend or refute the idea that he was the "Great Emancipator" as well as defending him as one of the greatest presidents of all times. [Michigan]

Teacher 7: Curriculum and New High School Course

I was able to encourage my department chair to allow for the development of a course centered around Lincoln and the forging of modern America; the course will be a semester long course (January-June) and will begin during the 2012-2013 school year. The seminar played a significant role in my ability to gather research and topic/theme ideas as well as access to primary documents that sparked interest to offer the course. [Florida]
Teacher 8: Curriculum and Re-energizing Elementary Level History

Because my elementary school focuses on language immersion and international education, we often neglect the study of people and events that framed our home culture. The Lincoln workshop helped me to refocus on American history and the importance of our students having a clear understanding of our beginnings. I began the year with a unit on the American Civil War. With Sesquicentennial events beginning to show up in my home state, I wanted the students (3rd-5th grades) to have a foundation to understand those events. We presented a huge display of Civil War replica items…books and DVDs in the library. …each class was read a story from the Civil War era. Students also researched a Civil War topic.

…students at every grade level will focus on Lincoln and his legacy. Third graders will study a book about Booker T. Washington and relate it to the Civil War and Lincoln’s role in the abolishment of slavery. Younger children will be introduced to the story of Abraham Lincoln through stories and displays. A local individual who bears an uncanny resemblance to Lincoln will be visiting several of the primary grade classrooms to discuss the Lincoln legacy. As a capstone event for our Lincoln study, our goal is to take our 5th graders on a field trip to two Civil War battle fields and museums that are located within driving distance. [Oklahoma].

From the intention data and the vignettes, we notice two impacts of the workshop experience on K-12 teachers. First, the workshop appears to have inspired teachers’ passion for integrating new knowledge into their classroom settings and in some cases, into community projects, such as visiting historic sites. Second, the opportunity to apply new knowledge, that is to be a change agent in their school environment is an important aspect of teacher professional development. While these vignettes indicate that teachers have received accolades (grants and awards) for their work on curriculum redevelopment, the enthusiasm they portray for this important work should not be overlooked.

From our data on knowledge gain and intention to use, we have several suggestions for similar workshops or training projects, each related to potential for future application in the schools, and outcomes for students:

- Provide multiple resource types during the workshop (e.g., lecture, site-based visits, digital resources and the training to use these)
- Provide expert content personnel who “think like a teacher” or site based teacher educators who can foster the use of standards-based curriculum
- Provide a wide-range of humanities experts (museums, art, literature) to more fully provide for knowledge integration across the content areas
- Hold participants accountable for a curriculum product and allot workshop time to develop these (e.g., working groups for lesson planning)
- Plan for a wide range of grade level teachers to work together, despite a seemingly complex topic, to broaden rather than limit content scope (e.g., group teachers as K-5, rather than K-2, or 5-9, rather than 4-6).
Conclusion

To more fully investigate the long-term impact of the workshop, additional research is needed to explain how its various components broadened the history education of K-12 teachers. Our teachers reported strong intentions to use both the sites they have visited and the information provided to them by humanities faculty (e.g., art history faculty). We do not know, however, if the beliefs about the importance of humanities content will in fact translate into a broad-based humanities integration in the K-12 curriculum. We also have little information about teacher content knowledge prior to the workshop. Finally, it is important to learn how humanities integration might impact students’ content or skills based knowledge.

Notes

1 Knowledge gain was assessed by a retrospective pretest, posttest measure which, as Campbell and Stanley (1966) suggest, is likelier to mask, rather than exaggerate, actual knowledge gain.

References


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