

Summer Enrichment Classes

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Introduction

Across fourteen years of running a summer enrichment program at a large midwestern university several ideas have clarified the evaluation of the effectiveness of summer social studies enrichment programs that will allow teachers to create meaningful and compelling curriculum for elementary social studies. This paper examines the question of how elementary teachers can evaluate summer social studies enrichment classes. Four terms will be used in evaluating elementary social studies summer enrichment programs: Adventure, Content Acceleration, Power, and Service Elevation. When students seek adventure, they endeavor to learn through exploring new places, and meeting new people that are out of the ordinary from their regular home or school events. The students look at the content from the class to discern controversial issues that continue to conflict society across generations. Researching student-initiated questions allowed learners to have power over their elementary social studies investigations. Elevation is the state or feeling students experience after they have done something good through performing service-learning in the community.

(Figure 1)

Adventure

The element of adventure occurs when students receive unique experiences not regularly part of their typical day. This may be the exploration of novel situations. Teachers capture the

risk-taking behaviors of upper elementary students and channel them into academic lower peril situations (Lesseig, Firestone, Morrison, Slavitt, & Holmlund, 2019, Gerlach & Gockel, 2018, Diggs & Akos, 2016, Hope, 2010, Beghetto, 2009). The desire and attraction of risk-taking behavior entices students to learn in new situations. Students who engage in risk-taking behavior find their curiosity rewarded or stunted by the results of their explorations. Unconventional topics or experiences remain motivating to students.

Adventure learning is aimed at upper elementary students, and it calls for instructors and teachers to examine situations beyond the conventional four walls of the classroom. Students participated in an engagement-rich environment with experiential simulations or real-world learning and authentic issues (Henrickson & Doering, 2013, DeLeon, 2008, Moos & Honkomp, 2011). Adventure learning provides a place to integrate technological platforms while providing a motivational environment. The idea is for teachers to provide middle grade students with a safe environment for risk taking such as a law related education class while pacing through material at advanced levels in an environment where students are with their peers. Students look at search and seizure laws, rights, protests, and courtroom procedures. Student risk taking supports a critical pedagogy and helps them to attain learning outcomes.

Content Acceleration

The element of content occurs when students encounter topics and time periods new to them, and they learn knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions. Students explore knowledge they are not able to access during the traditional academic year because the curriculum limits them to a small number of topics and testing dampens their access to in-depth content knowledge. Enrichment activities provide a variety of programs and services for students. They

may be looking for enrichment with depth of content knowledge which they find in specialized learning situations (Morris, 2008). The students have unique experiences that help them to learn about enriching content in depth. Other authors examine enrichment in elementary social studies content (Helms & Ankenbauer, 2009, Beecher & Sweeny, 2008). Many students find additional challenges through elementary social studies content based on civics education in university programs. An enrichment experience allows for students to have additional experiences that the regular curriculum would not provide. Students examine accelerated content, explore enrichment opportunities, and work with a supportive peer group that meets their social and emotional needs.

When working with summer programs elementary social studies enrichment students learn about topics not normally introduced in their formal education. Furthermore, there are multiple ways for students to find challenging content through elementary social studies through summer enrichment classes. Students learn advanced content without negative consequences in social emotional domains (Hoogeveen, van Hell, & Verhoeven, 2012). The students engage in a variety of experiences working with skills and content to provide educational stimulation during the summer.

In the summer social studies enrichment class, The Antebellum Era, students trace social movements from before the Civil War across the twentieth century to the present, and the seeming obscure topic connected directly to news issues in current events. Students learn about history and culture from viewing their community as a living document, and these experiences allow students to explore topics in greater depth and to form deep understandings of how interactions occur. The Antebellum Era class also includes the controversy between Whigs and Democrats; students aged eleven to twelve learn about America prior to the Civil War; they receive a strong interpretation of western migration and the rise of sectionalism prior to eighth

grade. The students see other events that occurred in the young republic including, agriculture, business and commerce, education, party politics, reformers, transportation, settlement patterns, and social history. Students bring back information about transportation from visiting a section of a transportation canal; they also bring back information about America in 1836 after interviewing interpreters at Conner Prairie, a living history museum.

Students examine issues of importance that people found to be controversial at that time and remain controversial today (Byrd & Varga, 2018). They also look at a variety of issues that impact their lives and have meaning for them. The students look at these continuing controversial issues and draw parallels to how the issues have changed and how they remain the same across time into the present. Students can compare responses to controversial issues from their grandparents, parents, and their own generation. They make connections to the community by looking at real questions of justice and real applications of the law. By examining an issue across time students get additional perspectives and get to examine the problem with a depth of understanding.

For the students seeking an acceleration experience they find it when a child encounters content that would not normally be encountered during the regular curriculum until later years. Many times, students do not get this information until high school unless they read on their own. Some accelerations are problematic, but others are highly rewarding; and all stakeholders need to buy into the importance of an acceleration for the child to be successful (Siegle, Wilson, & Little, 2013). While many factors contribute to a successful or unsuccessful educational acceleration situation, more challenging instructional materials help students work at a higher level than is found in the regular curriculum. Some models look to the individualization of instruction to provide a least restrictive environment for students. Other models look at providing

multiple ways across a continuum to accelerate a variety of students. Each experience with acceleration has as its purpose the individualization of instruction to help the student reach their greatest potential (Pfeiffer & Shaughnessy, 2015, Siegle, 2015, Wardman, 2014, Wood, Portman, Cigrand, & Colangelo, 2010). Acceleration of content allows students more time for social studies enrichment experiences by helping the child accomplish the proficiencies of the regular curriculum while compressing time so that the child can move on to their next accomplishment.

In the 1900-1945 class, elementary students learn about America and the world from Roosevelt to Roosevelt through Progressives, World War I, Great Depression, and World War II. Eleven to twelve-year-old students engage in simulations and role-playing activities to learn about this period before their grandparents. They bring information back to the classroom from a Progressive Era state park, a CCC camp, a WPA project, the home of a WWII correspondent, the Eugene V. Debs home, Oldfields, the home of the Lilly family, and the Indiana Medical History Museum. When students have direct experience, they create products reflecting their experiences such as their oral history recordings from people who were children during World War II. These products may take the form of written or oral explanations of what the students have learned. (Steinmeyer, 2012)

Power

The element of power occurs when students encounter inquiry as a methodology of investigation. When students seek power, they learn in a different way; one such way is inquiry in which students control the questions they endeavor to explore, and they control the methods used in their investigations. Many people used inquiry in elementary social studies to explore a

variety of content in history, economics, or geography (Leaman & Corcoran, 2018, Thacker, Friedman, Fitchett, Journell, & Lee, 2018, Coppersmith, & Song, 2017, Whitlock & Brugar, 2017, Whitlock, 2015, Young & Miner, 2015, Brugar, Halvorsen, & Hernandez, 2014, Brugar & Roberts, 2014). Students initiated the inquiry arc by using their textbook, timelines, or biographies. Moreover, students-initiated inquiry experiences resulted from visits to archives, museums, and working with primary sources.

When they visited a recreated general store, they constructed a list of questions about economics including the role of credit, an IOU as currency, making change, currency discount rates, and store pricing. Based on their visit they had to evaluate:

- What would help business the most?
- What would hurt business?
- Is being good for business also good for the farmers who traded at the store?

Service Elevation

Students use service learning as a part of elementary social studies instruction (Morris, 2016, Serriere, McGarry, Fuentes, & Mitra, 2012, Chessin, Moore, & Theobald, 2011, Ullman, 2009). Students became empowered by learning principles of citizenship through their service-learning experiences. Some students couple this local study with local action in service-learning programs, and they start with local studies and build their understandings outward from there. The students need to become civic minded in seeking solutions to community problems in creative ways. Students start with their interests in unjust situations, and then advocate by exercising a concerted effort to produce a student initiative that ameliorates the situation. They

use elements of student choice, independent study, and direct experience outside the classroom environment -- including working with historians, historical societies, and local resource people.

The element and ideals and practices of elevation comes from students taking action and the resulting emotional lift of seeing the results of their work in the community. Students find that these experiences helps them to connect to the community. Elevation comes from the students establishing meaningful connections while they work in the community. The local historical society had records soiled with coal dust. Students carefully wiped off each page with a document cleaning pad provided by the historical society with their cotton gloved hands. The students saw immediate results and instantly realized that they made a difference on each document. By working together the students quickly cleaned two boxes of records that would have taken a volunteer weeks to process.

Connection to Summer Learning: Example Class

Summer program motivators include desires for adventure, content, power, and service/elevation. These four elements both attract elementary students and hold their attention in summer program learning situations. They may be implemented in differing amounts and in different groups depending on the nature and mission of the summer program activity. It is also important for learners to use methods of investigation that reflect the above elements that motivate and retain members of the class. All four of these ideas entice the student to learn more from a summer social studies experience.

The educator gets more time to teach than is found in the school day, in comparison fifth and sixth grade students have time to go into depth with subjects that interest them. In the Civil War class all four elements of adventure, content acceleration, power, and service elevation are

on display and elementary students learn what it would be like to be a common soldier in the Union army. This experience is immersive with students marching, fixing their own food, and learning for the common soldier. The idea of a classroom around the soldier's campfire provides an element of adventure for the students. Students find the program to be very experiential and from their direct experiences they can gather facts, form concepts, and construct generalizations as content.

The focus of this program is on social history content or the examination of the experience of the common man rather than the perspective of the officer or the politician. The students work with simulations and role-playing to find out what daily life would have been like in that decade, and they use primary sources and artifacts to find out about this time. Students bring information back from field trips to the study of General Lew Wallace, the home of Republican leader Henry S. Lane, and the Civil War Museum under the Soldier and Sailors Monument on the Circle in downtown Indianapolis. The students go into the community to bring back information for study that propels their interests to the next topic power (Morris, 2012). The students examine social history to determine the experience of the common person living in history. Students examine social history when they engage with elementary social studies enrichment classes. When working with social history students develop historical understanding, national identity, and civic awareness (Bair & Ackerman, 2014). In a summer residential social studies enrichment class, students get the opportunities to work with social history that would not normally be a part of the regular curriculum. The students receive additional insights into the time period by looking at the life of the common person.

On the last day of the program, students show their parents and other parents what they have accomplished through their journaling of their experiences when they volunteered for an

afternoon at a voting registration workshop. Voter registration was a key opportunity for freedmen to become participating citizens after the Civil War. This civic participation exercise linked content from the Civil War to present needs in the community. The students encountered the idea of service/elevation through this experience. Instructors use the four interactive elements of adventure, content, power, and service/elevation social studies summer enrichment programs.

Suggestions to Embrace

Teachers use the elements of adventure, content acceleration, power, and service elevation to develop summer enrichment programs. They also use these ideas to enhance their K-6th grade classroom settings. Use these suggestions to build experiences at the local level. Some examples illustrate the intersection between the elements of adventure, content acceleration, power, and service/elevation in student programming.

- There are many reasons that students might choose to be involved in an enrichment experience. Students looking for social studies enrichment can find depth of knowledge and enriching experiences through summer programs. They use all this information to spark interests in topics that will cause them to have advanced experiences compared to their age mates (Gubbins, 2010). Students may find power through their choice of enrichment activities.
- Students research within their community, and this puts power in the hands of learners to experience authentic summer program events.
- Students have time to go into depth with subjects that interest them, and they certainly find highly qualified teachers with similar interests for content acceleration.
- Students also get teachers who are accustomed to using methods of instruction appropriate finding depth of knowledge through content acceleration by working with well prepared and experienced teachers. Students need to tell their teachers what they need, and teachers need to initiate the process by asking questions. Teachers need to form a connection to the students, understand where the students are in life, and create meaningful educational experiences for the students (Lewis, 2011).
- Students get the opportunity to study topics in greater depth or they may get the opportunity to discover more content acceleration in the social sciences. These classes allow students

with deep interest to show the passion and intensity of their interests with other peers. Students sort themselves into areas that they are both particularly interested in and classes where they show competency.

- The community energy builds when a group of interested people decide that they wish to investigate topics in common through service elevation. Students benefit from this type of curriculum when they engage in summer enrichment classes.
- Elementary students enjoy the situation of having other people their age who also enjoy learning about the topics they are interested in exploring. Social and emotional needs are as important as academic study. The youth cluster together to find other people like themselves to form a peer group who enjoy learning together in a summer enrichment program in elementary social studies as they have adventures together.
- Using simulations and reenactments students get to playfully explore social studies adventures while developing skills, and they may engage in controversial issues that they explore as a result of summer classes.
- Social studies enrichment take students beyond the walls of the elementary school classroom to find adventure.
- Each class has active learning opportunities including:
 - The students take roles and engages in simulations.
 - There will be a series of field trips where students gather information.
 - Knowledge comes from primary sources, secondary sources, artifacts, and video.
 - Evaluation originates with both student reflection and self-assessment of learning.

Situations to Avoid

- Lineage societies build strong family connections, and these patriotic programs have a long history of encouraging individual family research. Membership is open to the progeny of families with long ties to a place, time, or event. They have abilities to encourage family connections but sharing that information might be viewed with suspicion by some recent arrivals. These organizations do not cater to the recent immigrants that teachers find in their classroom.
- Avoid programs that provide sorting by attrition while setting up pyramiding competition. This type of program only caters to a small group of winners while fostering elitism; this type of program does nothing to acknowledge that citizens remain in community even if they lose and that all the citizens need to engage in a democracy. Imagine taking all of the students in a school who are excited about social studies and telling them that they have lost, then sending

one student off to a regional event where all of the students who are most interested in social studies are told they lost, then sending one student off to the state where everyone is told that they lost, and finally sending one student off to nationals where the best students from across the nation are told they all lost except for one student. This type of sorting serves no positive purpose in a democracy where all students must live and work together as citizens. While a relevant issue could be tackled in such a project, it is rarely followed through with a real audience and real social action in the community.

- Another type of program to avoid includes those games in which all responses to factual recall events are reduced to one-word answers. While trivia games are popular, the name of the game says it all; it is trivial. A curriculum of competition seems like a misapplication of energy distracting the students from social issues. These types of events lack context, social action, authentic problems, and real audiences. A long series of sorting events that point out winners and losers hardly enhance the abilities of students unless it is to prepare them for a career of watching game shows (Riley, 2011). There is little value to society for students to hit a buzzer faster than the rest of the people on the panel. Social studies is premised on citizenship education, rather than competitive losing; collaboration helps the child see that they not only have great talents, but that they also have a responsibility to the community. Educators need to make a careful examination of social studies enrichment to determine how they can enhance cooperation. Bees, bowls, and knowledge teams while popularized by media quiz shows do nothing to improve the community and even subtly popularize anti-intellectual attitudes that only nerds are smart rather than the idea that knowledge can be used by all people to improve the lives of people who live together as citizens in a community.

Conclusions

The four elements of adventure, content acceleration, power, and service elevation may be considered interactive in examples of social studies summer enrichment programs. However, the teacher must be very well prepared because of the rapid pace of the class, must be able to gauge the level of the students immediately, make modifications and adjustments based on their needs, or the class will be over before the instructor can make corrections. This requires a teacher with experience who has a variety of resources and personal connections on which they can draw (Coleman, 2014).

When living together in a democracy, students need to consider the ideas of social justice and the common good as well as when considering how to analyze historical events or evaluate problems in society. Students get opportunities to learn about these four elements in relations to

one another and in response to each other. Students get opportunities to develop adventure as part of their learning environment and learn content acceleration and enrichment through the experience. Students exercise power over their learning in enrichment experiences and feel the elevation of service through their program.

Students and their parents want additional challenges or additional experiences, and the students take specialized courses that either provide academic acceleration or enrichment during the summer (Henson, 2018). While many programs focus on math, science, or technology, the summer enrichment classes illustrate an important underrepresented model for summer social studies programming. Students at early ages get to sample social studies content, play with it, and determine if it is something they wish to pursue further as they gather for additional study on topics of interest.

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Figure 1: Summer Program Motivations

