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Abstract

Three criteria for meaningful student learning—construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school—are assessed as authentic learning outcomes for an implementation of a digital documentary project in two fifth grade history classrooms where teachers' practices are constrained by a high-stakes testing climate. In all three areas, there was ample evidence of student engagement in authentic intellectual work in the student-created movies. Only when teachers are ambitious in looking beyond test score outcomes will students have opportunities for meaningful and authentic intellectual experiences. (Keywords: Social studies, history, digital documentaries, authentic intellectual work, high-stakes testing)

Teachers will not take up ideas that sound attractive, no matter how extensive the research base, if the ideas are presented as general principles that leave the task of translating them into everyday practice entirely up to the teachers….What teachers need is a variety of living examples of implementation, as practiced by teachers with whom they can identify and from whom they can derive the confidence that they can do better. They need to see examples of what doing better means in practice (Black & William, 2008).

Researchers have begun to explore teachers' efforts to engage students in the development of short documentary films in a variety of curriculum areas. A number of researchers assert that student-produced digital videos provide a variety of benefits, including increased student motivation and engagement (Burn, Brindley, Durran, Kelsall, Sweetlove, & Tuohey, 2001; Hoffenberg & Handler, 2001; Kearney & Schuck, 2003; Ryan, 2002), opportunities for creative expression (New, 2006; Reid, Burn, & Parker, 2002), and a sense of student ownership (Kearney & Schuck, 2005). In many instances, the creation of student-produced films also provides opportunities for students to engage more deeply in the subject matter than might otherwise have been possible (Ferster, Hammond & Bull, 2006; Hammond & Ferster, 2009; Manfra & Hammond, 2008; Webeck, Hasty & French, 2006). Although these studies show promising results, there are also significant challenges and issues to consider in future work.

Perhaps the most problematic and fundamental challenge we have encountered in our own work with digital documentaries is the difficulty teachers face in devoting large blocks of time to a single project, particularly given the decreasing instructional time for social studies and the ever expanding scope of the social studies curriculum within high-stakes testing environments (Hofer & Swan, 2008; Hofer & Swan, 2007; Swan, Hofer & Levstik, 2007). Added to these pressures are expectations from professional organizations (e.g., National Council of the Social Studies, National Center for History in the Schools) that teachers engage their students in authentic intellectual work through higher-order thinking, interpretation or problem solving (King, Newmann & Carmichael, 2009).

The teachers we worked with in this study were excited about the possibilities of using digital historical documents and the opportunities to engage their students in authentic intellectual work, but, similar to many of their colleagues, these instructors faced the constraints of time, testing, and technology. Moreover, as the introductory quote suggests, teachers—particularly those with external testing or performance pressures—often struggle to translate the promises of pedagogical innovations, such as digital documentaries, into their own classroom realities. In other words, they lack "living examples of implementation" to help them know "what doing better means in practice."

In this case study, we report on the efforts of two fifth grade teachers within a high-stakes testing environment to engage students in developing digital documentary films and the degree to which students engaged in authentic intellectual work.

Theoretical Framework

Instructional frameworks that emphasize authentic intellectual work (King, Newmann, & Carmichael, 2009; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996; Scheurman & Newmann, 1998) may provide a way to ensure that standards-based instruction covers the key curricular content through the use of pedagogy that enables students' construction of knowledge. In an effort to operationalize these notions of authentic intellectual work, King, et al. (2009) offer three criteria for meaningful student learning: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school. These authors argue that construction of knowledge involves "organizing, interpreting, evaluating, or synthesizing prior knowledge to solve new problems (p. 44)." They further suggest that these skills should be taught in the context of learning experiences

rather than as discrete thinking skills. For these kinds of learning experiences to be effective, disciplined inquiry is also required. Disciplined inquiry includes (a) use of a prior knowledge base, (b) a focus on in-depth understanding rather than on superficial awareness, and (c) development and expression of ideas and findings through elaborated communication (King et al., 2009). Finally, the authors recommend that the work students are engaged in should have value beyond school—utilitarian, aesthetic, or personal. In other words, "activities and topics should not just be interesting to students, they should involve particular intellectual challenges that when successfully met would have meaning to students beyond complying with teachers' requirements" (King et al., 2009, p. 45).

Student construction of digital documentaries on curriculum-based topics may offer potential to both support students' acquisition of content knowledge and their engagement in authentic intellectual work. To explore this potential, we document two teachers' efforts to engage their students in a 5-day digital documentary project to challenge their students to more fully understand Irish immigration in the early 19th century. We ask: To what degree are students engaged in authentic intellectual work during the creation of a digital documentary film?

Method

Site Description and Participants
Two elementary social studies teachers and their students participated in a five-class-period exercise to create digital documentaries on Irish immigration in the late 19th century. In fifth grade classrooms in this state, students are tested in April on their understanding of a range of subject matter, including their knowledge of U.S. history, economic, and geographic benchmarks. The test itself comprises multiple choice questions as well as open-response items, including short-answer questions. The standards are comprehensive in nature and necessitate a fast-paced approach to content coverage. In both school

districts, administrators have mapped out curriculum for teachers, including a scope and sequence that tie directly to the content standards.

School A is a suburban elementary school, located 10 miles outside a major city in the south-central United States. The students are primarily Caucasian (97%), and 31% of the population is eligible for free and reduced lunch. State test scores in 2008 were precarious for this school—the students scored below the state's averages in social studies, reading, writing, and slightly above the average in math and science. Class sizes are small with 15–18 per FTE teacher. School B is a rural elementary school, located 40 miles outside a major city in the south-central United States. The students are primarily Caucasian (74%), Black (15%) and Hispanic (8%), and 39% of the population is eligible for free and reduced lunch. State scores in 2008 hovered around state averages, slightly above in reading and math and slightly below in social studies, science, and writing. Class sizes at School B are larger than School A, with 26–32 per FTE.

Ms. Smith was in her seventh year of teaching, last three years at School B, and Ms. Anthony was in her third year of teaching at School A when the digital moviemaking project took place. Although neither teacher had any experience with moviemaking, both were technologically facile: Each had a classroom website, both knew Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel fluently, and both were considered technology leaders on a Teaching American History Grant. Both teachers actively engaged in professional development and, in the case of technology, provided training to their fellow teachers.

Instructional Context
The teachers described several challenges in implementing the projects:

- The schools' computer labs were unavailable for use during the project. Because each teacher had only one computer and a projector in her classroom, she would need to plan a project with these technological limitations in mind.

- Each teacher explained that she was under significant pressure from her respective principal to bring the students' test scores well above state averages. As a result, each teacher could only devote five instructional periods to the project—and even this, they explained, was a challenge for any topic within the fifth grade curriculum map.

- The topic of the digital documentaries needed to be derived from the state standards and the districts' curriculum map. Because this unit took place in late spring, the teachers felt that 19th century immigration would be a good fit for the project in terms of the timing of the curriculum as well as content coverage needs.

- Each teacher was a novice with the digital documentary process, so each teacher decided to implement the moviemaking project with only one of her classes, indicating that she would create an additional project on a separate topic in U.S. history for all students after state testing in April.

- Both School A and B "departmentalize" social studies, mathematics, and science. Teachers in the fifth grade teams each take the subject in which they have the greatest expertise and teach all fifth graders that subject. These teachers were the social studies teachers within the fifth grade teams.

It is important to note that there were differences in the teachers' instructional implementation. Ms. Smith used the digital documentary experience in place of her normal curriculum related to the study of immigration. In this setting, the students in one of her classes completed the digital documentary project while the other two classes learned about 19th century immigration by working through a simulation of Ellis Island and other corresponding book work (i.e., reading and answering questions from the text). Ms. Anthony, on the other hand, chose to do this project with her homeroom class as an extension of her immigration unit after having taught the material. As part of her instruction on immigration, she used the immigration

simulation but also used direct teaching strategies, as she had larger class sizes and felt that she needed to cover material efficiently. Although all three of her classes learned about immigration in the same manner during their social studies class, Ms. Anthony used additional time during homeroom to have one of the classes complete the digital documentary project. Ms. Anthony's homeroom class met once a day for 30–45 minutes, with a total of 3.5 hours of additional instruction for the treatment group. The teachers at School B (Anthony's) use homeroom for disseminating school information (e.g., special events, initiatives and for guest speakers) as well as for extension exercises, such as the immigration project described in this study. All of the students in these homerooms were also students in Ms. Anthony's social studies class.

Materials/Equipment

Initially, the researchers on this study worked with the teachers to create a digital documentary toolkit to help minimize the technological and curricular challenges the teachers faced. The kit focused on 19th century Irish immigration to the United States and contained a number of items, including selected historical documents and images, a digital collection of period-specific music, and additional ancillary documents that the teacher could use in a whole-group setting to assist students in their understanding of the historical period. Although creating the kit required additional teacher preparation time, anticipating possible student choices and giving careful attention to providing multiple perspectives in the archival resources significantly reduced in-class time, provided a reusable resource for future projects, and encouraged more focused historical work that tied directly to the standards.

Procedures

Given the technical limitations of one computer per classroom, the teachers worked around the technology by putting the students in four groups with a packet of printed documents and resources from the toolkit anchored with a question:

- Group 1: Who were the Irish that immigrated?
- Group 2: Why did so many Irish come to America in the 1850s?
- Group 3: What did immigrants experience when they arrived in America?
- Group 4: What was life like for Irish immigrants in America?

Within each packet, the students were given an overview that addressed the question. Several primary source documents were also included. For instance, the packet for the group that investigated who immigrated contained an article from the New York Times (1852) that described the Irish immigrants, a table showing the number of immigrants to the United States from all countries (1820–1880), an 1850s advertisement from an Irish newspaper, and a series of "information wanted" advertisements from the Catholic Herald (1833–1856). Additionally, the students were given a series of images from the Lewis Hine collection of the immigrants who were processed at Ellis Island.

Both teachers placed students into the groups described above. Because of class sizes, groups at School A had three or four students, and School B groups had seven or eight students. A school assembly at School A and a guest speaker at School B slowed the schedule one day, which stretched the unit to 6 days. An instructional outline of the 6 days follows:

Day 1. The teacher showed students an example of a digital documentary and explained that by the end of the week, the students would create one too. She read the book Coming to America (1996) to the students and then presented an overview of the immigration unit. She put the students into four groups and introduced to the question that each group would address within the documentary.

Day 2. In groups, students read through the overview document in their packets, then individually created an organizer to help manage their note taking and began taking notes. Guided by the teacher in how to read a primary source, students selected a source from their packets and worked as a group to understand author, purpose, and meaning.

Day 3. The students began the day by looking at another digital documentary and discussing what worked and what did not in terms of the narrative, the visuals, and the overall aesthetic of the film. Students read two additional sources and began working on their narrative/script.

Day 4. Students worked the entire class period in groups on their scripts, which were to address each group's focus question. Each student was required to contribute to the script, and the teachers asked the students to use highlighters and colored pencils to distinguish an individual's contributions to the narrative. Each teacher structured the script for the documentary as a "readers' theater," so each student's content contribution was documented in the voiceover narration recorded for the complete digital documentary. The teacher met with each group to make sure the students were including evidence from the sources and that they were answering the guiding questions.

Day 5. The teachers arranged the groups into learning stations. The first learning station had students working with the teacher to make final edits to their script. In the second station, students practiced reading their scripts—working on inflection, taking turns, and using a microphone. Students in the third learning station chose the background music they would include in their section of the documentary using the collection of songs included with the kit. In the last learning station, students placed images along a timeline in Movie Maker and arranged the images to advance properly with the script.

Day 6. On the final day, the teacher had students prepare for a test independently at their desks while she pulled the groups of students to her desk to record their narrative parts. That night, the teacher put the movie together: She created title slides and transitions, added the narration to synchronize with the images that the students had selected, and then added the music that the students had selected. She pieced

Table 1. Newmann's Student Product Standards

Standard	Newmann's Description (1995)
Standard 1: Analysis	Student Performance demonstrates higher order thinking with social studies content by organizing, synthesizing, interpreting, evaluating, and hypothesizing to produce comparisons/contrasts, arguments, application of information to new contexts and consideration of different points of view. (p. 98)
Standard 2: Disciplinary Concepts	Student Performance demonstrates an understanding of ideas. Concepts theories and principles from the social disciplines and civic life by using them to interpret and explain specific, concrete information or events. (p. 99)
Standard 3: Elaborated Written Communication	Student Performance demonstrates an elaborated account that is clear, coherent and provides richness in details, qualifications, and argument. The standard could be met by elaborated consideration of alternative points of view. (p. 101)

together each group's work to create a single documentary film that she showed the next day to the students.

At the end of the project, the teachers collected a folder from each group. Each folder included a group storyboard and a script highlighting individual roles for the documentary. The teachers did not collect notes taken on the primary sources. When asked what final grades students were given, both teachers reported they gave all students an A for their work on their respective components of the final class documentary.

Data Sources

We employed a case-study design with multiple data sources to answer the research question (Stake, 1995). The data corpus for the study also includes classroom observations of the project work and students' scripts (also recorded as narration in the class documentary project). The teachers in each school also provided the researchers with the final version of each class' digital documentary. As a secondary source of data, we conducted postproject interviews with each teacher and made a focus group of five student participants from each documentary class.

Data Analysis

To explore the degree to which the documentary project engaged students in authentic intellectual work as defined by King, et. al., 2009, we utilized the Standards and Scoring Criteria for Student Performance (Newmann, Secada & Wehlage, 1995, which provides three standards to measure student products in terms of engagement with authentic intellectual work (see Table 1).

Student work is assessed for each of the three standards by assigning a score of 1–4. A score of 1 would indicate no

evidence of higher-order thinking, or unsatisfactory performance. A score of 4 in any area would indicate exceptional performance. The scoring guide for each standard differentiates the performance levels primarily by both the amount of the work that exhibits analytical thinking and the number of statements that "indicate that the student has successfully generalized, interpreted, tested, or synthesized specific information (Newmann, et. al., 1995, p. 99)."

We used the classroom observation notes to supplement the student work in the form of storyboards and final documentary films. This snapshot of how the students negotiated the construction of the film in their small groups helped us better understand the process of how they worked with the sources and identified the images, quotations, and music to include in the film to inform the level of intellectual engagement in the work. We used the student focus-group interviews to further elaborate the level of student engagement. Finally, we were also able to triangulate our observations of the process and student interviews with the teachers' impression of the group work in the follow-up interviews.

To generate the authenticity score for the documentaries, we independently rated student work on each of the three standards with a score of 1–4 using the scripts, storyboards, and final videos, supplemented with classroom observation notes. We scored the student documentaries holistically, rather than student by student, due to the collaborative nature of the work. The issue of how to best assess collaborative work is well documented, as are the benefits of using it to work on projects where time, effort, and—as in the case of our teachers—physical resources

for computing are problematic. This group effort involved substantial and documented individual "distributed" elements. But the final goal was the completed documentary. The teacher "stitched" together the final product due to technology constraints, but the students developed, sequenced, and narrated the content. After the individual scoring was complete, we compared and discussed our ratings, and in the instances where we differed, we assigned the lower rating score. The section Findings below describes the rating scale and scoring in detail.

Findings

Using Newmann's (1995) framework, we assessed the degree to which the digital documentary projects constituted authentic intellectual work. It is important to note that each class produced one documentary comprised of four parts anchored by the four questions provided to students:

1. Who were the Irish that immigrated?
2. Why did so many Irish come to America in the 1850s?
3. What did immigrants experience when they arrived in America?
4. What was life like for Irish immigrants in America?

Ms. Smith's students created Documentary A (7 minutes run time), and Ms. Anthony's students created Documentary B (6 minutes run time). In evaluating the documentaries, we scored each documentary as a whole according to Newmann's three student performance standards: analysis, disciplinary concepts, and elaborated written communication using the scoring guide described in the Instrumentation and Data Analysis sections above.

Standard 1: Analysis

While the students in both classes used a variety of documentary sources to support generalizations in their narratives, we gave Documentary B a score of 4 for analysis and gave Documentary A a score of 3, as students in Ms. Anthony's class seemed to use the sources with greater facility than the other class. Several themes emerged as we viewed the documentaries to evaluate the level of analysis evident, including the students' perspective taking with the documents, the way the students sourced the documents, and instances when students either misread or improperly contextualized the documents.

In each part of Documentary A and B, students excerpted at least one written source, although in most cases, they used several sources to build each of the narratives. These sources included multiple perspectives of the immigration experience. For example, in Documentary A, students included a direct quote from Frederick Douglass and an article from the Cork Examiner (1846) to embellish their account of the potato famine. As they described Ellis Island, the students referred to a 1907 New York Times article about the "1,000 Marriageable Girls," the list of legal questions that immigration officers at Ellis Island asked, and finally a quote from a daughter of an Italian Immigrant, Guiseppe Italiano, as he recounted his experience through Ellis Island. Similarly, in Documentary B, students included a constellation of voices from sources such as the Information Wanted Ads from The Catholic Herald (1833–1956), The Illustrated London News (1851), and Matthew Hale Smith (1868).

One way the students integrated the sources was through imaginative dialogue, a way of "interpreting meaning of personal roles, ideas or events" (Newmann, et al., 1995, p. 98). In both classes, students created skits and commentary on the immigrants' experiences. For example, in Documentary B, students used one of their documents, a list of questions that officers asked the immigrants at Ellis Island, to create a dialogue between the two. Students traded off the narration to bring the dialogue to life.

In Documentary A, students also crafted original commentary to summarize Frederick Douglass' trip to Ireland during the famine. A student reads the quote as Douglass:

> The spectacle that affects me most and made the most vivid impression in my mind was the frequency with which I met little children in the street at a late hour of the night, covered in filthy rags, and seated upon cold stone steps, or in corners, leaning against brick walls, fast asleep, with none to look upon them, and none to care for them.

Two students respond. The first student empathetically reads, "That is very sad," and the other replies sadly, "Indeed." In a later part of the script, the students do something similar. One student reads an excerpt from an article in the Cork Examiner (circa. 1846):

> A Coroner's Inquest was held … on the body of Daniel Hayes, who for several days subsisted almost on the refuse of vegetables, and went out on Friday morning in quest of something in shape of food, but he had not gone far when he was obliged to lie down, and, melancholy to relate, was found dead sometime afterward.

Students replied in unison with disbelief, "Died of starvation?" The reporter states, "Yep."

Sources were not always integrated seamlessly into the narrative, however. In some cases, use of the documents was a bit garbled, lacking appropriate transitions or introductions. For example, in Documentary B, when students discussed the scale of Irish immigration in the mid-19th century, the students seemed lost in the numbers. In this section, students alternated in reading the following items in successive order:

Student 5: "Between 1820 and 1860, the Irish constituted over one third of immigrants."

Student 6: "On Sunday last 3,000 immigrants arrived at this port. On Monday there were over 2,000."

Student 7: "On Tuesday over 5,000 arrived. On Wednesday the number was over 2,000."

Student 8: "A total of 12,000 persons landed for the first time upon American shores."

Although the students used a variety of sources in this instance, they did not contextualize the sources or explain their relationship. In fact, one issue that emerged consistently throughout both documentaries was the issue of sourcing. The students writing the scripts did one of two things when sourcing: (a) left out sourcing information entirely or (b) incompletely cited their sources. In the instances where they had partial information, students either chose to cite the author (e.g., "When Matthew Hale Smith visited five points, a famous very bad place to live, also very cheap, Smith remarked…") or to cite the date of the document (e.g., "That was written on October 30, 1846."). Because the teachers were both new to this documentary-making process and because time was an issue, they did not give the students clear instructions on how to cite within the digital documentary context.

Although the students' narratives certainly had areas for improvement, we agreed that students both imaginatively and "authentically" demonstrated analytical thinking with the historical sources provided to them by describing a significant event in U.S. history [Irish immigration] through organizing, synthesizing, and interpreting different perspectives using a variety of primary and secondary sources.

Standard 2: Disciplinary Concepts

Documentary A and B were both received a score of 3 out of 4 for disciplinary concepts, indicating good, but not exemplary understanding of the social context of Irish immigration.

Within each documentary, students offered reasons for vast numbers of Irish emigrating to America in the 1850s. Both groups focused on the potato blight as the core reason for this mass movement. One group not only acknowledged the potato blight itself, but also the fact that many Irish farmers were poor and had no "safety net" when the crops became diseased. In Documentary B, the students noted, "...the Irish came to America because 6 million of Ireland's 8 million people were poor farmers. As the blight continued in the next year and the next, people grew desperate." This group supported this statement with a personal account of a poor farmer who died of starvation in 1846. In Documentary A, the students also acknowledged the potato famine, but a close reading of the transcript showed an apparent lack of understanding. They state:

> It was a hard life for the Irish in 1843. For many of the Irish, renting land was difficult. If they didn't get to rent the land, they couldn't plant or grow their potatoes. And, and that's when the … potato, the … potato famine started. Many farms became infested with fungi. Since that was the only crop that the Irish could have, many became starved.

Although the students connect the Irish's reliance on potatoes as the staple crop and the devastating effects of the blight, in their discussion they did not clearly connect the concept of sharecropping and how this contributed to the desperation of many poor farmers. This group did, however, create an imaginative dialogue between a poor farmer and an interviewer that attempted to personalize the effects of the blight not only on the crops, but on individuals as well.

Neither group offered any further discussion of why Irish emigrated to the United States in the 1850s, other than one group's brief acknowledgement that a prior wave of Irish immigrants came to America in colonial times. Both groups also imagined an immediate end to the problems the Irish faced upon arriving in America.

One group suggested, "...we could start a new life and make many improvements. Then everything fell into place." Although the groups of students who focused their research on life in America for the new Irish immigrants focused on the harsh and challenging aspects, this group of students portrayed life in America as being "the answer to their prayers."

Students also described the significance of the historical event and explained the cause-and-effect relationships within the historical period. In terms of significance, the students in both classes emphasized the scale of Irish immigration in the mid-19th century by using immigration data to support their narrative. The first group noted that the Irish made up one-third of all immigrants during this period. They also provided daily totals of new immigrants within a week's time to help the viewer make more sense of the data. The second group took a similar tack, noting that between 1820 and 1880, 2.8 million Irish arrived in the United States. They also used data on specific vessels and ports to further contextualize the numbers.

To underscore the significance of these waves of immigration, both groups described the opportunities and challenges Irish immigrants faced both at Ellis Island and in their new communities in America. Both groups seemed to acknowledge both the positive and negative experiences of individuals at Ellis Island. For example, the first group provided an interesting anecdote from one immigrant:

> I remember my grandfather telling me how he could be rich in America because he saw riches in the architecture of Ellis Island. He felt that if they let the poor in such a gorgeous hall then life in the country was just.

The second group offered a similar type of quotation: "As we entered the harbor, I saw Lady Liberty, holding the flame of freedom, and I would cherish that moment forever."

In addition to these romanticized notions of the Ellis Island experience, both groups also emphasized the harsh reality of entering America. Both groups

focused on the "intake" experience in which newcomers to Ellis Island were asked a myriad of questions and subjected to numerous physical, psychological, and educational tests. One group offered direct quotations to capture the experience, such as, "We were marched down the gang way like so many sheep, each one was being counted and scrutinized by a score of officials and conducted, what I might term a cattle pen." In describing the Ellis Island experience, both groups seemed to understand that for many immigrants, the experience included hardships that preceded the opportunities of the "New World."

In the final sections of the documentaries, both groups exclusively emphasized the poor living conditions of most new Irish immigrants. Students drew heavily from the sources when describing tenement life. The second group referenced a firsthand account of the notorious Five Points neighborhood: "Lodging Houses are underground, foul, and slimy, without ventilation and often without windows and overrun with rats and every species of vermin." Both groups also noted the bias against the new Irish Catholic arrivals but did not provide much explanation other than to note, "In the mid 19th century, people did not trust Catholics."

In sum, the students drew heavily on the sources they were provided to describe some key aspects of the Irish immigrant experience. However, little emphasis on cause and effect or comparison with other immigrant groups was evident in the films. As noted above, this could have been a function of the students' limited understanding or a missed opportunity within the instructional design.

Standard 3: Elaborated Written Communication

Documentaries A and B both received scores of 3 out of 4 points for elaborated written communication, indicating narratives in which "the details, qualifications, and nuances are expressed within a coherent framework intended for the reader, relevant to the topic, and without major inaccuracies (Newmann, et, al., 1995, p. 101)."

The narrative format of a documentary film affords students the opportunity to express their understanding in more nuanced ways than might be possible in a more expository format. One of the strengths of the documentary genre is the ability to create a mood and evoke sensory elements of a historical period. Each documentary began with a title slide, and a text slide of the group's question introduced each of the four parts. Within each section, students took turns narrating the script and selecting images and music that complemented their narratives.

In some cases, the students' image selection literally "painted a picture" and helped tell the story. For example, as the student read the grandfather's quote, "I remember my grandfather telling me how he could be rich in America because he saw riches…," the image of Ellis Island appeared just as he finished "in the architecture of Ellis Island." In the background, the traditional Irish flute song Good Natured Man faintly played while the student read the source. When interviewed, one of the students said, "Even without the words, the pictures could tell it all." While in some cases, this was true, in others instances it was not. In the same section described above, for example, Student 2 talks about the full range of legal questions asked of immigrants, and the image appears mismatched. Instead of using the last image within the sequence of immigrants moving through inspections, the image selected is of a group of immigrants aboard a ship bound for America. Given the time limitations on the students and the lack of experience the majority of the fifth graders had in the medium, we felt these idiosyncrasies were more a function of a lack of deliberate selection rather than inaccuracies per se.

As discussed in the findings from standards 1 and 2 above, there were instances throughout both films when the students creatively used first-person, fictionalized accounts to recreate aspects of Irish immigration in the 19th century. The documentary genre helped bring dimension to this dialogue by providing opportunities for students to give dramatic readings. Although the observations revealed that students had some initial trepidation about oral presentation and speaking into a microphone, additional practice on day 4 of the project gave students an opportunity to overcome fears. Students recorded and then asked to re-record several times, wanting to hear each iteration. When they watched the completed films, students expressed pride as their voices were heard among their peers, and each student's contribution was not lost, as can be the case with some collaborative work. Ms. Smith echoed this notion in an interview: "I think they loved that each student had a piece of it."

In summary, the students used this multimodal video format to develop a "generalized narrative of events" (Newmann, et.al., 1995, p. 83) and successfully used this form of communication to elaborate their narrative.

Discussion and Implications

It was clear from the data that this particular intervention was quite promising in terms of engaging students in authentic intellectual work as described by Newmann. Interestingly, even in examining the degree to which the students engaged in authentic intellectual work in the project, the end product did not always clearly represent the students' analytical and knowledge-building processes. Particularly in the section focused on analysis, it was often difficult to ascertain the specific types of analysis the students engaged in to create their narratives and final films. Often in scoring the work, we had to infer why the students might have made particular choices in terms of referencing and contextualizing the historical sources. This could have been mitigated through more deliberate attempts to capture this thinking in the design of the pedagogical process employed in the project. For example, the teachers could have included document analysis guides for each of the historical documents with sourcing prompts that would have better captured their thought processes. They might also have asked students to more explicitly contextualize the sources they chose to incorporate in the narrative and storyboard. Similarly, on the storyboard, the teachers could have required students to write a brief reflection for why they chose to pair each image and music selection with particular parts of their written narratives. However, realistically, there was already scant time for the project. An entire day might be built into such a unit for feedback and analysis as a future pedagogical suggestion. Finally, in terms of research design, perhaps we might have employed a think-aloud procedure that might also have captured some of the decision-making the students employed throughout the project. In some ways, though, this process may be difficult to elucidate, given the developmental level of these students (who are between 10 and 11 years old) and given the practical time constraints within which these teachers worked.

One might reasonably ask whether or not the same type of authentic intellectual work might be more easily leveraged without the technology. The teachers in this study, for example, offered other types of opportunities to engage students in working with historical documents and attempting to understand the perspective of Irish immigrants. Setting aside the connections with the student technology standards in the state and the motivating element of this type of work for students (Lenhart & Madden, 2005; Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007), when we scored the documentaries on the elaborated written communication standard, it was clear that the documentary medium provided significant affordances. In this medium, students were able to creatively provide multimodal representations of their understanding of the historical topic. The ability for students to pair music and images with their narratives provided the potential to develop a richer, more nuanced treatment of their topic. Additionally, by literally giving students a voice in the work, they were able to contribute to the mood and tone of the films through their narrations. Comments from both the students and teachers following the project suggested that creating the documentaries provided students with a high degree of both affective and intellectual engagement and ownership of their work.

Conclusion

The teachers with whom we worked in this study face a myriad of challenges every day, including meeting and exceeding state standards, contending with decreasing instructional time for social studies, engaging their students in historical thinking and analysis, and integrating technology in authentic and meaningful ways, just to name a few. Grant (2007b) defines teachers, such as Ms. Anthony and Smith, "who push hard to create opportunities for powerful teaching and learning despite contextual factors … that may be pushing them in different directions" (p. 253) as "ambitious." He further explains:

> Ambitious teachers take no elixir that offer immunities from the influence of their state exams. Instead, they understand the challenges that state tests pose and they factor those challenges into the mix of ideas and influences they consider when creating and teaching instructional units. (p. 253)

This type of documentary project is an illustration of ambitious teaching in practice.

In the end, despite some of the missed opportunities in terms of the student products as well as the project design, we were encouraged that digital documentaries provided opportunities for students to engage in authentic intellectual work in the context of this standards-based curriculum. Our hope is that this study, along with future research, will provide teachers and teacher educators a model, albeit imperfect, to translate authentic intellectual work into everyday classroom practice.

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