

## ABSTRACT

KEATING, WILLIAM. Delivering Content During an Inquiry in the Social Studies Classroom: An Action Research Approach (Under the direction of Dr. John K. Lee)

This study utilizes action research to examine the design and implementation of inquiry-based teaching in a middle school social studies classroom. As a practitioner, fulfilling the role of teacher and researcher, I sought to better understand my teaching practices. To do so, I collected multiple forms of data that would help me understand successful teaching of content, which would aid students in their ability to create and support claims. Data for this study reflected teacher and student perspectives. As the practitioner, I maintained a journal, which was completed throughout the planning and implementation process, as well as jotted and memoed key materials related to the inquiry. Student work was collected and analyzed, and included all inquiry tasks, as well as exit tickets that asked students open-ended questions about the lesson completed that day. Data were analyzed using open coding. The analysis of students' summative tasks involved an additional coding process that included a priori coding and analysis using the Persuasive Claim Framework (PCF). The analysis of data resulted in three key findings; 1) Designing an inquiry is a complex process, 2) Implementation of an inquiry requires specific teacher moves, and 3) Students created and supported claims with varying levels of success.

**Keywords:** Action Research, Inquiry-Based Teaching, Middle School Social Studies, Content, Claim-Making, and Inquiry.

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Delivering Content During an Inquiry in the Social Studies Classroom: An Action Research  
Approach (Under the direction of Dr. John K. Lee)

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to all that have helped me get here. To my sons Liam and Evan, you are my inspiration, and I am truly blessed to be your father. I hope that one day you will see this accomplishment as an example of resilience and persistence. To my father, thank you for leading the way and instilling in me the importance of education and taking on difficult tasks. To everyone else in my family that provided guidance and support (in no particular order); Uncle Jack and Aunt Laurie, Aunt Jean and Uncle Mark, Aunt Lori and Uncle Kevin, thank you for your help along the way! Your support was crucial and contributed to everything I have accomplished. Lastly, a very important shout out to the faculty of the TELS Department at North Carolina State University. Thank you for pushing me to be a better student, as well as teaching me the principles of research design, rich social studies content, and skills that I can apply to every aspect of my career. A special thanks to Dr. Lee, who stuck with me throughout this long process, and went above and beyond in your support. Thank you all again!

## **BIOGRAPHY**

I was born and raised in Upstate New York. Growing up, I was always interested in playing sports and had a passion for playing hockey. My childhood was spent playing on travel teams, almost year-round, and focusing on schoolwork. From an early age, the importance of education was emphasized and viewed as something that would lead to more opportunities. Over the course of my K-12 education, I developed an interest in social studies, particularly in what constituted historical fact. After completing high school, I thought I would use my understanding of history to work as a teacher and completed my bachelor's and master's degrees in teaching secondary social studies.

I began my teaching career as a substitute teacher for various school districts in Upstate New York before relocating to North Carolina. My first full time teaching position was in Hertford County. I eventually relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina and enrolled in the Curriculum & Instruction program at North Carolina State University. I believed this would improve my teaching practices.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## CHAPTER 1

### Overview

Confucius once said, “by three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third, by experience, which is the bitterest.” This quote suggests there are different ways to acquire wisdom, and by extension, knowledge and good judgment. Education offers students opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop important intellectual judgment. Accomplishing these aims requires good pedagogy. Unfortunately, when it comes to teaching and learning in social studies, traditional teaching practices often stand in the way of students acquiring the knowledge and judgment needed to navigate a complex contemporary society.

All teachers want their students to acquire knowledge and good judgment irrespective of content area. In delivering on these aims, social studies teachers have a unique challenge. They must teach their students a plethora of content, which sometimes feels impossible, and they must do so in a way that enables students to develop transferable skills, such as the capacity to make sound intellectual judgments. In addition to good intellectual judgment, social studies teachers need to teach content knowledge. Content knowledge, in its most basic form, can be described as knowing facts or concepts from the multitude of disciplines that make up social studies (Barr, 1997; Shulman, 1986). Transferable skills can be described as any skill that can be applied to other facets of life or another academic area. Effectively teaching content and transferable skills requires social studies teachers to recognize the complexity of contemporary society, the problems with traditional ways of teaching social studies (e.g., lecture) given those complexities, and ultimately how inquiry pedagogy may allow for students to build up their content knowledge and develop transferable skills in powerful ways.

Social studies is a subject students' love or hate. This common view among students may be a product of the teaching practices that have driven social studies for a long time. Traditional teaching practices for social studies include lectures and relying on the textbook for historical knowledge. Broadly defined, a lecture is the act of a teacher imposing knowledge on students by directly telling them what they need to know. Students who are subjected to lectures often take notes, a requirement that strips students of their capacity to make meaning of their engagement with content and reduces learning to the rote exercises of recording, remembering, and retelling someone else's content knowledge. Russell (2010) reminds us that most social studies teachers spend half their time teaching through lectures. The popularity, and use of this teaching practice, negatively impacts students. Russell & Pelligrino (2008) suggest that lecture makes learning experiences boring for students, and they often do not see the purpose of the information they are learning. The implications for students learning content and transferable skills are clear. If students are bored in class, they are not engaged. If they are not engaged, they are not learning content, or building transferable skills.

The problems with lectures are amplified when looking at issues related to textbooks. Textbooks have been a stalwart in social studies classes since the establishment of the field. Textbooks have seemingly always been present, even when new and more student-centered curriculum approaches were used. An excellent example of this phenomenon was the development of new textbooks by Harold Rugg, who sought to make social studies more relevant in the 1930s. Despite the introduction and use of Rugg's textbooks in social studies classes, pedagogies did not shift. Loewen (1995) points out that textbooks present biased content coverage, overlook historical analysis, present misleading information on historical events to prevent controversy, and lack depth. Anthony & Miller (2014) agrees and builds on the ideas of

Loewen (1995) by stating that textbooks lack depth when describing people and events in the past, as well as fail to challenge students' preconceived notions about content. Wineburg (2018) brings this critique forward, arguing that contemporary progressive teachers using textbooks such as Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, are guilty of the same pedagogical sins of transmission, which include denying students' agency in creating their own knowledge. This prevents students from learning content and transferable skills. In this condition, students are limited in the content knowledge they can learn and the skills they develop. The resulting limitations of social studies pedagogy are detrimental to students.

So, where does that leave us? What are the consequences of bad pedagogy and the shallow learning and inadequate instructional resources that are prevalent in traditional social studies classrooms? First, we must acknowledge the unique context of social studies teaching and learning today. Students today are growing up in complex environments where information is readily available, but using that information demands careful and critical analysis. This type of thinking should be nurtured in social studies classes through strategic instructional practices. If students fail to learn content and transferable skills in their social studies classes, they are ill prepared to navigate the information age successfully. The learning imperative of this information age is multi-layered. Students must leave school with digital literacy skills that set them up for success in economic and social contexts. This means they can locate, critique, and communicate information using technology in ways that enable and enhance the exchanges we have in social and economic settings. Students must also accept an increased civic responsibility in critiquing and communicating information. The demands placed on citizens in order to navigate the technology-enabled world of civic engagement are considerable. If young people fail to build up the critical skills needed to manage their social, economic, and civic life, they are

vulnerable to false and misleading information that weaken the aims of a pluralistic democratic society.

Living in the information age requires students to learn specific content and transferable skills in social studies. Locating, critiquing, and communicating information are three distinct skills that apply to social studies. Some might argue that access to information means that knowing (remembering) content is not important because looking up an answer to a question is quick and easily accessible. Other scholars refute this idea because, so the argument goes, building content knowledge required a level of engagement with source material that a quick search cannot facilitate. Barzilai & Zohar (2008) state that learning information is an important part of curriculum in the information age. Further, developing some social studies content knowledge, allows students to learn more. Marzano (2004) suggests that learning vocabulary serves as background knowledge, which in turn allows students to learn increasingly complex ideas. Willingham (2002) states that inflexible (i.e., content) knowledge becomes flexible knowledge when it is applied. For social studies, this means that learning some content will allow for more complex thinking when it is applied in new settings. Given these claims, that content and transferable skills are relevant in the information age, social studies teachers need to use a teaching pedagogy that allows students to learn them simultaneously. One such pedagogical approach that allows this type of learning is inquiry.

Inquiry has a long history in social studies and has recently become the foundation for a new standards-based framework, as well as a new approach for planning instruction. Colburn (2000) states that inquiry is “the creation of a classroom where students are engaged in essentially open-ended, student centered, hands-on activities” (Colburn, 2000, p. 42). Inquiry in this format is not a new idea, as many of these ideas can be linked to John Dewey. Dewey (1916)

stated that students learn by doing and implied that they think better when presented with a problem or issue. Since Dewey first presented his ideas, inquiry has been used in social studies classrooms in various places and formats.

Contemporary inquiry practices are guided by the College, Career & Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards, and the Inquiry Design Model (IDM). When planning an inquiry, the C3 Framework and IDM are useful tools for social studies teachers. The C3 Framework is a set of guidelines to help states develop and upgrade existing standards (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). The Inquiry Arc within the C3 Framework functions as an inspiration for how educators might implement inquiry in their classrooms. The Inquiry Arc walks teachers through four sequential dimensions for conceptualizing an inquiry. These dimensions include, 1) developing questions and planning inquiries, 2) Applying disciplinary concepts and tools, 3) evaluating sources and using evidence, and 4) Communicating conclusions and taking informed action.

In addition to the broad ideas put forward with by the Inquiry Arc, the Inquiry Design Model puts forward an instructional articulation of the Inquiry Arc and a design path for building inquiries. The IDM is grounded in questions, sources, and tasks (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017). The C3 Framework and IDM provide opportunities for teachers to help their students to develop deep content knowledge and practice with transferable skills in meaningful, relevant, and question-driven contexts.

The components of the C3 Framework and IDM imply, or directly state, opportunities for students to learn content and transferable skills. The first dimension of the C3 Framework is about developing questions and planning inquiries. The IDM situates questions as a core component in the model. Questions can be developed with the input of students, but often

teachers design the questions given the demands of standards and content. The second dimension in the C3 Framework is about the content from the disciplines. This content is expressed in the disciplinary sources that comprise an inquiry. The third dimension in the C3 is about making claims with evidence from sources. In the IDM, those claims, as well as other expressions of students' knowledge and practice with skills are part of the tasks students complete. The IDM allows students to learn content and practice with transferable skills using sources to complete tasks. Students learn content from the sources and demonstrate in depth understanding by using various skills to analyze sources. For example, a student reading a primary source with difficult language must apply literacy skills to comprehend the source.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Given the needs of the information age and demands of citizenship in these times, social studies teachers stand to benefit from using inquiry-based approaches in their classrooms and practices founded on the principles of the C3 Framework and IDM. Inquiry challenges the traditional failures of social studies because it provides students with an engaging and thoughtful learning environment (Blessinger, Carfora, & Ahmad, 2014). These engaging inquiry-based learning experiences allow students to accumulate a deep and diverse knowledge base that holds the potential to enhance students' opportunities to learn content and develop transferable skills in order to navigate our complex information-based contemporary society.

While the general notion of inquiry is a useful approach for helping students learn content knowledge and develop skills, we need to know more about how the C3 Framework and IDM are implemented in classrooms. The C3 Framework and IDM might establish what a social studies teacher needs to design inquiry curriculum materials, but we need to know more about how to implement an inquiry. The context of an inquiry is also important. Blessinger, Carfora, &



Ahmad (2014) note that inquiry-based teaching and learning varies greatly in the classroom. The instructional decisions teachers make when planning and implementing an inquiry are central to its success. To implement an inquiry using the C3 Framework and IDM, teachers need to make instructional decisions about how they will support students' as they work with sources to develop content knowledge and practice with inquiry and disciplinary skills. This research will shed light on the instructional decisions teachers must make when implementing an inquiry designed with the C3 Framework and IDM in mind.

### **Research Questions**

This research study examined how I supported my middle grades students as they engaged with subject matter content in an inquiry. I planned the inquiry featured in this research study using the C3 Framework and IDM. To address the issues of how students engage content through inquiry, this research answers the following question; How does a middle school social studies teacher effectively facilitate the learning of content knowledge through inquiry? Three additional questions expand the research.

1. What processes does a middle school social studies teacher go through when planning an inquiry using the IDM?
2. What does a middle school social studies teacher do to teach content in an inquiry using the IDM?
3. How is content learned and applied by students through inquiry?

### **Significance**

The significance of this study was twofold. First, this research provided me with general clarity on how teachers may effectively implement an inquiry. In this sense, I defined effectiveness as students' ability to develop content knowledge for the purpose of creating an

evidence-based claim. Second, my research improved my instructional practices. As a teacher, I intend to be a lifelong learner and seek to refine my teaching practices to maximize my students' potential.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Inquiry Uses in Contemporary K-12 Education**

The K-12 educational community has seen an increased emphasis on inquiry. Scholarship about inquiry teaching practices has been extended to all four core areas of public education. New work on inquiry in all subject areas focuses on student engagement, curriculum, literacy, and teacher agency (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017; MacKenzie & Bathurst-Hunt, 2018; Marshall, 2013; Wilhelm, 2007).

The work of Wilhelm (2007) promotes key points for social studies teachers to consider when using inquiry in their classrooms. One key idea that Wilhelm (2007) points out is that inquiry can accomplish key curricular goals, related to depth and breadth. This is an important idea because it suggests that depth of knowledge, and understanding of a historical event, is more important than only knowing some information about that event. The second key idea that Wilhelm (2007) points out, is that inquiry questions need to generate student interest on a topic. Increased student interest will then result in a higher level of student engagement.

Quigley, Marshall, Deaton, Cook, & Padilla (2011) write from a science teacher perspective about the barriers of implementing effective inquiry, as well as suggestions to overcome those barriers. Although not specifically for social studies, their work reflects the increasing popularity inquiry pedagogy is experiencing. A key point suggested in the article applies to inquiry in any subject area. Focusing on the importance of feedback, Quigley, et al (2011) emphasize its role in sustaining inquiries and the need for teachers to relinquish some traditional aspects of authority. In other words, teachers in this role have to become a facilitator of learning rather than an autonomous leader that tells students what to know.

Inquiry has also been used in mathematics, providing key ideas that translate to other subject areas. Marshall (2013) believes that the use of inquiry is tied to students' preparation for contemporary society by stating "a successful 21st century learner must be able to think critically, communicate ideas effectively, and collaborate with others," as well as "work with large data sets, design experiments, and work collaboratively to seek solutions to real world problems that rarely have a single answer" (Marshall, 2013, p. 17-18). Here the connection to inquiry in social studies is finding solutions to problems that don't have a single answer. The questions that guide inquiry in social studies typically do not have a single answer. There are multiple perspectives that can be used to answer them.

Social studies scholars have also recently analyzed and promoted the benefits of inquiry in the classroom. For example, Grant, Swan, and Lee (2017) recently outlined a new conceptualization of inquiry in social studies focused on questions, tasks, and sources. Their work documents the importance of inquiry and ties it to a planning template called the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) that was created specifically for social studies. The work by Grant, Swan, and Lee (2017), and other scholars in different content areas, demonstrates a new emphasis on inquiry predicated on the consensus belief of scholars that it is a proven and effective teaching methodology.

### **History of Inquiry in Social Studies**

This new emphasis on inquiry has emerged in the shadow of a long history of inquiry thinking in social studies. In the early twentieth century, inquiry in social studies was centered around the reflective thinking ideas of John Dewey. At the heart of reflective thinking, or reflective inquiry, is the idea that one should actively search for answers to questions, as well as to be prepared to ask more questions (Dewey, 1933). When applied to social studies, new approaches for teaching social studies using inquiry began to take shape. Inquiry in the 1960s

emphasized students learning to think based on the disciplinary fields that make up teaching and learning in social studies (de Leeuw, 1967; Lloyd, 1971; Ortgeisen, 1968; Wiggins & Sperling, 1968). Inquiry in the 1970s sought to explicitly connect social issues to social studies by having teachers facilitate the answers to interesting questions (Dow, 1971; Massailias, 1970). The 1980s brought another element to inquiry. The idea of inquiry began to be tied to the philosophical underpinnings and the purposes of social studies (Brandhorst & Splittgerber, 1987; Cherryholmes, 1981; Earle, 1982; Ross, 1985; Ross, 1987; Shermis, 1982). These purposes included social studies as citizenship transmission, social science, or reflective inquiry (Shermis & Barth, 1980). In the 1990s inquiry began to be connected more closely to academic disciplinary tasks, particularly focused on historical thinking and knowledge construction (Foster & Padgett, 1999; Levstik & Barton, 1997; Mayer, 1998; VanFossen & Shively, 1997; Yeager, 1994). The 2000s have brought a renaissance for a classical version of inquiry, harkening back to Dewey's ideas a century earlier, as inquiry once again became more closely tied to the civic and humanistic purposes of social studies as represented in the C3 Framework (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013).

### **C3 Framework and a New Approach to Inquiry**

The publication of the C3 Framework in 2013 represented a pivot point in the history of inquiry in social studies. The Inquiry Arc within the C3 Framework provided a new context for social studies educators to think about inquiry, both in theory and in practice. Since 2013, the C3 Framework has served as an important context for both empirical scholarship on inquiry and social studies (e.g., Bickford & Bickford, 2022; Manfra & Greiner, 2020; Thacker & Friedman, 2017) and for descriptive scholarship in this area (e.g., Caffrey & Journell, 2019; Giliken, Hubbard, & Stapleton, 2019; Hlavacik & Krutka, 2021). It should be noted that the predominance of scholarship on inquiry since 2013, and the publication of the C3 Framework,

has been descriptive and focused on classroom practice. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has facilitated a considerable body of descriptive scholarship on C3 Framework inspired educational practices in social studies through its flagship publications, *Social Education*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, and *Middle Level Learning*. At the date of this writing, NCSS had published 38 articles in these three publications alone.

Inquiries designed with the C3 Framework in mind aim to provide students with authentic educational experiences in the social studies classroom that extend outside of the classroom (Brush & Saye, 2008; Dariolia, 2020; Holmes & Manfra, 2022; Caffrey & Journell, 2019). The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) has framed much of the recent work on designing inquiry materials for social studies teaching and learning. Authentic educational experiences that are part of inquiries created with IDM aim to provide students with skills and knowledge to successfully participate in society. For example, Holmes & Manfra (2022) examined approaches to participatory literacy and found that inquiry learning supported students taking informed action. Dariolia (2020) and Caffrey & Journell (2019) explored inquiries that focused on controversial issues and participation in contemporary society, and found that they offered a lot of potential for transformative instruction that humanized events and allowed for a focus on civic mindedness. Civic mindedness, or knowledge relating to civic education, is a key component of contemporary inquiry design.

### **Contemporary Literature on Inquiry in Social Studies**

A focus on civics is prevalent in contemporary scholarship on inquiry. This work spans across academic levels and is utilized to achieve different learning outcomes. The C3 Framework describes civics as “the study of how people participate in governing society. (p.31).” Generally speaking, participation in society is closely related to citizenship, and the current state of inquiry as reflected in the literature projects a stance that citizenship is important for students to learn

because it will inspire and drive their participation in society. The literature reflects a focus on civic-oriented inquiries implemented in the K-12 social studies classroom that were designed to make connections to key content and skills, and application of content and skills (Caffrey & Journell, 2019; Holmes & Manfra, 2022; Maddox, Howell, & Saye, 2018; Muetterties & Bronstein, 2020). Through an inquiry that emphasized history and civics, Muetterties & Bronstein (2020) found that students reassessed their own views in preparation for civic life. Maddox, Howell, & Saye (2018) connected geography and civic problems to explore ethical decision making.

The literature also includes scholarship on teacher preparation programs that have utilized inquiry design to prepare prospective teachers. In a piece that sought to address preparation for teachers implementing inquiry in their classrooms, Cuenca (2021) contended that teacher education programs should prepare prospective teachers to use inquiry to extend into the civic lives of students. In a related work, Doornbos (2020) put this idea into action. Doornbos (2020) explored an elementary social studies methods course that included an inquiry in which teachers had to grasp the significance of the past and engage in taking informed action using children's literature.

Recent scholarship on inquiry in social studies has also focused on the connections between inquiry in social studies and global learning. To understand these connections, Rapoport (2020) examined individual state social studies standards and their alignment with the C3 Framework's standards related to global citizenship. Rapoport (2020) found that eight out of nineteen states that he examined referenced the C3 Framework. While the connections to the C3 Framework were in common, these states varied in how they conceptualized understandings linked to global citizenship. For those states where the connections between global learning and

the C3 Framework were limited, Rapaport (2020) suggested that the lack of emphasis, or inclusion, of global citizenship in state standards was likely political and “misunderstood and simplified idea of patriotism” (Myers, 2006). Although global citizenship may be lacking, or offer varying conceptual understandings, teachers have sought to include global citizenship through inquiry.

In addition to examining the standards that guide classroom instruction, scholars have also examined inquiries that have focused on developing global citizenship. Johnson & Hamblin (2022) explored three different inquiries that intended to teach students global citizenship. Their coverage of these inquiries included a template for designing inquiries and the resources used to teach them. Further, the inquiries themselves were conscious of wording in the questions themselves and written in a way to support a global perspective. Johnson & Hamblin (2022) state that they believe more development is needed to develop global citizenship using inquiry.

In contrast to the focus on citizenship and global learning, other scholarship on inquiry teaching and learning in social studies has sought to use inquiry as a means to improve the learning of historical content. Lee & Swan (2018) described how educational policy has privileged the discipline of history in social studies, and found that history has served as a useful disciplinary context for inquiry design and implementation. To improve the learning of historical content to make it more meaningful for students, scholars have put forward lots of related inquiry models (Brush & Saye, 2008; Hlavacik & Krutka, 2022; Johnson & Hamblin, 2022; Saye & Brush, 2012). For example, Brush & Saye, 2008 used inquiry pedagogy to focus on historical dilemmas. Another example can be found in Hlavacik & Krutka’s (2022) work, where they applied civic litigation to have students review controversies in a legal format. Both studies provided effective outcomes on student learning.



Recent scholarship is replete with examinations of how inquiry teaching and learning compliments and extends other pedagogical stances. In fact, inquiry pedagogy has been found to be compatible with lots of other pedagogical approaches. (Barko-Alva, Maysyada, & Norez, 2022; Bickford & Bickford, 2022; Brush & Saye, 2008; Caffrey & Journell, 2019; Clouse, 2018; Fleming, 2016; Johnson & Hamblin, 2022; Gillikin, Hubbard, & Stapleton, 2019; Hilburn, Buchanan, & Journell, 2019; Hlavcik & Krutka, 2021; Hammond, Oltman, & Manfra, 2020; Holmes & Manfra, 2022; Kasai, Noborimoto, & Ito, 2017; Saye & Brush, 2012; Thacker, Lee, Fitchett, & Journelle, 2018; Watkins & Hubbard, 2023). Barko-Alva, Maysyada, & Norez (2022) combined inquiry with approaches for dual language bilingual education. Bickford & Bickford (2022) used inquiry approaches with an interdisciplinary unit that included two tiered multimodal assessments. Clouse (2018) combined inquiry with critical geography. Brush & Saye (2008) explored a problem-based inquiry focusing on historical dilemmas. Caffrey & Journell (2019) examined an inquiry that humanized historical events. Fleming (2016) included critical literacy and information literacy into a course that featured inquiry. Johnson & Hamblin (2022) analyzed the use of language when students engaged in an inquiry focusing on global citizenship. Gillikin, Hubbard, & Stapleton (2019) sought to create a framework for teaching about religion using inquiry. Hilburn, Buchanan, & Journell (2019) utilized the study of film to humanize social issues during an inquiry. Hlavick & Krutka (2021) combined inquiry with litigative discourse to examine the 1960's civil rights movement. Hammond, Oltman, & Manfra (2020) examined the inclusion of computational thinking into teaching inquiry-based lessons. Holmes & Manfra (2022) combined inquiry with participatory literacy. Saye & Brush (2012) investigated how technology can be used to support inquiry. Watkins & Hubbard (2023) explored an inquiry focused on critical thinking. The combination of inquiry with other pedagogies is significant, as

it illustrates the dynamic nature of inquiry and its capacity to function as a vessel of sorts for a wide variety of pedagogical ideas.

Inquiry has also been used as a tool to develop additional teaching frameworks or teaching approaches (Brush & Saye, 2017; Hammack, Matherson, & Wilson, 2002; Hong & Melville, 2018; Molebash, Lee, & Heinecke, 2019; Wilkerson, 2022; Saye & Brush, 2012). Brush & Saye (2017) created a framework for Problem Based Historical Inquiry that included a central question, culminating activity and specific approaches for content selection and scaffolding. The development of this framework led to the analysis of implementation and professional development for using Problem Based Inquiry in far reaching contexts (Saye & Brush, 2012; Saye, Kohlmeier, Brush, Mitchell, & Farmer, 2012). Hammock, Matherson, & Wilson (2022) sought to give teachers a framework for investigating a specific event, the social impact of the Olympic games. Hong & Melville (2018) created a framework for inquiry that included the development of geographic information systems (GIS) in lesson plans. Molebash, Lee, & Heinecke (2019) created a framework for teachers to learn how to develop interdisciplinary inquiries called the Teaching and Learning Inquiry Framework (TLIF). Wilkerson (2022) created a modified version of the IDM to improve teaching of religious beliefs. Newly developed frameworks, as well as the incorporation of various pedagogical influences again demonstrates the adaptability of inquiry as a general approach to teaching and learning.

Scholarship on the implementation of inquiries in the social studies classroom has demonstrated a wide range of applicability to local classroom contexts. For example, Saye & Brush (2012) described differences in the implementation of inquiry teaching that occurred due to differences in how teachers contextualized knowledge, varying levels of student engagement, varying levels of complexity in the content, and the amount of knowledge provided to students

by the teacher. Further, Saye & Brush (2012) attributed much of these differences to the influence of teachers' epistemological beliefs, their beliefs about teaching and learning, their pedagogical knowledge and vision, as well as teachers' dispositions. Other scholars have confirmed many of these findings. For example, Thacker, Lee, Fitchett, & Journell (2018) found that teachers' pedagogical knowledge impacted implementation. Manfra & Greiner (2020) found that teachers relied on pedagogical content knowledge and beliefs, or assumptions about knowledge and views, when navigating instructional shifts that occur over the course of an inquiry. Varying implementation of inquiry directly tied to pedagogical knowledge suggests that teacher training is a key component of successful inquiry design and implementation.

The review of literature on the recent uses of inquiry teaching and learning in social studies, shows that teachers need training on how to design and implement inquiry in social studies. The literature suggests that the implementation of inquiries requires that teachers scaffold learning for students to positively impact student learning (Barko-Alva, Masyada, & Norez, 2022; Saye, 2017; Saye, Kohlmeier, Brush, Mitchell, & Farmer, 2012). For example, Long (2020) and Saye (2017) suggest that teachers need to scaffold students' interaction with complex texts and stipulate that complex texts are almost inherent to inquiry. In other words, inquiry provides a built-in opportunity to push students forward as they develop skills through the careful use of scaffolds by teachers.

In addition to scaffolding for students, the work of designing an inquiry needs to be scaffolded for teachers. For example, Manfra, Lee, & Grant (2020) supported teachers as they learned how to design inquiries in digital learning settings, and found that 1:1 communication and scaffolding was critical in supporting teachers to navigate instructional shifts that occurred

when implementing inquiries. Also, Saye, Kohlmeier, Brush, Mitchell, and Farmer (2012) stated that modeling and scaffolding could assist teachers in linking theory to practice.

When teachers design and implement inquiries in their classrooms, they are nurturing student-centered learning. Characteristics of a student-centered classroom include students taking an active role in the learning process, students collaborating with peers, and students having the opportunity to apply or use the content they learned. The literature is consistent in emphasizing scenarios in which students take active roles in learning. For example, Bickford & Bickford (2022) described an inquiry in which students utilize their understanding of concepts from a poetry analysis to decorate a bird. Wilkerson (2022) described an approach to inquiry for faith-based learning in which students actively engage in conversations that answer compelling and/or supporting questions. In addition to active learning situations, inquiry also allows for peer collaboration. In her article on critical conversations through inquiry, Darolia (2020) explored an inquiry that allowed students to “listen to and consider multiple perspectives,” as well as “try out new ideas” or completely “change their minds (Darolia, 2020, p. 40). Inquiries also allow students to apply what they have learned. Holmes & Manfra (2022) suggested that participatory literacy as part of inquiry can support students taking informed action. In this scenario, students can apply their learned knowledge in authentic, or real world, situations.

### **The Inquiry Design Model**

The increased creation and use of inquiry practices in social studies, can be tied to the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), which has become a driver for curriculum development. IDM has become a focal point for implementing inquiry in social studies classrooms because it specifically addresses both a theory of inquiry, and the design process for creating inquiries (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017; Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2018). The effectiveness of IDM is tied to the many pedagogical influences of inquiry. Although there are many pedagogical influences

informing IDM, it does not take them in their entirety. Rather, IDM infuses different elements of various pedagogical ideas about instructional design, assessment, and student learning to create an innovative way of planning and implementing inquiry in social studies classrooms.

IDM is a theory and a planning template used to create and implement effective inquiries in social studies classrooms based on three key components. The three key components are questions, tasks, and sources. The questions, tasks, and sources can be modified or changed to meet the context of any social studies classroom. This context may include the interests and maturity levels of students, their cognitive ability, and academic achievement.

IDM utilizes compelling and supporting questions to structure an inquiry. Compelling questions seek to represent both the rigor of academic subjects and maintain some connections to students' lives. Compelling questions may be catchy or rhythmic, a play on words, or anything else that is engaging to students, but the question must also be focused on content that experts in the field agree is worth the time to examine. Supporting questions are created to provide clear content information to help answer the compelling question.

An example from an inquiry helps to clarify the dynamic between compelling questions and supporting questions. This inquiry examines various achievements in ancient civilizations and the compelling question 'What makes an achievement important?' To ensure students have the content knowledge to answer the compelling question, the inquiry includes the following supporting questions; What scientific creations did Ancient Greece create? How did political structures of the Greek city states positively and negatively impact citizens? and What creations did Greek city states use to increase trade? The compelling question is broad in nature and requires students answering it to form an opinion. The supporting questions have clear cut

answers that provide students opportunities to develop the knowledge and practice the skills needed to answer the compelling question.

Sources in the IDM are carefully selected documents that deliver content. The content is directly related to the supporting questions, and provide the evidence needed for making claims that answer the compelling question. The sources can take many different formats, such as graphs, maps, primary sources, secondary sources, political cartoons, etc. Further, sources can vary by type, complexity, and perspective in ways that can engage students and help structure a variety of learning experiences for them.

The last key component of the IDM are tasks. Tasks in IDM can be formative or summative. The formative tasks are connected to the supporting questions and provide students an opportunity to learn the content signaled by the questions. This means that each supporting question not only has sources aligned with them, but they also include tasks to go along with the sources. Students complete formative tasks along the way toward building up the knowledge and practicing with the skills needed to complete the summative argument task in response to a compelling question. An inquiry with the compelling question, “What makes an achievement important?” and a supporting question of “How did political structures of the Greek city states positively and negatively impact citizens?” could have a formative task where students fill in a pro/con chart with information from the source or sources aligned with the supporting question. By completing the pro/con chart students demonstrate their understanding of the material, and teachers can facilitate the development of students’ knowledge toward constructing an argument.

The pedagogical influences of IDM are numerous, as the authors of the model sought to carefully and deliberately create a template aligned with current theories and frameworks guiding the teaching of social studies. One framework that frames IDM is Newmann and Wehlage’s

(1993) notion of Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW). Newmann and Wehlage (1993) proposed AIW because other ways of teaching do not always equate to deep student learning. Further, Newmann & Wehlage's (1993) AIW can help teachers support students as they develop and apply a deep understanding of concepts and topics. Authentic intellectual work is made up of processes supporting the construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and completing activities or work that have a value that extend beyond school. The criterion of AIW is found throughout IDM.

IDM enables students to construct knowledge and engage in disciplined inquiry aligned with AIW through a specific structure of interplay between questions, tasks, and sources. Compelling questions, and the summative argument tasks that result, frame an inquiry. Formative performance tasks in response to supporting questions provide a structure for students to develop the necessary knowledge and practice with the skills needed to make their argument. Sources provide students with access to the information they need to complete tasks. Throughout an inquiry, teachers provide students with the feedback they need to be successful.

Authentic Intellectual Work also suggests that learning in school should have value beyond school. This idea is ingrained in the IDM as well. Disciplined inquiry connects to IDM through the topics driving the questions in an inquiry, including tasks that have value outside of the classroom. Through inquiry, students are learning content knowledge and practices with skills that improve their capacity to be civically responsible citizens. Encounters with content helps students understand the systems, events, people, and actions that shape our world. Skills help students learn to critically analyze sources and information they encounter as a citizen. The task-based structure provides students opportunities to develop knowledge and practice the skills needed for civic life. Extension and Taking Informed Action tasks allow for students to use the

knowledge they learned in the inquiry and transfer that to experiences that are outside of academic structures. Some examples of this would be writing an editorial, creating an infomercial, writing a public official, etc. The possibilities are endless.

Another crucial pedagogical influence of the IDM is Understanding by Design (UbD). The UbD model was created by Wiggins & McTighe (2012) with the intention of establishing a design process for creating rigorous classroom activities. UbD and IDM are both instructional design systems that utilize the backwards design planning technique. According to Wiggins & McTighe (2012), in order to plan instructional activities you must identify desired results first and then determine acceptable evidence before planning learning experiences. Wiggins & McTighe (2012) argue that backward design allows instruction to be aligned with standards without sacrificing student understanding.

IDM and UbD emphasize depth over coverage. Coverage can be described as teaching that focuses briefly and shallowly on topics or concepts. Wiggins & McTighe (2012) describe this as “teaching [that] typically relies on a textbook, allowing it to define the content and sequence of instruction” (p. 32). For history teachers this approach often results in lecture pedagogy, sometimes just to say you covered it. The motivation for lecture can vary, but the impact on student learning is minimal at best. Such approaches are antithetical to IDM and UbD. With a results-oriented structure, both champion depth over breadth and add a level of complexity that challenges coverage teaching.

Both UbD and IDM also focus on transferable skills or transfer strategies that are predicated on the idea of applying what students have learned in an academic setting to other contexts. IDM draws on transferable skills through an explicit emphasis on literacy and critical



thinking that can be applied to other content areas, as well as the actions we take in our civic life outside of the classroom.

IDM and UbD are both standards-based approaches to planning instruction, but there are important differences. Understanding by Design requires the standard to be broken down and unpacked. UbD requires the creation of clear learning objectives, but the IDM does not. With UbD learning objectives are closely aligned with standards. The design goal of UbD is for students to do the thing represented in the standard. The end goal of the IDM is not always so tightly aligned with the standard. Although standards drive the content focus of the inquiry, the end goal of IDM is for students to make arguments consisting of claims supported with evidence and to make use of what they learned in their civic life.

Another overlapping aspect of IDM and UbD is the use of questions, but there are two key differences. IDM uses questions to establish a structure for a classroom inquiry, whereas UbD uses questions to establish a purpose or focus for teaching. The UbD teaching methodology may be inquiry or it could be some other approach. UbD also expects that the questions will relate directly to standards, often using similar wording. Further, the questions are always teacher made. IDM is different in this regard because while questions are aligned with standards, they are also expected to reflect what kids care about and should be engaging to students. UbD does not explicitly aim for relevance within their guidelines, but the influence of UbD can be seen as questions are used to structure classroom teaching.

### **The C3 Framework**

While IDM takes much from antecedent instructional design models such as AIW and UbD, the primary conceptual driver for IDM is the *College, Career & Civic Life: C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards*. The C3 Framework was created through a collaboration among multiple professional organizations to enhance social studies instruction by applying

interdisciplinary approaches to social studies that align with inquiry. The C3 Framework and IDM aim to prepare students for participation in a democratic society.

The C3 Framework is organized around the Inquiry Arc, “a set of interlocking mutually supportive ideas that frame the ways students learn social studies content” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p.6). As noted earlier, the Inquiry Arc is the organizational structure for the 74 indicators contained within the C3 Framework and consists of four dimensions including, 1) Developing questions and planning inquiries, 2) Applying disciplinary concepts and tools in civics, economics, geography, and history, 3) Evaluating sources and using evidence, and 4) Communicating conclusions and taking informed action. These dimensions are directly correlated to the IDM.

IDM follows the Inquiry Arc of the C3 Framework. The first dimension of the Inquiry Arc is about developing questions and planning inquiries. The idea of developing questions is primary to IDM, as both compelling and supporting questions drive the task-based work in an inquiry. The second dimension of the C3 Framework is applying disciplinary concepts and tools. This is congruent with the IDM because students are applying disciplinary concepts and tools as they complete the formative tasks aligned with the supporting questions. The third dimension of the C3 Framework is evaluating sources and using evidence. Students complete the tasks of the IDM by analyzing and evaluating sources in the formative tasks, and when using evidence as they complete the summative argument task. The fourth dimension, communicating conclusions and taking informed action, is directly connected to IDM through extension and the summative tasks.

Due to their harmonious designs, the C3 Framework and IDM, utilize a detailed disciplinary approach to achieve their goals. For example, the C3 Framework has a subset of disciplinary concepts tied to each dimension as listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. C3 Framework Disciplinary Concepts Correlated to the Dimensions**

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<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Disciplinary Concepts</u>
Civics	1. Civic and political institutions, 2. Participation and deliberation; applying civic virtues and democratic principles, 3. Processes, rules, and laws
Economics	1. Economic decision making, 2. Exchange and markets, 3. The national economy, 4. The global economy
Geography	1. Geographic representations: spatial views of the world, 2. Human-environment interaction: place, regions, and culture, 3. Human population: Spatial patterns and movements, 4. Global interconnections: changing spatial patterns
History	1. Change, continuity, and context, 2. Perspectives, 3. Historical sources and evidence, 4. Causation and argumentation

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Disciplinary concepts and tools such as those featured in the C3 Framework can guide the planning and teaching of content knowledge for social studies. For example, in geography there is a sub-topic of human-environment interaction. This is part of the five themes of geography, which is often taught at the middle school and elementary levels. Another, less specific, example is apparent when looking at the history discipline. One of the subtopics of the history discipline in the C3 Framework is historical sources and evidence. This means that any source, primary or secondary, can be used in a social studies classroom. This is significant because the sources in this manner determine the content that students interact with. They can present competing ideas

about the same event or reinforce a particular interpretation of history. In this sense, it is important for the teacher to carefully select sources to deep intellectual thought.

The disciplinary concepts and tools associated with the C3 Framework also connect to the purposes of social studies. One common belief about the purpose of social studies is to prepare students for life in a democracy. John Dewey (1916) is most famous for this idea in his publication *Democracy and Education*, which argues that the three reading, writing, and arithmetic of teaching are not enough to prepare students for life in a democracy and that students must engage in intellectual thought that is relevant to students' lives. For example, Dewey (1916) states that traditional education is “based upon ignorance of the essentials needed for the realization of democratic ideals” and that a “curriculum which acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together, and where observation and information [content] are calculated to develop social insight and interest” (p. 87-88). As Dewey notes, we must take care when determining how content is used in social studies so that it connects to “the problems of living together,” but we must address those problems in some context that is shaped by academic content.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODS**

The goal of this research is to examine my implementation of an inquiry instructional plan developed using the Inquiry Design Model that I taught over several days in the first month of a recent school year. In this research, I examined my facilitation of students' engagement with the inquiry as well as students' learning of content and their performance on the summative assessment I used an action research approach to collect and analyze data and report my findings. In the sections that follow, I provide an overview of the research questions and my rationale for using action research. I also provide a description of my subjectivity as a practitioner conducting this research study and provide an overview of action research. I then discuss how I designed this action research study along with a description of the contextual factors shaping the research. Concluding this chapter is a description of the participants, the sources of data, and the methods of data analysis.

### **Overview of the Research Questions**

The overall research question guiding this study is, How does a middle school social studies teacher effectively facilitate the learning of content knowledge through inquiry? To enable a full-bodied examination of this question, I unpacked the overall question with three sub-questions; 1) What processes does a middle school social studies teacher go through when planning an inquiry using IDM? 2) What does a middle school social studies teacher do to teach content in an inquiry using IDM? 3) How is content learned by students through inquiry?

My research on the facilitation of inquiry learning fills a gap in the research and aligns with emerging trends in social studies. While there has been some research on inquiry in classrooms (De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz et. al., 2017; Sielaff & Washburn, 2015; Sherman & De La Paz, 2015;), little research has focused on how teachers facilitate inquiry instruction, using

the Inquiry Design Model, with a focus on the relationship between how students apply inquiry skills to develop their content knowledge. Inquiry-based teaching and learning is a complex endeavor that includes a wide range of actions on the part of the teacher and students related to the application of skills and the development of content knowledge. This research focuses on how I supported students as they engaged in a series of learning tasks that required them to use inquiry skills that included the identification of information in primary historical sources, comparisons of that information, synthesis of ideas, and the construction of an argument in response to a compelling inquiry question. In tracking the application of these skills, my research sought to also uncover how student content knowledge developed across these tasks.

### **Rationale for Action Research**

A fundamental component of action research is reflection. Reflection in this manner is done strategically to grow in a desired area or meet an intended goal. This type of reflection is especially helpful to teachers, who take on several roles in their daily work. Teachers take leadership roles for extracurricular activities, advocate for students, and teach their students. Any of these areas offers teachers the opportunity to be reflective, but the area that requires the most attention is teaching. Teachers need to continually examine their decision making, planning processes, and implementation if they are going to improve their teaching practices. Since reflection is necessary for improvement, and a core component of action research is reflection, action research is the most applicable research design for my study. I am seeking to improve professionally by building on my knowledge of inquiry, while contributing to the overall field of teaching. Although action research satisfies my goals, it is also justified when examining the topic covered in this study.

Action research is a natural fit for studying inquiry teaching in social studies. Inquiry teaching in social studies that utilizes the C3 Framework and IDM allows teachers a great deal of freedom when planning and implementing an inquiry. With inquiry, teachers can choose the questions, tasks, and sources for students. Since teachers have this freedom, it is important that they evaluate and reflect on several of their practices; alignment between questions, tasks, and sources, specific actions or steps taken to support student learning, and ways to provide feedback to students, to name a few. This brief list of items for teachers to evaluate and reflect upon when creating and implementing an inquiry suggests that teachers may be best situated to improve their teaching practices if they focus on a specific question or topic related to their inquiry teaching.

One aspect of social studies that has always piqued my interest is how students learn and apply content knowledge. An inquiry using the C3 Framework and IDM incorporates a rich level of content knowledge in the sources. Application of content knowledge comes when students are creating and supporting a claim. By examining this in my own work through action research, I would improve my teaching practices and understanding and use of inquiry.

### **Subjectivity of the Practitioner**

At the time of this research, I was teaching 6th grade social studies at a middle school located in a medium sized urban area in the southern United States. I began my career teaching 8th grade social studies in a small rural county in the southeast United States. Prior to teaching 8th grade social studies, I was a substitute teacher for multiple school districts in upstate New York. Substitute teaching exposed me to a variety of teaching techniques and styles, but I was often constrained to simplistic lesson plans and concepts because teachers recognized varying skill levels amongst substitute teachers.

When I started teaching full time in the southern United States, I utilized teaching methods that I learned from substitute teaching and teacher preparation programs. Although I was confident with utilizing knowledge, I had accumulated over the course of my teaching career, I wanted to better serve my students and prepare for newly mandated standardized tests. At this time, I enrolled in graduate classes for a doctoral program.

As a doctoral student, I learned about action research and inquiry. Action research appealed to me because I have always been reflective, whether they are related to personal or professional life. Inquiry based teaching interested me because it seemed to align with previously learned educational principles. When learning to be a teacher, as well as substitute teaching, two things were clear; classrooms need to be student centered and instruction needs to be tied to a question. To me, inquiry seemed to fuse these concepts together by providing a plan tied to an overall question, and in answering the question the teacher was facilitating student learning. Facilitating student learning can be accomplished in a student-centered classroom, one in which the teacher is actively seeking to support student learning as they navigate rigorous tasks. Needless to say, I was eager to plan and implement an inquiry in my classroom after learning about it in 2013.

In 2013, I was able to write and implement my first inquiry, and later write two inquiries published on the C3 Teachers Website. The more I became knowledgeable of inquiry, the more comfortable I became using it in my classroom. It also produced more questions, as I began to think about student learning outcomes, how this type of learning might enable students to be successful on standardized tests, the amount of content students learned over the course of an inquiry, best ways for students to apply skills learned over the course of an inquiry, etc. These



questions caused me to be more reflective in my teaching practices, as well as think about how to design and implement an inquiry that built students' content knowledge.

The most challenging and interesting part of designing and implementing an inquiry is to build students' content knowledge for the purpose of creating and supporting a claim. Inquiry is explicitly focused on students making claims with evidence toward building arguments in response to questions. How to get to those arguments is another matter altogether. It is in the formative part of inquiry learning where students engage with information from disciplinary sources and build their content knowledge. I viewed supporting students in this process as being critically important to the ultimate success of inquiry. I knew that teaching students about disciplinary content could be misapplied and very problematic regarding student engagement. Lecture is the most common pedagogy for teaching students about subject-matter content, but we know that lecture pedagogy is limited regarding engaging students. I wanted to engage with my students and felt like inquiry was the best approach, but I also knew that learning subject-matter content needed to drive my teaching and my students' learning. After all, students need to learn about something. I believe that learning subject-matter content is a critical part of teaching and learning with inquiry, and that how to do so successfully is not well understood. This belief drove my thinking as I designed this research study and was a defining perspective shaping my subjectivity. As I designed this research, I hoped to shed some light on how subject-matter content that might otherwise be transferred to students through lecture or unstructured reading might instead be engaged by students in a more powerful and intellectually honest manner through inquiry.

## Application of Action Research

Action research is a method for investigating questions about teaching practices in education. It is a useful approach for practicing educators, because when successfully applied it sparks empowerment and learning for the teacher. Action research has been conceived in a variety of ways, which has in turn affected action research design. Manfra (2017) states that the origins of action research can be traced to various contexts and scholars (Table 2).

**Table 2. *Scholarly beliefs about origins of action research***

<u>Contemporary Scholar</u>	<u>Work of scholar originating action research</u>
Noffke (1997)	John Collier
McNiff & Whitehead (2002)	John Dewey and Hilda Taba
Andelman (1993), Hendricks (2009)	Kurt Lewin

Differences among scholars regarding the nature of action research have also led to different approaches to implementing action research. Mertler (2006) states the process for action research includes identifying and limiting the topic, reviewing the related literature, developing a research plan, implementing the plan and collecting data, analyzing the data, developing an action plan, sharing and communicating the results, and reflecting on the process. Similarly, Merriam & Tisdell (2016) suggest teachers plan, act, observe, and reflect. Most scholars have come to conclude that action research is an “interpretive research” process that includes “selecting a focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting the data, taking action, reflecting, and continuing/modifying the study” (Manfra, 2017, p. 137). This interpretive approach that action research offers promise and empowerment to teachers.

Regardless of the specific approaches, action research takes form in a cycle. Manfra & Bullock (2014) state that action research is a “cyclical process of posing questions, collecting data, reflecting on findings, and reporting results” (Bullock, 2014, p. 161). In this context, cyclical means that “with each new understanding leading to new questions and new action,” new knowledge and new opportunities to learn emerge (Manfra, 2017, p. 137). Feldman, Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh (2018) suggest a similar approach when stating that action research involves a “mini action research cycle” because new things are learned throughout the research process (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 2018, p. 16). Action research scholars situate teachers as the focal point of research design and collection (Manfra, 2017; Manfra, 2019; McKernan, 1991; Mertler, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 20). The cyclical nature of action research suggests that teachers can modify their research based on new things they have learned while completing their research. This autonomous approach to research design and implementation benefits teachers in a variety of ways.

Conducting action research helps teachers develop professional knowledge (Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feldman, Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 2018 Kincheloe, 2003; Noffke, 1997; McKernan, 1991). Feldman, Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh (2018) describe how teachers who have used action research approaches, “have not only carried out development work for their schools, but also broadened their knowledge and their professional competency. They have passed this knowledge on to colleagues, pupils, and parents, and, in written and other forms, to the wider public” (Feldman, Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 2018, p. 7). Cochrane-Smith & Lytle (1999) suggest that teachers serving as researchers change how they do their jobs. Instead of being receivers of information that influence teaching practices, teachers shape the creation of knowledge that guides their practice.

Action research is a bottom-up approach that offers a pathway for transforming teaching practices. Manfra (2017, 2019) suggests that action research breaks away from traditional educational research. Traditional research methods incorporate the researcher as being outside of the context of the classroom or institution where research is taking place (Manfra, 2017). Action research changes that by allowing the teacher to be a central figure in the research process. The teacher is able to pose a question, set a plan, implement a plan, and reflect on how it went. This is important in addressing the sticky problems that emerge in classrooms. McKernan (1991) states that action research is used to solve the “immediate and pressing day-to-day problems of practitioners (McKernan, 1991, p. 3). By solving these problems, ‘insider knowledge’ of teaching practices is ascertained that can accurately describe contextual factors influencing academic successes in classrooms (Manfra, 2017).

### **Research Design**

Action research is cyclical, and when applied to teaching, I take this as improving one’s practice in intervals. Manfra (2017) recommends taking the following steps in an action research approach, “selecting a focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting the data, taking action, reflecting, and continuing/modifying the study” (Manfra, 2017, p. 137). Since this study focused on utilizing a specific teaching approach, the steps were implemented to varying degrees.

As a practicing social studies teacher that strived for continuous improvement, I wanted to study something that would help me become a better teacher. I also wanted to study something that would contribute to the larger field of middle school social studies teaching. I was knowledgeable of inquiry-based teaching in social studies and saw a natural fit between my overall goals of conducting a study. I settled on the topic of inquiry and was already aware of a gap in the literature; teaching using inquiry in the middle school social studies classroom. As a

result, I decided my study should focus on how to successfully implement an inquiry in the middle school social studies classroom by examining content. I knew this focus would need to encapsulate all phases of inquiry, including planning, implementation, and evaluation of student learning. From there I was able to settle on the research question for the study; How does a middle school social studies teacher effectively facilitate the learning of content knowledge through inquiry?

In order to provide thorough and clear conclusions for the research question, I knew that data would need to consist of viewpoints from students and myself. Therefore, I included a wide range of data sources from both perspectives. Data sources from students included completed student work, as well as exit tickets. The exit tickets were included as a data source in the study as a strategic method for gaining students perspectives on the implemented lesson plans. Students were asked five open-ended questions that asked them to identify parts of the lesson plans that facilitate learning for them. In designing the study, I thought this would be beneficial for a few reasons. First, at the conclusion of the implementation of the inquiry it would add depth to the findings by corroborating what I saw as a teacher with the experiences of students. Lastly, viewing the exit tickets throughout the implementation of the inquiry allowed me to better support student learning.

Since the study incorporated various data sources from myself and my students, data analysis needed to be iterative. Data analysis for the purpose of producing a finding did not occur until the conclusion of the inquiry. Over the course of the inquiry, I reviewed exit tickets and kept a reflective journal. These items allowed me to take action as the practitioner. I was able to support student learning by clarifying any misconceptions, as well as anticipating areas of lesson plans that would need to be tweaked.

I was reflective throughout the inquiry. My journal began during the planning process, and was maintained throughout implementation of the inquiry. Each day I reflected on my experiences, which provided different uses over the course of the study. By maintaining a reflective journal during the planning of the inquiry, I was able to organize my thoughts and utilize them to better plan the inquiry and subsequent lesson plans. Writing in my journal during implementation, allowed me to evaluate what was working and not working for me and for students. As previously mentioned, this would allow me to anticipate modifications to my teaching plans.

### **Contextual Factors for the Study**

This research took place in my sixth-grade social studies classroom in a middle school located in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. Like many middle schools in the district, the school included grades 6, 7, and 8, but it also had many unique characteristics. Instead of organizing students on teacher teams, like other schools in the district, students were organized at grade level. This means that students take core classes with different students in their grade level. Unlike other schools in the district, the school followed a magnet school design, which impacted course offerings and student population. The magnet theme was gifted and talented, which had the school offer a wide array of elective courses. These elective courses would allow students to show their academic strengths. The magnet school structure also produced a diverse student body. The magnet structure of the school allowed students to attend from all over the county. The racial composition of the student body included the following percentages: 43% white, 35% black, 10% Hispanic, and 8% Asian. In addition to a diverse racial composition, the socioeconomic status of students also varied. with 30% percent of students at the school classified as economically challenged.

The school continually met growth on state standardized tests and included a staff with varying levels of professional certifications or educational attainment. The school had five teachers with National Board Certification. This certification is pursued by teachers who have three years of teaching experience and involves a rigorous program to successfully complete certification. Also, 32.5% percent of teachers held advanced degrees. Teacher turnover at the schools was 8% in 2017-2018.

### **Summary of the Inquiry**

Teachers in the school district had access to a deep collection of curriculum materials. These materials were either developed or purchased by the district and disseminated to district staff through a website. These materials included pacing guides, lesson plans, etc. but did not include inquiries aligned to the Inquiry Design Model or C3 Framework. I utilized the district resources to guide my inquiry construction but did not utilize specific district level resources left unaltered or used in the same way. After multiple iterations and revisions, I settled on the following compelling question for the inquiry; Which source is better, primary, or secondary? The supporting questions included what are primary and secondary sources? What are the advantages and disadvantages to examining primary and secondary sources? How do primary and secondary sources compare? To support these questions, I used sources that would clearly exemplify characteristics of a primary or secondary source. Also, the sources that served as examples of primary and secondary sources were all tied to one civilization during a broad time period, Ancient Egypt. I had success teaching about Ancient Egypt in the past and felt comfortable with the content. Also, there were multiple sources to choose from to include in the inquiry. The tasks for the inquiry varied and included identifying primary and secondary sources,

completing a preliminary task indicating which type of source they would be better than another, and then completing a Venn diagram comparing primary and secondary sources.

## **Participants**

This research focused on my teaching practices and students' learning. Students in my classes were identified as either academically gifted (AG) or gifted and talented (GT). The designation between the two was predicated on testing. Students in AG classes tested as academically gifted in mathematics and English/language arts. Students in GT classes tested as academically gifted in mathematics or English/language arts or had none. The data collected for this study was from one of my AG classes that included 28 students. Only 17 of the 28 students participated in the study. The limited number of students participating in the study can be attributed, at least in part, to students needing to return a permission slip signed by a legal guardian consenting to participation in the study.

Demographic information for participants along gender and racial lines showed the following: 47% female, 53% male, 12% Asian, 12% Black or African American, and 76% White. The academic background of participants, and racial demographics, demonstrate a non-normative dynamic for most K-12 public school classrooms.

## **Data Sources**

To answer the research questions guiding this study, multiple data sources were collected. Denzin (1970) suggests that the triangulation of data allows for more accurate findings. As a result, there were four general data sources: memoing, jotting, journaling, and student artifacts.

### ***Memoing***

Memoing is a field observational tool that can be described as writing notes to oneself (Bailey, 2007). Memos were collected on the design of the inquiry and the corresponding



lesson plans as they were being developed. Memos were written on all iterations of the inquiry and lesson plans until they were finalized. They served the purpose of identifying key thinking processes that went into the planning and teaching of the inquiry.

### ***Jotting.***

Jotting is an observation tool that can be thought of as recording an analytical piece of information that can fit on a small piece of paper (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Jotting was done as lesson plans were implemented. After lesson plans were finalized, they were printed out. The purpose of this was to have them on hand as implementation took place. I was able to write key observational information about student reactions, how well students were completing tasks, questions they asked, and anything else that stood out as the lesson plan was being implemented.

### ***Journaling.***

Feldman, Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh (2018) note that journaling is a tradition in qualitative research practices and that it is instrumental in acquiring data in action research. Chabon & Lee-Wilkerson (2006) state that a journal can include reflections, as well as descriptions of events and experiences. Since the journal was utilized throughout the planning and implementation process, information included thoughts and struggles designing the inquiry, as well as challenges and successes while implementing the inquiry. I was also sure to include any events or statements made by students that I recalled during implementation. In addition to writing about any events or statements made by students during implementation, I included additional structure to my journal entries to help provide more in-depth reflection. These questions included, what happened during the lesson plan today? How did you feel about the

success of the lesson plan today? How did students experience the lesson plan today? What things stood out to you as you implemented your lesson plan today?

### ***Student Artifacts.***

Student artifacts included completed student work. All tasks, summative and formative, were collected and analyzed for research purposes. The formative tasks were still utilized as a mechanism to provide students feedback during the inquiry in preparation for the summative task. In addition to completed work, students also filled out a brief exit ticket at the conclusion of each class period. The exit ticket included the following questions: what are your takeaways (what did you learn)? What did you enjoy most about today's lesson? Please explain. What would you change about today's lesson? Please explain. What about today's lesson allowed you to learn new things/information/concepts/etc.? Why do you think the lesson allowed you to learn new things/information/concepts/etc.?

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this study used multiple ideas or frameworks from different researchers. Feldman, Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh (2018) suggest the following data analysis steps, reading the data, selecting the data, presenting the data, interpreting the data and drawing conclusions. Reading data means that the researcher closely looks at the "events and experiences" in the data (Feldman, et al., 2018, p. 185). Selecting data means important parts of the data are identified. Presenting data means they are communicated in an easy-to-understand format. Interpreting data and drawing conclusions means that relationships within the data are explained and theories are developed. Creswell (2013) suggests that data analysis is done by describing, classifying, and interpreting data. Further, Creswell (2013) states that "[i]n this loop, forming codes or categories" is at the core of analysis.

Before describing how components of each of these frameworks was applied, and their connection to action research, it is important to provide the sequential order of data collection and analysis. Since this study utilized action research, data was analyzed during the inquiry for the purpose of effectively implementing the inquiry. Meaning, I was reflective of teaching practices and tried my best to meet student needs, but formal analysis of all data points was not completed until the conclusion of data collection. This is significant, as studies can collect and analyze data simultaneously, but since this study sought to examine effective implementation of an inquiry, data analysis for the purpose of producing a finding was not prioritized until the conclusion of the inquiry.

To analyze the data for this study, I combined the works of Altrichter, Posner, and Somekh (2018) and Creswell (2013). I utilized the reading of the data by Altrichter, Posner, and Somekh (2018) to gain perspective on my data and to think of ways to analyze it. I did not focus exclusively on ‘events and experiences’ for multiple reasons. Since the study was designed as an action research study, I knew that not all events and experiences could be observed because I was the researcher and practitioner. Another reason I did not focus solely on ‘events and experiences,’ was to incorporate all the data points, which included students' application of content knowledge on various tasks. I ultimately decided to utilize an open coding process after reading the data. Still, while reading the data I took the opportunity to identify data points that stood out to me. Data stood out to me for a variety of reasons, including insightful comments by students in their artifacts, any reference to emotion, questions that were posed, etc. Once these data points were identified, they influenced the transcription process.

I then transcribed the different data points believing it would be an informative step towards analyzing the data. A more thorough description of this is provided in the transcribing

section of this chapter. Once the data was transcribed, I began the process of describing, classifying, and interpreting data. Completing these steps led me to believe that additional analysis was necessary to better understand student learning outcomes, so I reapplied Creswell's (2013) process using apriori codes aligned with the Persuasive Claim Framework (2021).

In order to describe data analysis for the study, multiple subsections were needed. These subsections included transcribing, coding process, and additional analysis. In the transcribing section, I provide a thorough description of why transcribing was utilized in this study, and how it was done. In the coding process, I describe in great detail how codes were created and utilized to form the thematic findings. In the additional analysis section, I highlight the need for additional analysis to inform discussion surrounding student outcomes, as well as how it was achieved. Lastly, throughout each of these sections I make an explicit connection to action research.

### **Transcribing**

When a researcher determines how transcribing data in a study will be done, they consider costs and benefits. If a researcher hires someone to do the transcribing of data for them, it is costly in terms of money, but if a researcher does the transcription themselves, then it is costly in terms of time (DeCuir- Gunby & Schutz, 2017). Since I utilized an action research approach to this study, I thought it would be beneficial to transcribe the data myself. Action research is naturally reflective, and since this study will be used to help inform future teaching practices, transcription would allow me to know my data more intimately. This in turn, would improve my general teaching practices and ability to implement inquiries.

I transcribed the following data points; memoing, jottings, and selected components of student artifacts. Selected components of transcription included some works being transcribed in

their entirety, while others only had sections transcribed. Student artifacts transcribed in their entirety included the summative task and exit tickets. All other student artifacts were selectively transcribed. The procedure for selective transcription was as follows; re-reading the data that was not transcribed in its entirety and transcribing the selected data points into a digital file. The digital file, titled selective transcription from student artifacts, included a table with the following columns: Transcription and data source and Transcription columns self-explanatory. The data source column would identify the source of the data, which were aligned to student tasks (i.e., formative task #1, formative task #2, etc.). The rationale for selective transcription was two-fold. First, re-reading the data after initial reading and identifying key aspects would help mitigate any missed data. Second, this would provide an efficient manner for data analysis that would maximize making connections amongst the various data points.

Transcription was done in a way that allowed for maximum efficiency and thorough analysis. The jottings were transcribed in list form and separated by the date the lesson was implemented. The memos associated with the inquiry design template were transcribed in list form and separated by iteration of the inquiry. Memos associated with lesson plans were transcribed in list form and separated by lesson sequence and iteration. The exit tickets were transcribed in a chart form for each date. The chart consisted of multiple columns that included the student pen name, and a column for each question. An example chart is shown in Appendix E.

### **Open Coding Process**

After reading the data and selectively transcribing it I began an open coding process that allowed me to begin describing the data. Since the data points in this study varied in format and source, I coded them in a sequential order. I began by reading and coding the journal. Coding the

journal first seemed most aligned to the study since it was action research. From there, I coded the following items in the order listed, memos, jottings, and student artifacts. Initial coding of the raw data from all sources formed a variety of codes. Some codes included planning, difficulty, reaction of students, engagement, change of plan, and guidance needed.

Once initial coding was done, I began the process of interpreting the data by entering these codes into a spreadsheet. From there, I used the initial codes as categories to pull information from all of the data sources and entered them into the spreadsheet. The first column was the initial code, the second column was the data source (journal, memo, jottings, or student artifacts), and the third column was the data excerpt. Data points that applied to multiple codes were included on the spreadsheet for each code. To interpret the data and create findings from the codes, I sorted the codes column and began identifying themes that incorporated multiple excerpts aligned to the codes. This process ultimately led to clear findings for the planning and implementation of the inquiry but left more to be desired for student learning.

### **Additional Analysis for Student Learning**

An effective mechanism for evaluating student learning in an inquiry is to examine students' ability to create and support claims using evidence. Since I thought more evaluation of student learning was needed, I looked exclusively at students' summative work. To do so, I re-examined the transcription of students' summative tasks. I created a new spreadsheet that included the following columns: student (pen name), claim, excerpt, and code. For each claim, I pulled out an excerpt that was related to the content and provided a code. The process identified various codes, like feel, amount of information, and perspective to name a few. When completing this process, it was apparent that claims varied greatly in quality and that the coding process would not encapsulate the varying level of quality. Therefore, an additional layer of

analysis was added. I utilized the Persuasive Claim Framework (PCF) to examine the quality of claims for evidence, reason, clarity, and accuracy (Lewis, 2021). To do so, I listed criteria for each component of the PCF and evaluated each claim for each category. For example, to evaluate a claim for how reasoned it was, I determined if the claim was logical, valid, and followed a chain of reasoning. Utilizing this method claims would be coded as strong, weak, or needs revision. This process allowed for the creation of aggregate findings of students' claim making abilities, as well as profiles of students' work to show the differences in quality. These are presented more clearly in the findings section.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This study sought to examine teaching and learning of content knowledge through inquiry in a middle school social studies classroom. Three questions guided this research.

1. What processes does a middle school social studies teacher go through when planning an inquiry using the IDM?
2. What does a middle school social studies teacher do to teach content in an inquiry using the IDM?
3. How is content learned and applied by students through inquiry?

To answer these questions, I examined my planning and teaching practices and student learning outcomes. These questions were examined in a single middle school classroom using action research. The action research approach focused on my planning and teaching practices in my sixth-grade social studies classroom. Data included assignments that students completed over the course of the inquiry. These findings seek to add to the existing body of research on inquiry. The findings in this section are organized thematically. Each top-level finding is supported with evidence from all sources of data, with each data point contextualized to provide relevance and understanding.

My analysis of data from this study supported three distinct findings related to the planning and implementation of the inquiry. The first finding suggests that planning an inquiry is a complex endeavor. Within this finding, evidence suggests that it was difficult to make use of the district provided curriculum resources during my efforts to plan for inquiry instruction. Even when these challenges were surmounted, maintaining fidelity with the IDM planning template produced other complications. The second finding explores how teaching with inquiry requires a complex set of decisions and teacher moves to support student learning. Teacher moves required



modification to instructional plans in multiple ways, expanding the task, elaborating on a concept or approach, and changing scaffolding. The third finding examines how students demonstrated their understanding of the differences between primary and secondary sources in various ways. These learning outcomes include maintaining students' interests, meeting students' learning preferences, and supporting students' ability to create and support a claim.

Before delving into the findings of the study it is important to point out and explain contextual influences that are relevant throughout the findings. In this section, I provide an overview of the context for my research and resources that influenced the planning of the inquiry.

### **Context and Resources Impacting This Research.**

My changing professional role during the initial stages of my dissertation research, including the data collection period, had a significant impact on the design and implementation of the inquiry. I accepted a position as a curriculum specialist before the 2019-2020 school year began. This job change occurred after I had designed my research. My initial design was to plan my inquiry and implement it after a few weeks into the school year. My new position necessitated a change to this timeline, with the collection of data occurring right at the beginning of the school year. My implementation of the inquiry had to be completed prior to September 25th. This deadline limited significant changes to instruction as the inquiry was implemented.

Several curriculum resources framed my research, including the district curriculum framework, the inquiry I designed, and my daily plan for implementing the inquiry. The local curriculum included a thematic approach to social studies and was built around six strands. The curriculum, known by its acronym GRAPES, features disciplinary concepts and skills from Geography, Religion, Achievements, Political structures, Economic structures, and Social

structures. The middle grades curriculum is focused on content from ancient civilizations. The six strands frame students' engagement with major civilizations over various time periods. The overall GRAPES thematic approach was used to create more consistent and intentional district unit guides. These unit guides provided lists of topics, vocabulary, essential questions, and resources to be used when teaching. Despite the details in the GRAPES framework, when using the framework teachers still had some flexibility to choose content sources and design their own pedagogical approaches to implementing lessons.

I used the GRAPES framework to guide the design of my inquiry. In creating my plan for inquiry, I followed the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) approach, focusing on the development of interconnected questions, sources, and tasks. IDM provides a structure for developing compelling and supporting questions which are framed in a set of related tasks that are completed using disciplinary sources. The overall content focus of this inquiry examined the concepts of primary and secondary sources. The compelling question asked, which is better, primary or secondary sources? The compelling question was unpacked through three supporting questions; What are primary and secondary sources? What are advantages and disadvantages to examining primary and secondary sources? How do primary and secondary sources compare? The questions were aligned to the formative performance tasks of the inquiry.

As a starting place, I took into consideration that students had already learned a little bit about primary and secondary sources. The design of my inquiry considered that students had basic definitional knowledge of primary and secondary sources. Additional information about the inquiry can be found in Appendix A. The inquiry required students to apply their knowledge of primary and secondary sources through three formative performance tasks. The first formative performance task required students to analyze a primary and secondary source by answering

comprehension, comparative, and reflection questions. The second performance task had students use prior knowledge to brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources, as well as stating a preliminary rationale for why one source would be better than another. The third formative performance task had students complete a Venn diagram after analyzing multiple primary and secondary sources.

While the inquiry focused on the concepts of primary and secondary sources, I also made use of content from the state curriculum and the GRAPES framework. Students examined sources related to ancient Egypt and specifically the discovery of the ancient tomb of King Tutankhamun in 1922 by Howard Carter. In order for students to complete the performance tasks, multiple sources were provided. The first supporting question and task included a primary source called the “Hymn of the Nile” and an excerpt from a National Geographic essay on ancient Egypt. There were no specific sources associated with the second supporting question and formative performance task. Instead, students were expected to access prior knowledge and, to some extent, the sources from supporting question one. The third and final supporting question and related task made use of a collection of images of artifacts found in King Tut’s tomb as well as two articles titled “Tutankhamun and King Tut’s Tomb” and “The Finding of the Tomb.” More information regarding the inquiry sources, performance tasks, and questions can be found in Appendix A.

To effectively and concisely implement my instruction using the completed IDM blueprint, I developed a series of daily lesson plans. The lesson plans followed a planning template from my school that included the name of the inquiry at the top, the title of the lesson, the date to be implemented, an ‘I can statement,’ a list of materials, and a procedure. The procedure section of the lesson plan included a hook and closure steps designed to provide

insights into the beginning and ending of the lesson. Table 3 shows the scope, sequence, and alignment to the completed IDM blueprint. Additional details regarding the lesson plans can be found in Appendix B.

**Table 3. Lesson Plan Scope and Sequence**

<u>Lesson Date</u>	<u>Title of Lesson</u>	<u>Alignment to Blueprint</u>
September 17th	Setting the Inquiry Foundation	Staging the Compelling Question Supporting Question #1: What are primary and secondary sources? Formative Performance Task #1: Examine two different sources about Ancient Egypt and determine which one is primary and which one is secondary. Further, they will answer comprehension questions that guide them to a determination.
September 18th	Brainstorming about Primary and Secondary Sources	Supporting Question #2: What are advantages and disadvantages to examining primary and secondary sources? Formative Performance Task #2: Brainstorm with a partner the potential advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources. They will then state a preliminary rationale for why one source would be better than another.
September 19th	King Tut's Artifacts	Supporting Question#3: How do primary and secondary sources compare? Formative Performance Task #3: Examine two sources about the Tomb of King Tut. One source will be a series of pictures of artifacts from King Tut's tomb and the second will be text written about it. Students will fill in a graphic organizer for the artifacts, answer questions about the text, and then compare and contrast the two using a venn diagram.
September 20th	Comparing and Contrasting Sources	Continued work on Supporting Question #3 and Formative Performance Task#3

**Table 3** (continued).

September 23rd	Comparing and Contrasting Sources - Part II	Continued work on Supporting Question #3 and Formative Performance Task#3
September 24th	Planning for the writing the argument	Summative Performance Task: Construct an argument
September 25th	Completing the argument	Continued work on Summative Performance Task

NOTES: SQ = Supporting Question, FPT = Formative Task, SPT = Summative Task, 7 day inquiry

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**Finding #1 – Given the Conflicting Constraints of Local Curriculum and the Conceptual Affordances of the Inquiry Design Model, Planning an Inquiry is a Complex Endeavor.**

Planning an effective inquiry is a difficult process that requires considerable effort. My analysis of the data collected in this research uncovered two major elements to this complexity including, 1) the limitations of the district pacing guide when planning the inquiry and 2) maintaining fidelity to the IDM planning process. In the following sections I unpack each of these elements.

***Constraints of the Local Curriculum.*** When planning this inquiry, I encountered several obstacles. The district pacing guide did not include a window of opportunity for teachers to implement a seven-day inquiry, but after navigating specific obstacles, I produced an inquiry that, I believed would have long-term value for social studies learning. One obstacle related to the district planning guides was the organization and display of content instructional materials. These content expectations were represented in essential questions and related unpacking statements. My difficulty in working with these essential questions and related content emerged early in the planning process. For example, in an early journal entry while planning the inquiry, I

noted that when I examined the unit guides the essential questions were uneven. As I noted in my journal, “This was problematic because one unit had many essential questions guiding learning and the other did not” (Journal entry - August 28th). Without these questions reflecting what needs to be taught, I had to interpret what was needed. As a result, I “began experimenting with creating my own questions for the unit based on the information in the unit guide” (Journal entry - August 28th).

Creating my own questions for the inquiry based on the limited information in the unit guide created additional work on my part. Although such an examination of content in the pacing guide might be thought of as part of writing any inquiry, the best inquiry planning processes are seeded with quality standard-based information about what is to be taught. A more complete unit guide with framing content-based questions would have expedited the planning process. This is especially true when it comes to establishing the compelling question for an inquiry. Since the unit guide did not provide much direction, I sought to use the content referenced in the unit guide to create the compelling question. In my journal I wrote,

Brainstorming compelling questions ended up with the creation of the following questions; What tools are used to study history? How do the five themes of geography assist in understanding ancient civilizations? What do historians do? How do historians do what they do? All of these failed. I thought they failed because they tried to encapsulate too many of the ideas written within the unit guide (Journal entry - August 28th).

The difficulty in creating the compelling question caused me to start thinking about the inquiry development process differently. In rethinking that process, I began examining the standards in more depth.

By closely reading the standards, as well as drawing on what I had previously learned about inquiry, I was able to settle on a compelling question. I came to the conclusion that instead of focusing on historical or geographical content, perhaps I should focus on conceptual knowledge that would have value throughout the year, specifically the concepts of primary and secondary sources. When examining the standards, I stated in my journal that “primary and secondary sources could be used in any unit, plus they were consistently stated in the standards” (Journal entry - August 29th). Settling on a conceptual approach for the compelling question allowed me to come up with the compelling question, ‘Which is better, primary or secondary sources?’

Understanding primary and secondary sources is important to teaching and learning in history and social studies. This is clearly represented in the local curriculum framework and in state standards guiding instruction. This was on my mind when I noted in my journal that the standards “specifically state students will know the difference between a primary and secondary source” (Journal entry - August 29th). In addition to recognition in the standards, I noted that there was a long-term benefit to students understanding primary and secondary sources. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, I stated in my journal that “primary and secondary sources could be used in any unit.” An inquiry early in the year on primary and secondary sources would prepare students for learning new historical content throughout the school year. Besides being standards aligned and having a long-term benefit for content acquisition, I also hoped that a focus on primary and secondary sources would provide an engaging approach to social studies instruction.

Settling on an area of focus for the inquiry that was aligned with the curriculum required a trial-and-error approach. I knew that the concept of primary and secondary sources was too abstract to really work, and I would need lots of examples, but was not sure what examples to

use. I wondered if I should use one content topic or lots of topics. To think through this, I investigated the possibility of focusing on geography in the larger context of the GRAPES curriculum. The idea was to examine different historical events mentioned in the curriculum, possibly focusing on major ancient civilizations and historical figures mentioned in the curriculum. I thought through many possibilities before settling on the content focus for the inquiry.

Building the inquiry to focus on geography seemed like a logical starting place as geography was the focus of the first unit in the GRAPES curriculum. I was also able to quickly organize content by geographical area. However, geography proved to be a challenging discipline for finding examples of primary and secondary sources. In my journal on September 1st, I wrote that finding primary sources was “time consuming, sifting through possibilities,” but that I was finding “a lot of images of objects, paintings, or engravings.” To complicate the process, I was trying to find primary and secondary sources that were connected to one another and aligned with my supporting questions. In my journal on September 1st, I mentioned that when I settled on one source, and I had trouble finding another that was connected. So, I decided to shift my focus to historical events.

The sixth-grade social studies curriculum provided many different options for an historical focus. I thought about historical events related to conquest and conflict (two themes mentioned in the curriculum). I found several possible historical events related to war but was worried that these would be “less engaging and lend to the more cliché aspects of any war” (Journal, September 1st). I wanted to move away from the glorification of war, so I decided to shift to the big idea of civilizations.



I started by focusing on Ancient Egypt because of my experience teaching this content. I had good experiences teaching about Ancient Egypt and students being interested. I also felt confident with my background knowledge on Egypt. When I began looking for primary and secondary sources on Ancient Egypt, I worried that most were too complex and that they “should not be taught in sixth grade” (Journal, September 1st.). I started thinking about how I could make the sources more relatable for students. I felt like the content in general was interesting, so secondary sources would work well, but the primary sources were challenging. So, I decided to find the topic that would be of great interest and settled on the pharaoh Tutankhamun, King Tut. I thought it would be a good fit with “engaging content due to King Tut’s age” and the potential of access to resources that would align with the inquiry questions (Journal, September 1st).

I had finally sorted out how to connect my inquiry to the curriculum framework. Ultimately, trying to find rigorous content in the thematic GRAPES curriculum felt a bit overwhelming. As I worked toward settling on the content for my supporting questions, I noted in my journal the time it was taking to refine my thinking, “this is taking a long time. How should I process?” I had to carefully manage the amount of time I was taking to plan for this inquiry as my goal was for this to be taught on the first day of school. I had already pushed back the unit as we were already in the second week of school. While I would have preferred more time to work on the supporting questions, I plowed ahead with the draft of my inquiry using the IDM planning template.

### ***Affordances of the IDM: Planning is a Process***

The IDM planning process is structured to support the development of the key components of inquiry centered on questions, sources, and tasks. Planning an inquiry using IDM is a precise process that for me involved a series of design steps. First, I had to develop my

compelling question for the inquiry. The compelling question dictated the rest of the inquiry design. The second step was to create supporting questions. These questions determined the content and, from a planning perspective, provided insight into finding the sources. The third step was to find appropriate sources given the supporting questions and the needs of my students. Depending on the needs of my students, I also needed to modify, adapt, and add context to the sources. I gave considerable attention to making sure that the sources aligned with the compelling and supporting questions. The fourth step was to develop the various formative performance tasks for the inquiry. These tasks needed to align with the questions and provide students an opportunity to build their knowledge and practice with skills toward completing the argumentative summative task.

The overall compelling question for my inquiry was, “Which source is better, primary or secondary?” The supporting questions included the following:

- Supporting Question #1: What are primary and secondary sources?
- Supporting Question #2: What are advantages and disadvantages to examining primary and secondary sources?’
- Supporting Question #3: How do primary and secondary sources compare?

Although I thought the questions were good, as I continued the planning process, I had to make them work for this inquiry with appropriate tasks and sources.

I have always thought that primary sources are particularly engaging. This was on my mind as I began to settle on primary and secondary sources being the focus of my inquiry. For example, I was thinking to myself, what’s more engaging reading a summary about Pearl Harbor or listening to President Roosevelt’s *Day of Infamy* December 8, 1941 speech to Congress asking for a declaration of war? It seemed like no contest to me. But, at the same time while primary

sources offer the potential to be more engaging, secondary sources can be useful in providing rich context. I had this on my mind as well. Secondary sources offer narratives that summarize key points, make connections, and may even draw conclusions about the impact of people's actions or an event. Secondary sources compliment primary sources. As I was planning, it was hard to envision one without the other. My journal reflects these ideas as I stated on August 29th that the use of primary and secondary sources would allow students to "build their analytical and evaluative skills."

I was building my rationale for using primary and secondary sources but had other ideas on my mind. While secondary sources can provide the contextual understanding necessary for using primary sources, I really wanted students to understand the unique value of primary sources as artifacts and relics of the past that were produced during the time period in which the event happened. Primary sources come in all sorts of forms and modalities. There is really no limit to their form, thus they may introduce additional elements of complexity to the planning process. I knew the complexity of the sources would require considerable additional planning for student engagement with the sources. In my journal on August 30th, I wrote that the use of scaffolding when using primary sources would help students "comprehend and analyze" the sources. Such scaffolds provide students with opportunities to acquire skills that can also apply to areas outside of social studies.

I was learning in the planning process that the curriculum framework was simply a starting place. It introduced concepts and content, in this case the concept of primary and secondary sources, but I had to do a lot more work to bring those concepts to instructional life. I had already recognized the need for scaffolding to help students build the skills they would need to work with sources. Among these skills is the ability to compare and contrast information. In

my journal I made this point on August 30th that primary and secondary sources allow students to “compare the information they are getting from the sources.” If students are carefully comparing information in sources, they are building up the important disciplinary skill of corroboration, which is a key feature for historical inquiry.

While I was confident with my new focus on primary and secondary sources, other issues remained unsettled. The inquiry design process required establishing supporting questions that reflect the content featured in the compelling question in more depth. I expressed my concerns in my journal entry, asking “what content do I include?” Potential supporting questions were obvious; What are primary sources? What are secondary sources? But, I was concerned that the content suggested in these supporting questions needed to be rigorous and closely connected to relevant disciplines. To complicate matters, the GRAPES Framework suggested that I should sample content from multiple social studies disciplines. In my journal, I noted that I needed to bring the content together with the supporting questions and thought that would happen with the third supporting question. However, as I worked more on the questions, I struggled with this third supporting question. My idea for the third question was to ask how primary and secondary sources compare. On the draft of my inquiry, I jotted down a question mark and wrote “necessary?” (Journal entry – August 30). I questioned the necessity of the question due to its similarity to the second supporting question, “What are advantages and disadvantages to examining primary and secondary sources?” But, I also thought that students would need to both understand that primary and secondary sources are different and that they are necessary in the disciplines. The advantages and disadvantages could be answered using ideas centered on accuracy, whereas the task asking for a comparison of primary and secondary sources would

need to focus on the structure and description of a topic. Ultimately, I decided to keep the third question.

As was the case in developing the questions for my inquiry, my thinking about the tasks evolved over time. As I planned the inquiry following the steps in the inquiry design process, I now needed to develop tasks that provided students an opportunity to respond to the supporting questions. My goal for designing the third supporting question was to carefully align them to the questions while also providing students variety in how they were working. Additionally, I wanted each task to help students build their knowledge and practice with the skills of inquiry, in particular making claims and using evidence.

With the three supporting questions in place, I developed the following three formative performance tasks to provide students an opportunity to learn the content suggested in those questions.

- Formative Performance Task #1 - Students examined two sources about Ancient Egypt and determined which one was primary and which one was secondary. Students answered comprehension questions that guided them to a determination.
- Formative Performance Task #2 - With a partner, students listed the potential advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources. Students also developed a preliminary rationale for why one source would be better than another.
- Formative Performance Task #3 - Students completed a Venn diagram comparing two sources related to the Tomb of King Tut. In this task, students examined two sources about the Tomb of King Tut. One source was a series of pictures of artifacts from King Tut's tomb and the second was a text-based source on the topic.

When teachers embark on a journey to design and implement an inquiry, they may experience shortcomings or incongruent designs in the resources they are provided, which in turn can exacerbate the complexity of designing an inquiry. To mitigate the complexity of designing inquiries, teachers have a few options. They can collaborate with colleagues to exchange or spark ideas, change the starting point of the inquiry design, or design an inquiry of smaller scale. Collaborating with colleagues can make the alignment of the inquiry with students needs more authentic. Such collaboration may help to align inquiry sources, tasks, and questions. Changing the starting point of inquiry design is another option, and may be more applicable depending on the grade level of the teacher. From my experience, there are far fewer elementary school social studies resources available. In this case, it may be easier to start with identifying sources because they can help inform the difficulty of the task and questions. Another option to mitigate the complexity of inquiry design would be to scale down the inquiry down. Teachers could opt to have fewer sources or supporting questions.

***Summary.***

Planning the inquiry was a complex endeavor due to district planning guides and maintaining fidelity to the IDM planning process. The district planning guide was not helpful in that it constrained my ability to hone the content into compelling and supporting questions. Trying to ensure alignment with all aspects of the IDM made following the planning process difficult.

## **Finding #2 - Implementing an Inquiry Requires Specific Teacher Moves Related to Expanding, Scaffolding, and Adapting Instructional Approaches to Supporting Student Learning**

After finishing my IDM blueprint, I began to shift from my pedagogical ambitions to the reality of implementing those ambitions. I learned that using the tasks, sources, and questions I created in the IDM might not play out as I anticipated. As my implementation of the inquiry proceeded, I realized that my goals for student learning and the experiences that students were having did not always line up. With this finding, I explore the interplay between my instructional plans and the experiences that I shared with my students in my classroom through a series of moves that I made to adjust my plans for implementing the inquiry.

### ***Implementing the Inquiry Through Teacher Moves***

My daily plans for teaching the inquiry included several recurring components. First, I provided an opening each day along with introductory information to students. The introductory information included a unit title, lesson title, and date for the lesson. Students then completed an “I Can” statement expressing their learning goals for the day. These ‘I Can’ statements defined the learning goals and objectives for the lesson. I then provided students with materials for the daily lesson and specific procedures. The materials included a list of the sources that students would use for the day. These procedures provided the step-by-step processes for students working with the sources and completing tasks and included opening and closing protocols for each day.

When implementing the inquiry lesson plan changes were made to address students' instructional needs. The complexities I faced in planning my inquiry did not end when I implemented the inquiry lesson. As I taught the inquiry, I learned that all sorts of things would

happen that I did not expect. As a result, I found myself making a number of *teacher moves* to reconcile my plans with the reality of the learning context and students' reactions and abilities to complete the planned tasks. These teacher moves were adjustments and in-process changes that I made when teaching. More precisely, the teacher moves were realizations that best laid plans might not always work and that my plans might have underestimated or misrepresented how students would actually respond to my plans. I made the moves as a series of tactical and strategic adjustments to accommodate for unanticipated barriers or opportunities for student learning. More importantly, these were key learnings for me as I reconciled my inquiry plans and the reality of my experiences with my students when implementing the inquiry. Table 4 reflects the teacher moves made over the course of the inquiry.



**Table 4. *Teacher Moves Description and Occurrence***

*Teacher Moves Description and Occurrence*

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<u>Teacher Moves</u>	<u>Teacher Move Description</u>	<u>Lesson Title of Occurrence</u>
Expanding the tasks	Increasing the depth of instructional activities or tasks	-Setting the Inquiry Foundation: Comparing and Contrasting Sources
Elaborating on the content	Building on ideas or concepts within the instructional design or delivery	-Setting the Inquiry Foundation -King Tut's Artifacts
Scaffolded students' learning	Providing additional support for student learning	-King Tut's Artifacts -Comparing and Contrasting Sources - Part II
Adapted supporting materials	Supporting students thinking about the compelling question and argument	-Planning for writing the argument

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***Teacher Move #1: Expanding the Tasks.***

On the first day of the inquiry (September 17), my opening staging task was set up to get the attention of students and to promote engagement in the inquiry. The plan was to introduce the compelling question and related content just to get students interested in the topic of sources. My initial idea for the staging task was to show students a source and see if they could figure out if it was primary or secondary. I used a picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt on Twitter with the tweet "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." It was just an irreverent way to get started and grab students' attention. I assumed that students would dismiss it as being false right away

because I planned to label it with a timestamp in 1933. However, as I implemented the staging task, I realized there was an opportunity for students to begin thinking about the differences between primary and secondary sources. So, I decided expanding the task was necessary. Since it was fake, the tweet was neither primary or secondary, but it perceived as a primary or secondary source. I wanted them to understand the idea that through the close examination of a source, they can determine not only the type of source but the perspective and the accuracy of the content. Class discussion to meet this goal went beyond immediately dismissing the fictitious tweet, to include the idea of tweets serving as sources to be studied when applying historical analysis to contemporary events. Since students were knowledgeable of the figure and the platform mentioned as part of the introduction, I decided to facilitate more conversation around critiquing a source.

From the beginning of the inquiry, I was adjusting and adapting based on feedback I was collecting through formative assessment. In my memoing notes on September 17th, I wrote that “students did not have any questions” as we worked on comparing the first sources using a soft scaffold. My journal indicated that students enjoyed the task because they were intrigued by the role of the Nile River in everyday life in ancient Egypt. Students’ products provided additional opportunities to determine learning progress. Amara reported on her exit ticket that “when we did the worksheet for primary or secondary sources, I think that really helped me to understand what they mean.” Olivia said on their exit ticket that, “using examples to see which ones primary and which ones are secondary” helped them learn the material. Margot reported similarly that it was helpful to “have a worksheet to learn about examples of sources.” These responses by students, in conjunction with my journal and memo, showed that my adjustments in this particular lesson ended well. During the lesson, I made an on-the-fly adjustment by expanding

the task in the form of a scaffold. When going over the identification of primary and secondary sources, I had students explain how they knew each example was a primary source, as well as ways the description could be changed to become a primary or secondary source. This was not the last time that expanding the task was necessary to improve a learning activity.

The third formative task included analyzing a written primary source. It became apparent that the primary source was difficult for students to understand. Sensing this, I decided expanding the task was necessary to maximize students' understanding. I wanted to check students' understanding of the sources by asking clarifying questions. I realized during the lesson that I needed to build on those clarifying questions given the difficult nature of the text. In my journal on this day, I noted that students "experienced far greater difficulty" than anticipated. This caused me to change the approach I had planned to check for understanding and include clarifying questions and a thumbs up technique. I regularly used the thumbs up technique in my classroom. The technique calls for students to put their thumb up if they understand or feel comfortable, thumb to the side if they feel unsure, or thumb pointed down if they lack understanding. I used this technique after posing the clarifying questions and providing students explanations of the sources. I noted in my memoing that by the last clarifying question, all students had thumbs up. At that point, I felt pretty good about what students were learning. Even though my adjustment seemed to positively influence this lesson, that was not always the case when planning and implementing the inquiry. At other times instead of expanding students' work on the tasks, I found that I needed to elaborate on the content that was supporting their work.

### ***Teacher Move #2: Elaborating on the Content***

Early in my implementation, I realized that elaborating on content in my inquiry was going to be central to my success in teaching. My moves to elaborate were consistent throughout

multiple lesson plans. For example, I memoed that I needed to “elaborate and list words” when introducing the directions for the primary source activity where students examined what they were. To clarify instructions I listed the words, primary sources and secondary sources, and verbally explained how to complete the first part of the activity where students were identifying examples of primary and secondary sources. Another example of elaboration came on the second day of planned instruction. During this lesson, I facilitated conversations with students regarding advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources after students had worked with a partner to brainstorm their ideas. I also provided notes during this lesson. In my journal I noted that I needed to “be specific” expanding upon the possible advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources (Journal - September 18).

The plan for the second supporting question called for students to continue building their knowledge about the difference between primary and secondary sources by brainstorming the advantages and disadvantages of primary and secondary sources and then developing a preliminary rationale for why one source would be better than another. My plan was for students to first work on this task independently, then in a collaborative manner before moving on to a whole group discussion and writing. In the discussion, students took their first pass at answering the compelling question by stating whether they would rather use primary or secondary sources to support an argument. As with the first task and supporting question, I had to make some changes on the fly to adjust to conditions in the class. I had planned a presentation for students on the advantages and disadvantages of primary and secondary sources. I hoped that students would take good notes and be able to use those as they proceeded in the lesson. As we proceeded, it became clear that was not happening, I noted in my memoing that students might need more “assistance.” One student asked, “would an advantage for one be a disadvantage for

the other?” This question along with others that students asked necessitated that I expand and clarify my original comments by elaborating on the content.

Another example of elaborating on the content occurred during the first formative task as students were working with two sources about the Nile River. The first source was a primary source called “Hymn to the Nile” and the second source was an excerpt from a National Geographic essay. I wrote in my journal when planning for the day that I should include a scaffold by stating “scaffold here: which would be a better approach, a hard or soft scaffold?” The proposal of using a scaffold to support source analysis clearly shows a desire to support student learning during a task that could be challenging for students. To help students, I planned to point out ways to identify types of sources by having students examine; verb tenses, examples of emotion in the text, as well as how people, places, and events were portrayed. When implementing the lesson, I found myself elaborating on the content by posing clear questions that students could answer to examine the text; does the author write in the author write in the past or present tense? Does the author include emotion about the topic or event being described? How does the author describe the event, place, or person? Answering these questions in regard to the text would allow students to come to a sound conclusion regarding the type of source they were analyzing, primary or secondary. This seemed to be effective as students indicated a clear understanding of the types of sources and were able to point out key elements of the text that led them to that conclusion.

### ***Teacher Move #3: Scaffolding Students’ Learning***

On the next day of the inquiry (September 19th), students reviewed images of artifacts from King Tut’s tomb. When analyzing the images, students were expected to record characteristics they observed for each artifact and make a claim about what it was used for. The

sequence to accomplish this would consist of direct instruction and a combination of independent and collaborative work. First, I would model this process by displaying one of the images and show students how to fill out the chart. Then independently students would record characteristics they observed and make their claim about what the artifact was used for. After that students would share their work with a partner to see if there were commonalities or disagreements. Lastly, we would go over each item as a class and have students make any necessary corrections or additions to their chart. The goal of the lesson was to help students understand that primary sources can come in a variety of forms and that examining them for meaning can be difficult work. When implementing this lesson, I again had to make some adjustments on the fly. Instead of following the initial plan of direct instruction, reviewing all artifacts independently, collaborating with a partner and then going through each artifact through class discussion, we accomplished these things by going in the order of the artifact, and I provided more scaffolding regarding the artifact analysis. To better assist students, I found myself pointing out the “characteristics in each image, asking students how they should concisely write that information in the chart, and then taking guesses identifying the artifact” (Memoing, September 19). This adjustment to add scaffolding was another unanticipated teacher move and was made to help build student understanding in supporting their knowledge of primary sources.

As the inquiry continued, students’ work shifted to working with even more complex texts. On September 23rd, students read a 19th century historical source about Tutankhamun’s tomb written by Howard Carter and A.C. Mace. The unique nature of this source provided an interesting opportunity for students to think about the differences between primary and secondary sources. Obviously, the source was not created during the time of Tutankhamun, but students thought it was primary because it was over 100 years old. Howard Carter did discover

the tomb of Tutankhamun, so in that sense his writing was a primary source about the discovery. So, students had to think about the questions they were asking of the source. If the question was about how people in the 19th century viewed Tutankhamun, then it would be a primary source. If students were reading it to know more about Tutankhamun, then it would be secondary.

Students' work with the source from Carter and Mace was supported by other more current secondary sources that provided more context. When implementing this task, I again made an adjustment, to help students make meaning from the more difficult Carter and Mace text. The plan was for students to follow a reading protocol that included a silent reading session, reviewing reading questions designed to scaffold understanding and then highlighting and annotating parts of the text that would help them answer the questions as they re-read the text. I thought this three-part approach would work as the text already included a hard scaffold with difficult words underlined and definitions provided in the margins. It turned out that more scaffolding was needed. In my memoing during this task, I noted multiple examples of students who were confused by words and ideas in the text that were not scaffolded. For example, one student asked, "what is a cache?" The Carter and Mace text included a quote from Carter when he first encountered the tomb. He asked, is this "a tomb or merely a cache." I worked with students to use context clues in the text to find the answer. At that point, I thought that we should identify words and ideas that students had identified as difficult.

#### ***Teacher Move #4: Adapting Supporting Materials***

I also made a new move when students were planning to write their inquiry. One of the biggest adjustments was a decision to add and adapt a planning template for students to prepare their argument in response to the compelling question. The template included the following sections: topic, thesis sentence, reasons/examples with supporting details, counterargument, and

conclusion. The original template included three areas for students to write a topic sentence and reasons/examples with supporting details, but to ensure the deadline of the inquiry, as well as accommodating the number of sources used in the inquiry, I instructed students to remove one of the areas to write a topic sentence and reasons/examples with supporting details. When using the template, students encountered difficulties. I had planned to use it early in the inquiry, but students struggled to fill it out as they were more focused on building their initial knowledge and developing the context. In my journal I noted it was a bad idea.

I think that this felt rushed due to time requirements. If I had gone back to the drawing board I would have had an activity that would have supported clarification on this topic, a hard scaffold activity that had them identify thesis statements and then a short text where students had to develop a thesis statement (Journal, September 24).

My memoing further suggested significant misunderstandings on the part of students who, wanted to know what to look for when filling out the template.

When designing the inquiry, I planned for students to build knowledge for the argument in response to the compelling question and then write an essay to represent their argument. As mentioned earlier, I planned for students to use a planning template for developing their argument. Appendix D shows the organizer. But, early on I was worried about this approach. I wrote in my notes; “Is this a good idea?” I was worried about the load placed on students who were trying to complete the supporting questions and learn about primary and secondary sources, the content related to ancient Egypt, and then to have to start putting together their argument. However, after thinking through it, I just did not see another option. We were limited with time, and I wanted students to write an argument, so it seemed like a risk worth taking.



I learned pretty quickly that my plan did not provide the necessary support for student learning. In my journal, I noted that “I wish I had been more explicit about how to use the sources to support an argument. I think including these would have helped alleviate or answer some of the questions that students asked during instruction” and “felt like students were not prepared for the level of writing I wanted them to complete.” My memoing notes also reflected the problems with this strategy. One student flatly stated, “I’m really confused.” Another student said they were “looking for guidance” as they had begun filling in the argumentative graphic organizer. I was learning that my plan was just not enough to support students. I tried to rectify this by re-teaching all aspects of the planning template and answering questions. To re-teach the template multiple steps were necessary. First, I identified each section that was going to be filled out and reiterated the section that was to be removed. Then, I proceeded to identify what each section was and asked clarifying questions to elicit an example from students. For example, with the thesis statement I asked the following questions: What is a thesis statement? How should I begin my thesis statement? I stated in my journal for this day that when “filling out the template I had to explicitly state what that was and gave an example of a stem.” I then wrote down a stem from student responses. I did this repeatedly for each section of the organizer to promote student understanding of the planning organizer. I believed that seeing more examples of how to fill in the graphic organizer and providing a start for students was a way to improve student understanding of the template, which would then improve students' work and indirectly their overall writing for the summative task.

Overall, the inquiry I taught was time consuming to design and implement. Designing the inquiry, and corresponding lesson plans, took approximately a week to complete. The amount of time to design the inquiry was time consuming given the drafting, revising, and reworking of the

inquiry. Implementation of the inquiry was also time consuming. Seven days of class time were devoted to completing it. However, I found the time spent to be well worth it. The broad nature of the compelling question that focused on primary and secondary sources and general content about Ancient Egypt would serve students for the remainder of the year in my class. Since the inquiry prepared students for the year, it made the time spent designing and implementing the inquiry well worth it.

As the practitioner of this inquiry study, I expanded the tasks, elaborated on content, scaffolded student learning, and adapted supporting materials. My findings suggest that teachers designing and implementing inquiries will need to be thoughtful when writing inquiries and have the mindset of a facilitator. Being thoughtful when writing an inquiry means that teachers need to proactively identify the areas in which they anticipate students will struggle. From there teachers need to think about how they will support students and maintain rigor in their learning. In terms of having a facilitator mindset, teachers need to adapt instructional plans to support student learning. Further, teachers need to anticipate that the needs to adapt will happen frequently over the course of inquiry due to the variety of students' needs in most social studies classrooms.

***Summary.***

When implementing the daily lessons I developed from my inquiry blueprint, I found myself needing to make a series of moves to support student learning. My teachers' moves for this inquiry include expanding the task, elaborating on the content, scaffolding students' learning, and adapting supporting materials. These moves manifested themselves at various points throughout the inquiry. When I planned the inquiry and then made various moves when implementing the tasks, students were front and center in my mind. As detailed in the second finding of my research, I had to make in-progress teacher moves because the expectations I had

developed from my inquiry plan did not always match what happened in class. After I finished the inquiry, I wondered if students had learned what I planned for them to learn about the difference between primary and secondary sources, and about the ability to create claims with evidence from the sources used in the inquiry.

### **Finding #3: Students Demonstrated Their Understanding of Differences Between Primary and Secondary Sources in Various Ways**

Students that participated in this study ultimately demonstrated their understanding of primary and secondary sources in various ways. These learning outcomes were on display when students completed all of the tasks, both formative and summative. The first formative task involved identifying and analyzing primary and secondary sources. The second task had students creating a preliminary claim stating whether primary or secondary sources were better. In the third formative task, students further compared primary and secondary sources. In the summative argument tasks, students constructed an argument where they were expected to make claims about which source is better, primary or secondary and to provide evidence to support their claims. In their work on the formative and summative performance tasks, students demonstrated an understanding of the difference between primary and secondary sources but did so in different ways.

Students' work on the tasks were informed by their reading and analysis of sources used in the inquiry. The sources for the inquiry included a mix of primary and secondary sources (Table 5).

**Table 5. Sources Used in the Inquiry**

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<u>Source</u>	<u>Source Type</u>	<u>Source Summary</u>
Source A	Secondary source	The source included an overview of primary and secondary sources with examples of each.
Source B	Primary source	The source included images of artifacts found in King Tut's tomb. Each image was a primary source that was found in the tomb.
Source C	Secondary source	The source provided background information on King Tut's tomb, its location, what it looked like, etc.
Source D	Primary source	The source provided a synopsis of the events surrounding Howard Carter finding the King Tut's tomb.

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The first formative task showed that students knew what primary and secondary sources were. The formative task was broken into two parts; analyzing a statement to determine if it was a primary and secondary source and reading an example of each type of source and analyzing it by answering questions. Students did exceptionally well on both parts. On the first part of the formative task, the class average was 97% percent correct. Meaning students accurately identified primary and secondary sources 97% of the time. On the second part of the task, students did even better, as they answered accurately 100% of the time. It should be noted that one student who participated in the study was absent during initial instruction and completed this task later than the other students. Thus, their scores were omitted from the previously mentioned results. Even with this student's omitted results, they were extremely positive and provided a solid foundation for the second formative task.

In the second formative task, students were asked to make a preliminary claim stating which source was better, primary or secondary. Students were successful in stating their

preference and utilizing a conceptual understanding of what primary and secondary sources to support their preliminary preferences. Students' work on this task was very different than in the first formative task. In the first task students were simply replying to direct questions using information available in the sources. There were no options for correct answers. In other words, students could only get the answers right or wrong and as mentioned earlier, almost all students answered these questions correctly. With the second task, the correct answer could be different. Some students preferred primary sources while others preferred secondary sources. The big difference with this task was that the substance of student effort was in the justification for their selection. For the third formative task, students were asked to explain why some sources were better than others. As with the second formative task, students had an opportunity to respond in ways that reflected their understanding and preferences without being wrong for having a personal view.

All students who participated in the study identified their preferred type of source in their initial statement on the second formative task. Many students were very direct in their statement. For example, Dylan stated, "Secondary sources give more information on the subject" and then proceeded to state why he believed this. Ruby did so in a similar fashion by stating, "I would want to use a primary." Conceptual understandings of primary and secondary sources help shape students' preferences. For example, Tejas stated "primary sources give you information from people who actually were there." Tejas' point was echoed in the second formative task as many students stated the firsthand nature of primary sources as a reason for their preference for primary sources. Similarly, students that preferred secondary sources pointed out that breadth of information that can be available in a secondary source. Brooks stated that secondary sources

“give you both sides of the story and more information that we have discovered over time.” Ben echoed similar ideas when he stated, “secondary sources get more info.”

Students accurately portrayed their understanding of this in their summative assessment. Much like the second and third formative tasks, all students clearly articulated their source preference. Again, students used their conceptual understandings of the sources as a basis for their arguments but attempted to utilize information from the sources in the inquiry to support their ideas. For example, Alex pointed out that primary sources are better because a first-hand account makes you feel like you are there. Alex then went on to include a quote from one of the sources. Riley included the same rationale, but instead of a quote, they paraphrased information from one of the sources by stating “...Carter describes how it felt to find King Tut’s tomb he writes about the suspense and the awe when he found the chamber with all the gold.” Alex and Riley clearly articulated that they preferred primary sources because they were created from first-hand accounts, but they used information from the sources in different ways. The writing of Alex and Riley exemplified their understanding of primary sources, which rested on the idea that primary sources are first-hand accounts. Alex and Riley build on this foundational understanding of primary sources to utilize supporting evidence extracted from sources in the inquiry. This phenomena played out the same way for secondary sources. Amara stated that secondary sources were better because you can research or add to information about the primary source from the secondary source. This implies that secondary sources are made up of multiple sources or perspectives. Amara then went on to state that the central character in one of the sources, Howard Carter, would have to research the artifacts he found in King Tut’s tomb to determine what they were. The nature of students’ work on the second and third formative performance task was clearly more sophisticated than their work on the first formative task. The summative

argument task pushed students forward. With this task, students were expected to say what they believe to be true in the form of a claim and to support their claims with evidence. In contrast to the second and third formative tasks, students were not just sharing their opinion, they were making a claim and the claims had to be clear, reasoned, and supported with evidence. In the next section, I explore in more depth students claim-making and the process I used to assess their learning about claim-making.

### ***The Summative Argument Task: Creating Claims with Evidence***

Students' claims were analyzed using the Persuasive Claim Framework (PCF), a tool for teachers to assess the quality of students' claim-making skills (Lewis, 2021). PCF includes criteria arranged in four dimensions of claim making including, evidentiary, reasoned, clear, and accurate. The evidentiary dimension focuses on how students' use information from sources as evidence to support their claims. The reasoned dimension focuses on the logic of students' claims. The measure of how clear a claim is measuring the way language is used to effectively communicate conclusions. When applying the accurate dimension, teachers evaluate the factual quality of the claim. Lewis (2021) also describes a single-point rubric that teachers may use to provide students feedback on the quality of their claims. He uses what he calls 'Enhancers' or areas that show process and 'Distractors' or areas that need improvement to provide specific feedback to students about the quality of their claims. Enhancers and distractors are an opportunity for teachers to provide students with information about why their claims are strong and well written or the parts of the claim that are weak and need some work.

To evaluate the quality of students' claims, I applied the PCF evaluation structure (Table 6) and coded students' claims using a modified version of Lewis' (2021) feedback system (enhancers and distractions) coding claims as strong, weak, or needs revisions for each of the

four dimensions of the framework (Table 6). For a claim to be considered strong, it needed to satisfy all of the criteria of the PCF dimensions. Claims were considered weak when some but not all criteria were satisfied. Claims were considered as needing revision if none of the criteria were met.

**Table 6. *Persuasive Claims Framework Evaluation Structure***

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<b><u>PCF Dimensions</u></b>	<b><u>Criteria</u></b>
Evidentiary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Convincing</li> <li>● Multiple Sources</li> <li>● Accounts for conflicting perspectives</li> </ul>
Reasoned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Logical</li> <li>● Valid</li> <li>● Clear chain of reasoning</li> </ul>
Clear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communicates conclusions</li> <li>● Unambiguous</li> <li>● Understood by wide audience</li> </ul>
Accurate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Presents factual information</li> <li>● Plausible interpretation</li> </ul>

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Students produced a total of 46 claims on this task. My evaluation of students' claims on the summative assessment for this inquiry showed that students experienced varying levels of success in their claim making ability. Table 7 shows the total number of claims by level of quality (strong, weak, or needs revision) for each dimension of the PCF.



**Table 7. Variation in Students Claim Making Ability**

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<b><u>PCF Criteria</u></b>	<b><u>Number (percentage) of Student Claims</u></b>		
	<b><u>Strong</u></b>	<b><u>Weak</u></b>	<b><u>Needs Revision</u></b>
Evidentiary	13 (28%)	22 (48%)	11 (24%)
Reasoned	30 (65%)	14 (30%)	2 (4%)
Clear	30 (65%)	9 (20%)	7 (15%)
Accurate	28 (61%)	16 (35%)	2 (4%)

\*46 total claims on summative assessment. Percentages in the table are rounded up and may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

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The quality of students' claims was uneven. A majority of students' claims were scored as strong on the three of the four PCF criteria - reasoned, clear, and accurate. Only two of the 46 claims needed revision regarding their reasoning or accuracy. The clarity of student claims was also good, but seven of the claims students made needed revision regarding the clarity of the claims. In contrast, students struggled to provide evidence to support their claims. Only 28% of students' claims had strong evidentiary support, and eleven claims needed revision regarding the evidentiary quality.

***Factors Influencing the Quality of Students' Claims.***

Students' varying levels of success in using evidence to make claims was caused by two things; misplaced expectations by me and contextual factors tied to when the inquiry was implemented. When planning the inquiry, I designed, and expected students to produce claims backed by evidence after completing the three formative tasks. The second formative task required students to use their knowledge of primary and secondary sources to make a preliminary

claim identifying which source might be useful in supporting the claim with evidence. They were also required to provide a rationale using the sources they had analyzed to that point, which included all aspects of Source A: Primary and Secondary Sources (Hymn of the Nile and National Geographic excerpt). The third formative task was another opportunity for students to explain why some sources were better than others. In preparation for the summative argument, I also modeled how to write a claim. These exercises provided students with some opportunities to practice claim making, and the opportunity for me to provide formative feedback, but it ultimately fell short of supporting students to go as far as I had hoped. Although these exercises allowed for formative feedback, they lacked an emphasis on how to use evidence. Additional activities identifying how to effectively use evidence in a claim, as well as how it was used to support the claim, would have benefited students.

Contextual factors related to when the inquiry was implemented also affected students' ability to create and support claims with evidence. The inquiry was implemented as the first unit of study for incoming sixth grade students. Students were transitioning to a new school, a new school day structure and routine, new teachers, and new expectations regarding the level of independence expected of them. In my experience, these factors tend to influence students academically in all subjects as they transition from elementary to middle school. Additionally, students enter middle school social studies classrooms with varying experiences in the content area. There is considerable variability in the amount of time elementary schools spend on social studies. Many of my students shared with me that this was the first time that they had participated in social studies on a consistent basis. These factors, combined with students experiencing a new approach to teaching in a content area they are not very familiar with, may have indirectly influenced students' success.

To highlight some of the differences among student work, I selected the work of four students that show strengths and weaknesses in claim making. Two students wrote claims that were evaluated as *mostly* strong across the four PCF categories, and two students were evaluated as mostly weak across the four PCF categories. In addition to the quality of the claims, students also differed in the number of claims written. The students analyzed here had between two and four claims respectively. These claims are shown in the Student Claims Table 8.

**Table 8. Student Claims**

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<u>Title</u>	<u>Phillip</u>	<u>Brooks</u>	<u>Alyssa</u>	<u>Owen</u>
Claim #1	“I think primary sources are better than secondary sources because they give you an overall real sensation.”	“Secondary sources are better than primary sources because they have more info, both sides fo the story, multiple sources, and an overview of the topic.”	“I believe the secondary sources are better then primary sources. There are many more advantages of the secondary source the a primary source.”	“Secondary sources are better than primary sources for many reasons.”
Claim #2	“One of the reasons primary sources are better than secondary sources is you get to experience everything.”	“One reason they are better is because they have more information”	“Some people who believe that primary sources are better than secondary sources may say, ‘what if you don’t know if the source is reliable, it may even use bias or leave our information,’ but because we have access to tons of secondary sources, we can find lots of reliable sources even if a few aren’t.”	“It would be easier to find a secondary source than to look through a bunch of primary sources trying to find one that is reliable.”

**Table 8 (continued).**

Claim #3	“Another is you get to feel the excitement or suspense in real time.”	“A secondary source reasons is secondary sources are made up of multiple sources.”	“Somebody who thinks that primary sources are better might say you get more details from one side of the story.”
Claim #4		“Someone else coils day primary sources are better because they are straight from something.	

At a glance, it is easy to see differences in the claims with regard to length, clarity, and overall quality. When evaluated using the PCF more nuanced differences in quality of the claims become more apparent. The table below displays the overall evaluation for each claim using the PCF.

**Table 9. Student Claim Evaluations**

	<u>Evidentiary</u>	<u>Reasoned</u>	<u>Clear</u>	<u>Accurate</u>
Phillip				
Claim 1	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Claim 2	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong
Claim 3	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong

**Table 9** (continued).

Brooks

Claim 1	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Claim 2	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak
Claim 3	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Claim 4	Strong	Weak	Needs Revision	Strong

Alyssa

Claim 1	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak
Claim 2	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong

Owen

Claim 1	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Claim 2	Weak	Strong	Strong	Weak
Claim 3	Needs Revision	Weak	Strong	Strong

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The first claim developed by Phillip, Brooks, Alyssa, and Owen had two things in common. First, all four students directly stated their preferences for the type of source (primary or secondary) that they thought was best. Second, these initial claims served as a thesis statement that helped the students organize their writing. However, Phillip, Brooks, Alyssa, and Owen varied in the complexity of the language they used, as well as how specific they were in rationalizing their preference of a source.

In their first claims in the summative argument tasks, Phillip and Brooks provided more convincing ideas with topics and concepts connected to the sources utilized in the inquiry. For example, Phillip wrote that he thought primary sources were better because, “they give you an overall real sensation.” Brooks utilized language that was more specific by stating secondary sources are better because, “they have more info, both sides [of] the story, multiple sources, and

an overview of the topic.” Given that this was at the beginning of the school year, and that these were their first attempts to write a claim as part of a summative argument task, both students produced well written claims. Phillip was expressing his preference for primary sources in emotional terms, as those emotions were expressed in multiple sources included in the inquiry, whereas Brooks pulled specific structural elements of secondary sources to support his preference. These served as distinctly different approaches to using evidence to support claims but were equally effective.

In contrast, Alyssa and Owen did not provide evidence from sources in their first claims, but alluded to the idea that they had a rationale for their preference based on the sources. The first claims written by Alyssa and Owen lacked specific evidence to support their ideas, which made them less convincing. For example, Alyssa stated that “there are more advantages of the secondary source [to] the primary source.” Her claim certainly stipulated that there were advantages but did not provide a glimpse of what those advantages were. Owen did something similar by stating, “secondary sources are better than primary sources for many reasons.” These claims were scored as weak because they allude to a rationale or reason for their thinking, they did not explicitly state those reasons.

Even more variability was evident in the additional claims from Phillip, Brooks, Alyssa and Owen. Alyssa’s second claim was actually a counterclaim attempting to counter her initial claim of primary sources being a better source option. Alyssa used the more sophisticated concepts of, reliability and bias saying, “what if you don’t know if the source is reliable, it may even use bias or leave our information,’ but because we have access to tons of secondary sources, we can find lots of reliable sources even if a few an aren’t.” Alyssa’s claims were reasoned and warranted, but lack evidence tied to sources in the inquiry. She was also somewhat

ambiguous by not specifically stating that the reliability of sources is often found through corroboration. I believe this is what Alyssa was trying to say in this claim, but she struggled to communicate through a written format. Alyssa only had these two claims in her final argument.

Phillip, Brooks, and Owen created additional claims aimed at supporting the first written claim in their summative tasks. The variance in the quality of claims among these three students continued across their arguments. In their second claims, Phillip and Brooks mention topics connected to the sources they used in the inquiry. Phillip stated that primary sources are better because “you get to experience everything.” In terms of clarity, this claim could be improved, but Phillip did appear to be inferring that primary sources convey more perspective and emotion. This could be tied to the source that had students reading about the excitement and apprehension of the archeologist who found King Tut’s tomb.

Brooks had better clarity in his second claim about secondary sources. Brooks wrote that secondary sources are better because they have “more information.” Brooks was referring to more generalized information about events and topics that appeared in the secondary sources in the inquiry. For example, the source about King Tut’s tomb which included a map of where it was located. Owen did not take the approach of Phillip or Brooks. Instead, Owen compared the reliability of sources by stating that finding a reliable secondary source would be easier than finding a reliable primary source. This claim needed significant elaboration that references an area where a primary source used in the inquiry was shown to be unreliable on a topic, whereas a secondary source proved more reliable. The differences between the claims of Owen, Brooks, and Phillip show the degree of difference in students claim making on the summative task.

## *Summary*

Students demonstrated a clear understanding of primary and secondary sources in their formative work. They were also able to articulate their preferences for primary or secondary sources in the formative tasks. However, in their work on the summative argument task, students struggled with making evidentiary claims when evaluated using the Persuasive Claim Framework (PCF). In future inquiries, the PCF could become a central component for providing feedback to students and evaluating student work. This may help mitigate variation in the quality of student work.



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study sought to answer an overarching question regarding inquiry; How does a middle school social studies teacher effectively facilitate the learning of content knowledge through inquiry? Recognizing that this question includes many variables that impact teaching, such as planning, implementation, and reflection, the study included three key research questions.

1. What processes does a middle school social studies teacher go through when planning an inquiry using the IDM?
2. What does a middle school social studies teacher do to teach content in an inquiry using the IDM?
3. How is content learned by students through inquiry?

Addressing these research questions was complex given the complex nature of the variables within that were focused on student learning. Overall, I felt successful in planning and implementing the inquiry. I was able to effectively facilitate student learning of content through inquiry by focusing clearly on the planning process with creativity and revision and then being willing to modify my teaching plan while implementing it to best meet student needs. The planning process was complex and required adjustments in how to approach the creation of questions, followed by constant revision in terms of the sources and tasks. To best reach students I was decisive when teaching the lessons in the inquiry. This required monitoring student progress and changing direction to best meet student needs. In this chapter I describe how each research question was addressed in the study. I then discuss key contributions to the field regarding how social studies teachers may effectively facilitate the learning of content through

inquiry, before concluding with implications, areas of future research, and limitations of the study.

### **Research Question 1**

My first research question asked, What processes does a middle school social studies teacher go through when planning an inquiry using the IDM? The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) is a valuable tool for planning inquiry in the social studies classroom. IDM is an approach to designing instruction that positions teachers as facilitators in classrooms where students are actively constructing knowledge toward applying what they have learned through argumentation. When planning an inquiry, care should be taken to successfully position students to interact with information in sources, in order to prepare students to complete tasks that demonstrate their knowledge and ability to apply the disciplinary and inquiry skills they have learned. This study sought to examine the processes I went through when planning an inquiry on the compelling question, Which source is better, primary or secondary? To accomplish this, I collected data on my practice including my thoughts and actions during the implementation of an inquiry that I planned. The data collected included a journal that I began during the planning of the inquiry and continued throughout the implementation process. In addition to the journal, I also memoed ideas that I was thinking through as I planned the inquiry and during the planning process. All the data generated through these methods was then analyzed and coded toward producing the findings presented in Chapter 4. Through the analysis and coding of data, I put forward findings which suggest that planning and teaching an inquiry is a complex process that is impacted by multiple factors.

In the planning process, I used strategies that I thought would be most beneficial in producing a well-designed inquiry. I used the planning model featured in the Inquiry Design

Model (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2018) that involved developing inquiry questions, finding the sources, and creating the tasks that students complete in response to the questions. Creating the inquiry questions was a complex process in which I utilized district level curriculum resources that emphasized the importance of students working with primary and secondary sources. My goal was to create an inquiry that would help students build an understanding of the relative importance of primary and secondary sources in an engaging context. Eventually I settled on the question, Which source is better, primary or secondary? I thought this question would be engaging for students because they would be able to debate the question as they shared what they have learned. I also thought learning about primary and secondary sources would be useful for students in future social studies classes. This question incorporated many aspects of the GRAPES (Geography, Religion, Achievements, Politics, Economics, and Society) curriculum provided by the school district where I worked and offered many options for including supporting content. I eventually settled on Ancient Egypt as the main area of content to support the inquiry question due to my experience teaching the topic and the robust number of sources available.

The complex nature of creating an inquiry bears many similarities to the writing process; prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Prewriting is best described as a way to organize your original thoughts, which can take many formats, mapping, charting, etc. Drafting is composing a draft of your ideas using the prewriting. Revising is going through and identifying areas in need of change. Editing is examining your writing stylistically to ensure that it is accurate and clear. Publishing is showing your finished work to others. The prewriting aspect of my work took place exclusively in the planning process. During the planning process I completed an IDM template and then utilized that information to create lesson plans to

implement as part of the inquiry. Although I did not formally write or map out my ideas, other than a journal, I did have parameters for what I wanted to accomplish with the inquiry. I wanted the inquiry to serve students for the length of their social studies classes in middle and high school, as well as align it with state standards and district curriculum. This process allowed for the successful creation of questions, in which I then needed to research and find actual historical content I was comfortable teaching that would align with the question. I settled on Ancient Egypt due to my experience and a plethora of instructional resources. When this was decided the prewriting aspect continued in a formal way as I had to organize the selected content around the questions. From there, I mapped out my lesson plans using the IDM process.

The drafting process included multiple steps. I created the inquiry using the IDM, which then allowed me to write lesson plans. I used the IDM to carefully determine the sequence of tasks and where to transition content as part of my teaching strategy. This was intended to prepare students for the summative task, which required creating and supporting a claim with evidence.

Revising and editing took place during the planning and implementation of the inquiry. After drafting the inquiry, it was revised and edited before mapping the lesson plans. This included reworking questions, as well as adjusting sources and tasks for students. Once the inquiry was revised and edited, lesson plans were drafted. They were then revised and edited to ensure coherence in teaching activities that best supported student learning. In retrospect, I believe the inquiry, and lesson plans, would have been revised and edited better if I had used the PCF as part of my planning process. This document would have provided another avenue to organize feedback for students, which would then influence some aspects of lesson planning and implementation.

For me, the publishing process occurred when I implemented the inquiry. Students were able to see the work I had put into designing the inquiry and lesson plans. They were able to view the content selected, the questions, etc. Thinking back, I learned a lot when I taught the inquiry. I was able to see how the decisions I made when planning influenced students' engagement and their learning. Furthermore, I was able to see students learning in a new way. By this I mean that my students had not experienced or participated in an inquiry before. They were engaging in rigorous tasks that utilized their inquisitive nature for the benefit of learning social studies skills and content.

Even though the creation and implementation of the inquiry was similar to the writing process, one key reflection point was the need to collaborate in creating and inquiry. I produced and implemented this inquiry independently of other teachers. Although there was another 6th grade team in my school who I often partnered with on planning instruction, I wanted to have control over the process and limit additional variables that may have impacted the findings. At the same time, I recognize the importance of examining collaborative inquiry planning and teaching and think that research in this area would be fruitful. Swan, Lee, & Grant (2018) have made the case that collaboration is an important part of developing an inquiry. Collaboration on creating inquiries can enhance the inquiry development process when stress testing questions, refining content, and identifying ways to best support students. I believe collaboration is an important next step and address this as a future area of research later in this chapter.

## **Research Question 2**

The second research question of my study sought to understand what a middle school social studies teacher does to teach content. To answer this question, I collected data in a journal through the planning and implementation of the inquiry. I also collected jottings as the lesson

plans were implemented and collected student artifacts. The analysis of this data included the coding of journal data, collected jottings, and student artifacts. Data analysis revealed the moves that I made to support student learning as I implemented the formative tasks in the inquiry and as I elaborated on the content, scaffolding, and adapted supporting materials.

Each teacher move that I made required a different action. One important and consistent move was to expand the formative tasks to provide more in-depth coverage of the relevant ideas and content. I also found myself elaborating on content in ways that built on the ideas or concepts that I had planned to teach about. This included providing more descriptive or visuals to directions, or adding an instructional component, like a conversation centered on a key concept or idea. Scaffolding students' learning required the creation of hard and soft scaffolds to support students' learning of content and their practice with relevant skills. Adapting supporting materials called for the changing of materials that I planned to use as conditions evolved during the implementation of the inquiry. I made these moves to help students organize their thoughts and emerging content knowledge connected to the compelling question. These teacher moves were made at different times during the implementation of the inquiry and involved me actively monitoring student learning and making changes to the plan to best support student learning. This is an important part of teaching using inquiry. It is my belief that teachers need to remain flexible and fluid to best meet their students' needs. A teacher may have a clear plan, or even a plan to go to if their original is not working, but teachers also need to remain cognizant of the possibility they may need to read their students and go off script to support them.

My need to make these teacher moves reflects the ambitious nature of inquiry-based teaching and learning for both students and teachers. Grant, Swan, & Lee (2017) state that inquiry in the social studies classroom requires persistence and patience from students and

teachers. I believe that this is due, at least in part, due to the difficulty in meeting students' needs as they work to complete academically rigorous tasks. Effective and proactive planning with a willingness and capacity to adapt can help mitigate this difficulty, but it will not prevent teachers from having to make modifications over the course of an inquiry. Since inquiry requires teachers to be facilitators of learning, rather than gatekeepers, inquisitive students might change the direction of a lesson or prompt a question that requires further coverage.

### **Research Question 3**

The third research question of the study sought to understand how content is learned through inquiry. Like supporting question 2, there were multiple sources of data collected to answer this question, journal, jottings, and student artifacts. The same analysis also applied, but there was an additional component when examining the summative task. The Persuasive Claim Framework (PCF) provided a succinct approach for determining how well students created and supported claims. I found that students struggled to apply the knowledge they had learned.

The aggregate scores of students showed variation in the quality of their claims, but overall students demonstrated a sound understanding of primary and secondary sources. The variation in claim quality could be seen in the scores on the PCF. Evaluation of tasks leading up to the summative task, showed that students knew the content of primary and secondary sources, as well as information about Ancient Egypt. Their difficulty in applying content knowledge might be explained by contextual factors, like the transition to middle school.

My experience as a sixth-grade social studies teacher showed me that students entered my classroom with varying amounts of experience being taught social studies in elementary school. Literature on this topic supports this perception. Fitchett, Heafner, and Lambert (2014) stated that “teachers working in states that require elementary social studies testing spend more

time on social studies instruction. Moreover, teachers' who report greater instructional autonomy and teach intermediate grades (4-5) spend more time on social studies. (p.1).” This literature suggests varying levels of social studies experience by state, teacher autonomy, and grade level, but I believe that the district I worked with was large enough to have this occurring at varying levels across different elementary schools across the district. Thus, students could come to my classroom with a wealth of social studies experience or very little.

Another contextual factor mentioned as a possible reason for student performance, relates to the transition to middle school. This transition is difficult and can impact student learning or achievement. Literature on the topic, not specific to social studies, indicates similar findings. Asplough (1998) stated that significant achievement loss is associated with the transition from elementary to middle school. Sparks (2011) suggests that the decrease in academic achievement is greater in the transition from elementary school to middle school is greater than that of middle to high school. Sparks (2011) summarized a study among Florida students that showed a decrease in academic achievement as students entered middle school. This drop in achievement is often overshadowed by the transition from middle school to high school, but the drop of the latter is “only one-fifth the size of the drop seen during the middle school transition” (p. 1). Other scholars have highlighted some of the factors that influence student achievement as they transition from elementary to middle school. Holas & Huston (2011) summarized these concisely; developmental needs of early adolescents at odds with middle school (Eccles et al., 1993), redefining relationships with adults (Arnett, 1999), teachers believe they can teach all students (Friedel et al., 2010), teachers being perceived as fair and caring by students (Midgley et al., 1988). Holas & Huston (2011) also stated that scholars found middle school teachers tend to be less trusting of students than teachers in elementary schools. The transition to middle school,



coupled with inquiry pedagogy in social studies, prompts additional research questions to be discussed later in the chapter.

## **Implications**

This study identified clear implications for teachers who use, or would like to use, inquiry, specifically related to teacher autonomy, reflection, and adaptability. The conditions of the classroom, with teachers often in isolation with their students, affords teachers considerable autonomy in establishing the learning conditions for students. Teacher autonomy requires thoughtfulness and malleability. Without the benefit regular feedback from other professionals, teachers must stay diligent, consistently reflecting on their practice, and must be ready to adapt as conditions change. These conditions were most certainly in play in this research. When implementing the inquiry in this research study, I did my best to determine what students were learning and continually evaluated what my next instructional steps should be. As a result, I made judgements and modified my pre-written instructional plans in process to best support student learning. My experience in this area and the findings of this research suggest that teachers who wish to use inquiry should consistently reflect and be willing to act on what they are learning from their students.

These implications may play out differently for experienced and pre-service teachers. I was an experienced teacher with considerable knowledge of inquiry and had the opportunity to learn about the Inquiry Design model from one of the creators of the model. Other experienced teachers may have similar levels of experience and access to expertise. Beginning teachers and teachers in training are still developing their basic knowledge of how to teach. They may be still honing their epistemological beliefs, classroom management style, and other foundational understanding of teaching. Further, the idea of planning and implementing an inquiry will likely

be new for beginning teachers. These factors should not deter beginning teachers and those in training from attempting to teach with inquiry in their classrooms. However, the networks of support around them must be strong and positioned to provide images of the possible for new teachers along with consistent feedback as they try their hand at inquiry instruction.

### **Future Areas of Research**

This study suggests numerous areas for future research related to inquiry-based teaching in social studies. These areas of research include both planning and implementation, along with other factors influencing inquiry teacher and learning. Among these factors are issues related to the constraints of curriculum, the capacity to adapt in process while teaching, and students' capacity to apply what they are learning to the process of making an argument. Each would significantly add to the literature on best practices for planning and teaching with inquiry.

When reflecting on the planning of the inquiry, I came to believe that collaboration in the process is important. If teachers collaborate, they are able to benefit from different viewpoints and experiences with inquiry. Collaboration can be useful for teachers who are new to inquiry when they are able to work with others who are more experienced. Teaching is an important factor as well as it provides an opportunity to bring teachers together who have a variety of experiences and interests from which all may benefit.

Student learning outcomes from this study suggested that students struggled to create evidence-based claims. The additional analysis from utilizing the PCF clearly demonstrated this, and in the process identified a future area of study for inquiry-based teaching in social studies. This area of study can be examined by exploring the best practices for teaching students to work with evidence as part of an inquiry. This broad question can cover additional topics like scaffolding, teaching approaches for working with evidence, how frequently students need to

work with evidence as part of an inquiry, etc. There are many possibilities, but each would significantly contribute to teaching with inquiry and improve teaching practices.

An additional area of future research came to light when describing potential contextual factors that might explain student performance in this inquiry, specifically the transition to middle school. The literature suggested that this is a monumental shift for students, and that they often struggle academically. Further, the factors highlighting why students struggled with this transition seem to be connected to their socioemotional factors. Thus, a research question to explore might focus on how we integrate socioemotional learning into inquiry planning and implementation. This would be helpful and may be more important for middle school students as opposed to high school.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study sought to apply best practices of action research to collect and analyze data. As the practitioner and researcher of this study, I collected and analyzed data independently. Therefore, data showing interrater reliability is not available. This has implications for the findings.

Another methodological limitation related to the roles of me as the teacher/researcher and my students as learners/participants. On some level, time constraints and the dynamics of studying my own practice may have resulted in me being less critical than I may have otherwise been. Manfra (2009) describes this lack of criticality as potentially limiting the topics that are addressed through action research and the methods used. The study attempted to mitigate these issues by closely examining the data and choosing a topic that would allow for other teachers to improve their professional practice.

Besides criticality, there is another limitation of the study directly tied to the subjectivity of the practitioner. I was an experienced classroom teacher with considerable knowledge of inquiry. Further, when completing my study I do so under the guidance of inquiry experts responsible for influencing the creation of the C3 Framework, as well as co-authoring the IDM. This dynamic requires future research to improve the instructional practices of a novice teacher.

This research included a small sample size of students and a single teacher. Some might suggest that the small sample size might make the findings less viable and widely applicable. Action research scholars, such as Manfra (2017) argues that this can be a strength to practitioner researchers. Contextual based findings provide valuable insights because they point to a specific grade level, location, set of participants, and a teacher with knowledge of the C3 Framework, inquiry pedagogy, and IDM. The context of the participants and teacher provide another limitation for the study. The participants in the study were part of an academically gifted classroom. This Meant that I could expect students to perform well in my class and in fact in all core academic areas. Participant characteristics in this case were non-normative of K-12 public education classrooms. The racial identity of the teacher and students add another layer to this limitation, as the teacher and majority of students (76%) participating in the study are white.

## **Conclusion**

This research examined the implementation of inquiry instruction in the middle school social studies classroom. By doing so, it provided insight on practices for inquiry implementation in social studies classrooms with a focus on creative planning and the modification of those plans to meet students' needs. Future areas of research may expand our understanding of effective implementation of inquiry-based teacher practices and teacher collaboration. Teachers working

together to build and implement inquiries will enhance their own knowledge of teaching practices, as well as build their confidence when implementing inquiries.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

<b>Evaluating the Source: Which source is better, primary or secondary?</b>		
<b>Compelling Question</b>	<b>Which source is better, primary or secondary?</b>	
<b>Standards and Practices</b>	6.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.	
<b>Staging the Question</b>	<p>To engage students in the inquiry I will present students with a fictitious FDR tweet that states “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Although the quote is accurate, the medium in which it was expressed was not available during FDR’s lifetime. The inclusion of this fictitious tweet will connect the idea of sources for students in a meaningful way. Students are knowledgeable of social media, including twitter. Some students in this age group actively use social media. Further, the explicit connection to sources will be made to students during a classroom discussion. During the discussion, it will be emphasized that historians study primary and secondary sources. Also, the examination of sources has changed to include social media. When historians in the future study events that are happening today, they can access social media as a primary source. Some questions that will inform the classroom discussion include; what is the tweet showing? Who is the individual in the tweet? What is significant about this tweet?</p>	
<b>Supporting Question #1:</b>	<b>Supporting Question #2:</b>	<b>Supporting Question #3:</b>
What are primary and secondary sources?	What are advantages and disadvantages to examining primary and secondary sources?	How do primary and secondary sources compare?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
Examine two sources about Ancient Egypt and determine which one is primary and which one is secondary.	With a partner, list the potential advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources.	Complete a venn diagram comparing two sources related to the Tomb of King Tut.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>

<p><b>Source A:</b> Primary and Secondary Sources (Hymn of the Nile, National Geographic Excerpt)</p>		<p><b>Source B:</b> Artifact Analysis: The Tomb of King Tut  <b>Source C:</b> Tutankhamun and King Tut’s Tomb  <b>Source D:</b> from The Finding of the Tomb</p>
<p><b>Summative Performance Task</b></p>	<p><b>Argument</b></p>	<p>Students will construct an argument in which they have to determine which source is better, primary or secondary. Anticipated arguments are the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Primary sources are better because they have more information.</li> <li>-Primary sources are better because the person saw the artifact.</li> <li>-Primary sources are better because they provide a real life look at the historical event.</li> <li>-Secondary sources are better because they are analyzed.</li> <li>-Secondary sources are better because they use many sources.</li> <li>-Secondary sources are better because they</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Extension</b></p>	<p>Students will create a mind map. The mind map will show knowledge of King Tut’s tomb learned from the sources in the inquiry. The creation of the mind map will allow maximum flexibility for students because they will determine how to organize its content.</p>
<p><b>Taking Informed Action</b></p>	<p><b>Understand</b>  Students will use their knowledge of primary and secondary sources to analyze and research a museum display of their choice.</p> <p><b>Assess</b>  Students will assess examples of primary and secondary sources for comprehension and analysis. They will then assess the museum display using their research.</p> <p><b>Action</b>  Students will analyze a museum display about a certain topic or historical event. Students will then research a primary and secondary source that corresponds to the display and write a letter to the museum. In the letter, students will critically analyze the display. In their analysis, students will point out information that was corroborated in their research, what they liked about the display, and any areas of the display that need elaboration or further explanation.</p>	

## Appendix B

<b>Inquiry</b>		
Evaluating Sources: Which is better, primary or secondary?		
<b>Title of Lesson</b>		
<b>Date to be implemented</b>		
<b>I Can Statement</b>		
<b>Materials</b>		
<b>Procedure</b>		
Hook		
1		
2		
3		
4		
Closure		

## Appendix C

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### *Lesson Plan Scope & Sequence*

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<u>Lesson Date</u>	<u>Title of Lesson</u>	<u>Lesson Summary</u>	<u>Alignment to blueprint</u>
September 17th	Setting the Inquiry Foundation	The teacher began the lesson with the Staging the Compelling Question activity. After a class discussion focused on defining primary and secondary sources, students completed an exercise where they identified examples of primary and secondary sources. The teacher then reviewed examples of primary and secondary sources with students. Students work collaboratively to answer questions about two sources, the Hymn of the Nile source and the National Geographic excerpt. The teacher lastly gave directions for an exit ticket and asked students to complete that final exercise.	Staging the Compelling Question  Supporting Question #1  Formative Performance Task #1
September 18th	Brainstorming about Primary and Secondary Sources	The teacher models the advantages and disadvantages of primary and secondary sources using information from previous sources. Students collaboratively brainstorm and then participate in class discussion. The teacher provides additional notes. Students then discuss answer to question about primary and secondary sources. Students complete written answer about primary and secondary sources. Students complete exit ticket.	Supporting Question #2  Formative Performance Task #2

### Lesson Plan Scope & Sequence (continued).

September 19th	King Tut's Artifacts	The teacher introduces the idea of artifacts. Teacher provides direction for filling in graphic organizer. Teacher models how to fill in graphic organizer using image of crown. Teacher reiterates direction and displays each image of artifact as students fill in graphic organizer. Students collaborate with partner to share ideas about graphic organizer. Class goes over graphic organizer. Students complete exit ticket.	Supporting Question #3  Formative Performance Task #3
September 20th	Comparing and Contrasting Sources	Teacher distributes articles and introduces the comparing and contrasting activity. Teacher gives direction for venn diagram. Students begin filling in venn diagram using information from yesterday's artifacts. Students split into two groups for silent reading. Each group given a different article and told to complete a silent read. Teacher provides direction for re-reading article and that intent is to become expert on the article. Students collaborate to begin filling in their venn diagram. Students complete exit ticket.	Supporting Question #3  Formative Performance Task #3
September 23rd	Comparing and Contrasting Sources - Part II	Teacher reminds students of activity from yesterday and distributes venn diagram and article. Teacher points out components of the article, including questions at the end. Teacher introduces students to the questions at the end of the article and assesses student understanding. Students work together reading the article and underlining/highlighting information in the text that would help them answer the questions. Class discussion regarding the questions. Students collaborate to add information to their venn diagram. Students complete exit ticket.	Supporting Question #3  Formative Performance Task #3



**Lesson Plan Scope & Sequence (continued).**

September 24th	Planning for the writing the argument	Teacher presents students with planning template. Teacher introduces each section and models how to fill it in. Teacher describes the usefulness of the planning template for completing summative performance task. Students work independently to fill in the template. If students finish with enough time and teacher reviews their template they can begin summative performance task. Students complete exit ticket.	Summative Performance Task
September 25th	Completing the argument	Teacher reminds students of planning template. Teacher describes importance of checking work on summative performance task before submitting. Students complete summative performance task.	Summative Performance Task

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## Appendix D

Topic 1. \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Statement \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason/Example A. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Details 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason/Example B. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Details 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason/Example C. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Details 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

Counterargument: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E

<b>Pen Name</b>	<b>What are your take aways?</b>	<b>What did you enjoy most about today's lesson?</b>	<b>What would you change about today's lesson?</b>	<b>What about the lesson allowed you to learn new things/information/concepts/etc.?</b>	<b>Why do you think the lesson allowed you to learn new things/information/concepts/etc.?</b>
<b>Student 1</b>					
<b>Student 2</b>					
<b>Student 3</b>					