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**THE EFFECT OF CHOICE ON MOTIVATION AND OWNERSHIP
IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study documents the effects implementing choice has on ownership and motivation in the social studies classroom. All students were enrolled in a required 19th Century American Cultures class in a small public high school in the Northeast. Choice was introduced in a variety of ways within the instruction, assessment, and enrichment aspects of the classroom. The study explores whether choice allows students to develop a “voice” within the classroom. This “voice” was created by allowing the student to make choices about how they learned material, how they were assessed on the material they learned, and how enrichment was offered. Participants were made aware of their preferred learning styles and strongest intelligences to aid in making choices that worked best for them. The choices came in a variety of forms that included the use of literature circles, contract learning, alternative assessments, multiple intelligence activities, varied teaching strategies, and constructivist activities. Data was gathered through surveys, journal entries, choice logs, and interviews. The study suggests that choice can have a positive affect on student motivation and ownership within the classroom. Student comments reflect on their feelings of ownership, their motivation to complete or not complete assignments and activities, and their overall thoughts on choices.

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RESEARCHER STANCE

As a student, I never felt I had any “voice” in my educational process. Very few teachers left me with lasting memories. As a student I felt that the teacher ran the curriculum and the classroom. The teacher decided what to teach, how to teach it, and when to teach the material. The exception to this was my 12th grade English teacher; Mr. P. Mr. P gave us a “voice” within our classroom by offering choices and projects within the classroom. He created activities and projects that helped us understand English literature and at the same time were fun and exciting. We had the opportunity to put characters on trial, make movies, write our own plays and poems, act out scenes, and delve into characters while working in groups. Through these activities, we developed a strong understanding of literature, our classmates, and ourselves.

Although I am a voracious reader, I greatly disliked English to this point. I believe this was due to never having any say in what we read, did, or discussed. Mr. P changed all these things and treated us as if we were a working part of the classroom. Maybe it was because we were seniors and he thought we should be taking on a more prominent role in our educational process, maybe it was because he was innovative and creative with his teaching strategies, or maybe it was that he wanted to explore alternative strategies in the classroom way back in the 80s. I do not know for sure, but it made a lasting impression on me, the student, and me, the teacher! Twenty years later I am still, in a way, trying to be Mr. P.

As I progressed through college, I was again disenchanted with the educational process. I had a few professors who included us in the decision making process and allowed us to be active instead of passive learners, but not as many as I would have liked. After graduating, I took a roundabout way to the classroom.

I started out working in a museum education department. Here I designed interactive, educational programs to accompany the exhibits. These programs were for both children and adults. I also gave tours of historical houses. It always amazed me how many people came to the museum and historical houses and talked about how interesting history was when presented in this format, or about how they hated history in school, but now found their favorite TV channel is the History Channel. I came to the conclusion that it was all about the presentation. When history is delivered in a stuffy lecture environment and it is all about dead, white men, no one enjoys or appreciates it. When history is presented in an interactive, visually enhanced environment and includes all members of a group, people get caught up in it and feel a part of it.

I left the museum to work in a HeadStart program, where I worked with at-risk pre-schoolers and their families for six years. I taught child development, parenting, health, and nutrition in a home based program. Within this program, I worked with the entire family, not just my core pre-schooler. Many of my families had children within a wide age range, so we dealt with both pre-school

and adolescent issues within the family. As a part of this agency, I received and gave extensive training in socialization, adolescent and child development, drug and alcohol issues, domestic violence, and child abuse.

One of the biggest issues faced within these families was the frustration and behaviors created by lack of choice. This lack of choice could be very frustrating to both the toddler and the adolescent. Two year olds get a terrible rap for temper tantrums. Those temper tantrums are usually a result of a lack of choice; choose their own clothes, pour their own drink, and eat their own food. The toddler wants to move out of the “baby” stage and be able to do things for him or herself. This time period is the “I do” stage. Parents, on the other hand, are not ready to let the baby go or deal with the aftermath of letting them “do.” When the two year old is denied these choices, it results in frustration and eventually the meltdown we label a temper tantrum (Herr, 1994).

The same scenario plays out with adolescents. They are at a stage in development and socialization where they want to be treated more like an adult. Their parents, on the other hand, are usually not ready for this transformation or do not think their child is. As the frustrations for the adolescent grows because his or her parents continue to control where they go, how they get there, and whom they go with, the adolescent becomes frustrated. They act out or withdraw. The difference here though is the adolescent has a lot more weapons for displaying his/her frustration. They have better language skills, problem-solving skills, and

know what buttons to push to get their point across. The results can be much more catastrophic though than spilled milk, mismatched clothes, and rice on the floor (Landis, 1980).

I carried this previously learned knowledge into the classroom with me. Here, I felt that our education system sometimes forgets about an adolescent's need for choice. As a student and as a teacher I did not think that high school students were given a "voice" in their educational experience. Striving to create passive rather than active learners, we teach them the curriculum but do not make them feel a part of it. According to Dewey (1938), "Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It gives to formulating its beliefs in terms of Either-Ors, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities" (p. 17). The statement embodies the lack of choice in the educational system. *Either* the student follows the district's curriculum and teacher's teaching style *Or* the student fails. There is no real middle ground offered. We wonder then why students feel no connection to learning and no personal ownership of it. They have learned to *Either* play the game *Or* fail. I have learned that the "best" academic students are not necessarily the best students. These students are just willing to play the game when others might not be.

According to Vygotsky (1978), "If we ignore a child's needs, and the incentives which are effective in getting him to act, we will never be able to understand his advance from one developmental stage to the next..." (p. 92). I

thought I had infused my classroom with enough choice opportunities, diverse teaching strategies, alternative assessments, and incentives to facilitate a sense of ownership and development. I teach using a variety of strategies and methods. I offer projects and alternative assessments in most chapters. I use contracts and multiple intelligence activities to integrate choice, ownership, and differentiation. I am limited, though in the amount of choice I can offer by a curriculum that requires me to “cover” American history from 1492 to 1900 over the course of a single school year.

Dewey (1938) says, “ The main purpose or objective (of education) is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life” (p. 18). For some of my students, high school may be their last stop for formal education and this preparation for the “real” world. Therefore, ninth grade needs to be the starting point for creating student responsibility for both themselves and their learning. Ninth grade is the first year of high school and therefore the first step in the ladder to independence from school and independent learning itself. I try not to “hold their hand” and lead them through education. I want them to be in a partnership of discovery with me. We are co-facilitators of this journey. I base these beliefs on my feelings as a student and my experiences with teachers like Mr. P. I try to model this by infusing my teaching with my experiences as both a teacher and continuing student. I use myself as an example of a life-long learner

by talking about my continued quest to gain new knowledge about the subject I teach, the way I teach, and other things that interest me.

There have always been students who challenge my “system.” Each year there are students who do not pass my class. I have an especially high rate of failure in my inclusion class. This is troubling to me because here is where the most differentiation is done. The class is team-taught, we use a variety of methods and strategies, and assessments and content are modified and adapted for all students. I have started to believe that some students do not “buy” into my concept of choice and ownership or that my choices might not be as “real” as I think. Many of these students choose not to complete the projects, activities, and homework I assign to help their grades and then complain that they do not understand why I am failing them. They do not take responsibility for the choices they make and the consequences of those choices. Dewey (1938) states, “A genuine purpose always starts with an impulse...A purpose is an end-view. That is, it involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting upon impulse” (p. 67). I see things from a different perspective than my students and maybe it becomes my job to introduce them to perspectives other than their own that includes choices and consequences.

I want to explore these perspectives in more detail. I want to offer new opportunities for choice and have my students help to create these choices. Through these choices, I want my students to be active instead of passive

participants in their own learning process. I want them to feel a sense of ownership. I want to create a student “voice” in education and alleviate some of the frustration and behaviors that result from this perspective that they have no “voice” or ownership. From this list of wants comes the question for my study. What are the effects of choice on motivation and ownership in a social studies classroom?

LITERATURE REVIEW

When I decided to conduct a thesis study on implementing choice in the classroom, I thought about the broader question of my thesis. I wanted choice to become a motivator for students to complete their assignments and feel some ownership of the curriculum in which we were both immersed. I also wanted students to develop an understanding of how they learn as individuals and to be able to apply that knowledge to the choices they make in the classroom, giving some ownership to how they would learn the curriculum. Later on, after reading Friere (1970/2000), I discovered that my study was about “freeing” my students from the oppression of the classroom and the curriculum. This could be accomplished by giving them a voice within their own learning. While brainstorming these ideas, I realized that the best places to implement these “choices” would be within the three main components of classroom teaching: instruction, enrichment, and assessment.

My search for literature then veered off in two different directions. First, I would be looking for strategies, methods, and ideas for creating choices within my classroom. Secondly, I would be looking for strategies to help students understand how they learn content best. I found articles, studies, and books on a variety of strategies and methods for the creation of choices for students. These included the use of historical narratives, contract learning for differentiated instruction, and student-centered constructivist learning. I then found studies and

books that presented multiple intelligence and learning style instruction to enhance student understanding of how they learn content best. From these studies and articles, I formed a core group of strategies that I thought I could adapt to my classroom, students, and curriculum.

The first core group of literature revolved around the use of learning style and multiple intelligence theories to help students understand how they learn content material best. Howard Gardner introduced me to multiple intelligence theory in his 1983 book, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. I became interested in implementing the intelligences in my classroom in 1998, following a staff development workshop given by two fellow teachers in my building. In 2002, I attended a workshop on implementing multiple intelligences within the classroom given by Spencer and Laurie Kagan at a High Schools that Work conference.

While searching for literature for my study, I found a study by Baskerville and Campbell (1999), two seventh grade teachers, who investigated what happens to academic achievement when students are made aware of their strongest learning styles. They were interested in seeing how their students would take ownership of their learning by incorporating their preferred learning style when studying. To incorporate learning styles into the science classroom, students chose enrichment activities based on their preferred learning style as a way to help

prepare for the unit assessment. The teachers realized that some of their students had a problem with the idea of choice.

We assumed students had no experiences choosing how they would acquire new knowledge because teachers had made the choices for them. This assumption was reinforced when a student, Anna, commented, "...when are You going to assign vocabulary cards for Us to make?" (p. 3)

Ultimately, they found that students used their preferred learning styles sporadically. It was hit or miss unless reinforcement was given to the students when choosing their activities.

A study by Carlton and Thomas (2000) posed a question that revolved around the effects of multiple intelligence strategies with ESL learners in the classroom. Each teacher chose one section to receive instruction in the concept of multiple intelligences and participate in different multiple intelligence activities and assessments. This was the experimental group. The "control" group continued with the same curriculum that had been used in the past. The experimental and control classes were then compared. Carlton was astonished to find her experimental class' portfolios scored 20 points higher than the control group's average. Thomas had a similar experience with her final assessment. Her experimental group scored an average of 14 points higher on the exam than the control group. Both Carlton and Thomas feel that "MI theory is the key to

embracing the future as student populations become more adaptable to learning disabled and language minority students” (p. 7).

I found a small study done by Wallace (1995), an education professor at Manhattan College. He did a study that gathered data on student and teacher learning styles in the Philippines. He then compared it to student learning style data collected in the United States by Dunn and Dunn in 1989. He was more surprised by the differences between the student and teacher learning styles in the Philippines than the differences between student learning styles in the United States and the Philippines.

In the Philippines, he observed that the majority of instruction was carried out in the traditional auditory style. Teachers stated that they taught this way because “it was the way they had been taught” and “the way students learn most easily”. He gathered data from one urban and two rural schools. When the Dunn, Dunn, and Price Learning Style Inventory was administered to the 450 sixth and seventh grade students and the adult version of the same inventory to 128 teachers, it became apparent that the auditory modality was the preferred learning style for the teachers, but the least preferred for the students. The students preferred a visual modality.

Wallace (1995) compared the results of this study to data gathered in the United States by Dunn and Dunn in 1989 and presented at the 13th Annual Leadership Institute in New York City. Dunn and Dunn found that thirty percent

of American students learn through the auditory modality, forty percent through the visual modality, and thirty percent through either the tactile or kinesthetic modalities or both. In the Philippines, Wallace (1995) found that eight percent of the surveyed students learned through the auditory modality, forty-two percent through the visual modality, twenty percent through the tactile modality, and thirty percent through the kinesthetic modality. He was mildly surprised by the differences here.

The important information found in this study was the vast separation between the learning styles of the Phillipino teachers and their students. Forty-four percent of the Phillipino teachers preferred an auditory style as compared to only eight percent of their students. Forty-two percent of the students preferred a visual style as compared to only eleven percent of their teachers. Wallace concluded that the Phillipino teachers needed to accommodate the learning style preferences of their students into their lesson plans in order facilitate successful learning for a larger number of their students.

Dunn, Denig, and Lovelace (2001) discuss the use of learning styles and multiple intelligences to help teachers achieve state standards. In the article they compare and contrast the use of learning style inventories versus multiple intelligence theory to meet the needs of diverse learners in the classroom in order to increase achievement. It is noted though that Dunn is one of the leading researchers in the field of learning styles and one of the co-creators of the Dunn,

Dunn, and Price Learning Styles Inventory. The Dunn model addresses twenty-one different elements that are classified into five different variables. The article explains in detail the elements and variables contained in the Dunn model.

The article references numerous studies done on the use of learning styles inventories to enhance student achievement. A meta-analysis done by Dunn, Griggs, Olson, Gorman, and Beasley in 1995 and cited in Dunn, Denig, and Lovelace (2001) suggests, “students whose learning styles were accommodated would be expected to achieve 75 percent of a standard deviation higher than students who had not had their learning styles accommodated” (p. 12).

The authors concluded that learning styles and multiple intelligences are two different ways to look at learning. There is more documented research that has been done on the use of learning styles than the use of multiple intelligences, but that both can be used to enhance student achievement.

I also read a study done by Wilson (1996), a biology teacher in a small Southern high school. She had one hundred sixty-six Biology I students complete a learning styles inventory designed to measure preference for channel of learning, sociological environment, and mode of expression. She then compared her students based on race, gender, and academic placement. Students were enrolled in both “regular” and honors curriculums. Her original hypothesis was that there was no difference in learning styles based on these variables.

Wilson (1996) made many comparisons for the different variables. None were significant enough to disprove the hypothesis. Key conclusions were drawn concerning the need to accommodate all learning styles when teaching. Wilson states, “Traditional teaching techniques emphasizing visual language (i.e., reading), individual work, and written expression address the needs of some students, but certainly do not address the needs of *all* students” (p. 18). Wilson emphasizes that the classroom teacher needs to consider all learning styles when presenting material. She categorized or clustered her students, based on their learning style preferences, into three categories: the “scholars”, the “active achievers”, and the “social butterflies”. She also gives recommendations for meeting the educational needs of these three groups within the classroom.

The second core group of literature revolved around the use of historical narratives. Historical narratives come in many forms and paint a richer tapestry than the textbook. For my study, I decided to use historical fiction and literature circles with my students.

I was convinced of the idea of using historical fiction in the social studies classroom in a class I took with Dr. Robert Mayer called *Teaching Historical Thinking*. Within this class, I was introduced to *My Brother Sam is Dead*. We read the first two chapters of this novel and brainstormed all the historical information we could learn from just those two chapters. There was a plethora of information relative to the time period. This was not a new concept for me. I am a voracious

reader of historical fiction and can say that I have learned almost as much history from historical novels as I have from history classes I have taken. The idea of introducing historical novels to my students as a way to learn history was very appealing to me. Historical fiction would introduce a different environment for learning history, one that is more engaging than a textbook.

In an article by Levstik (1989), a ten-year-old student comments, “ The social studies textbook doesn’t give you a lot of detail. You don’t imagine yourself there because they’re not doing it as if it were a person” (p. 115). Therein lies the problem with history textbooks; they do not engage the reader in a “narrative story.” By introducing historical novels, I want to spark an interest in the “American Story.” Levstik (1995) further says, “ one of the most striking features of studies of children’s response to historical narratives (Levstik 1986, 1989, 1993) is the frequency with which they explain their interest in historical topics in terms of ‘needing to know’ about a topic, of wanting to learn ‘the truth’, or ‘what really happened’ (p. 114). I wanted students to view history as a narrative about people, places, and times. I wanted them to want to question what really happened to all the people involved in history.

Fuhler (1991) discusses the use of fiction and non-fiction trade books to enrich social studies curriculum and supplement textbooks. The author discusses how the use of historical narratives can help students make connections to historical time periods, events, and people. The author agrees with Levstik (1989)

that, “ the context in which history is presented, examined, and discussed may be a critical factor in student’s historical understanding” (p. 235). Fuhler further states, “ Their use [trade books] encourages the students to weigh and assess the dilemmas and choices that people have faced throughout history” (p. 235). By presenting history in a narrative form, students can relate better to a time period that in a textbook seems very abstract. The essence to understanding social studies according to Fuhler and Levstik is to make a personal connection. Historical fiction and trade books can be used to facilitate this connection. The articles researched by Fuhler led her to conclude that the use of trade books can change students from passive to active learners and increase student motivation through choice and interest.

Literature circles are not commonly used in the history classroom. Almost all the articles, studies, and books I read talked about the implementation of literature circles in an English/language arts classroom. Daniels (2002) characterizes literature circles as rich dialogue groups where students choose their literature and conduct in depth discussions with little or no help from the teacher. Literature circles allow students to delve into a narrative and tie the story to an historical time period being studied and their lives today.

Bilof (1996) conducted a case study of fifty-four juniors in his United States History I classes taught at the enriched level. The study was on the effects of using historical fiction within the social studies curriculum. He created an

interdisciplinary Civil War unit that incorporated the reading of Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*, classroom instruction, and outside research in order to motivate student performance on written assignments dealing with the Civil War.

According to Bilof, the objective of this study was two-fold: "to stimulate student interest in historical events by focusing on the uniquely human aspects of the events and to apply skills of critical analysis and evaluation on written projects drawn from them" (p. 19).

The unit had two requirements for the students. First, students were required to read the novel to address the human aspects of the battle. They were then required to choose one of the major figures and create a character analysis of that figure. For balance in this character analysis, students had to conduct outside research on that figure in a non-fictional work. Students were to look for agreement and discrepancies between the piece of fiction and their non-fiction choice regarding their figure. Bilof gave all students a questionnaire. Students completed the questionnaire anonymously to encourage sincere feedback. An overwhelming majority of the students, fifty-two out of fifty-four, endorsed the assignment positively and enjoyed reading the novel. Many commented on the fact that the novel brought history to life and was an enjoyable way to learn history. They also felt it was a better way to learn history than using the textbook.

Bilof (1996) felt that his study would help teachers get past the initial reservations they might have with using fiction to teach history. He states that "

the object is not to determine where fiction ends and history begins. The object is to combine imagination with scholarship to make the past live again” (p. 23).

Handler and Niedziela (1997) discuss a program they started at Menomonee Falls High School near Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The article describes choice book units designed by Handler, a librarian, and implemented by Handler and Niedziela, an English teacher. Handler approached the English teachers with the idea of choice book units where students would be allowed to choose the book they would read for their English class instead of everyone reading the same book chosen by the teacher.

The choice units were exceptionally popular with the Basic English classes. Their low reading levels made it hard for them to be successful with the traditional literature used in English classes. The young adult books appealed to these students and facilitated understanding and success.

Handler and Niedziela (1997) feel their program has been very successful. What started out as collaboration between the librarian and one English teacher has grown into other subject areas and is done by other teachers.

The last group of literature revolved around various teaching methods in order to differentiate instruction and create choice. Differentiating instruction has always appealed to me because my social studies classes are heterogeneously grouped. In any given class there are a variety of learners ranging from those with learning disabilities to those who are considered gifted. Differentiation of the

methods I use to teach and the classroom activities I offer is essential to helping all learners feel success. The research included articles and studies that implemented contracts to differentiate for learners, a mixture of teaching methods to keep all learners engaged, and constructivist techniques to increase intrinsic motivation and student ownership.

Greenwood (2002) discusses his use of learning contracts in the middle school classroom. His rationale for contracting in the classroom revolves around differentiated instruction and the importance of fostering student choice and autonomy for adolescents. Differentiation is necessary for heterogeneous groupings because all students do not learn the same way or at the same pace. He argues that, “ Whole class instruction provides neither success nor challenge for about two-thirds of any heterogeneous group” (p. 8). We know that during adolescence students want the opportunity to be more in charge of their lives. According to Greenwood, contract learning can help to accomplish both differentiation and autonomy within the classroom. The contract allows students to structure their own learning around their individual learning style, pace, likes, and dislikes. There are non-negotiable and negotiable parts to every contract. These choices create both ownership and personalization within learning. Contract learning over time helps students to become independent learners and therefore fosters the opportunity for life long learning and ownership. Greenwood

(2002) includes an extensive list of contract examples as well as a step-by-step process for setting up contracting within your classroom.

Hootstein (1994) conducted a study on strategies used by eighth grade social studies teachers to motivate students to learn U.S. History. The study was done with 18 eighth-grade U.S. history teachers, nine male and nine female, in seven middle schools in a Pacific Northwest school district. The study also gathered data from sixty students in the classrooms of these teachers. There were an equal numbers of boys and girls contributing data.

The purpose of the study was to identify the strategies that the middle-school teachers used to motivate their students and analyze student thought about the strategies used by their teachers. Teachers were asked the following questions: (1) What strategies do you use to motivate students to learn U. S. history? (2) For each strategy named, (a) give an example of how you did this? And (b) why do you think this strategy motivates students? (3) What factors make it difficult for you to motivate students to learn? Students were asked to look at the list of strategies used by their teacher and identify the one that motivates them the most to really want to learn U.S. history. Students were then asked to list strategies they would use to motivate students to learn if they were the teacher in the classroom.

The researchers found correlations between the strategies identified by the teachers and those identified by the students. The number one strategy for both

was simulations. Teachers felt that “simulations encapsulate in simplified form the essential elements of real-life, historical situations and present these elements to be dealt with by students”(p. 214). Teachers also listed projects to give students the opportunity for hands-on learning and the creation of finished products, review games, and relating history to current events. Students mentioned review games, but their second strategy was group discussion.

Choice was another area of difference in the comments of the teachers and students. The teachers only mentioned student choice as it related to projects. The students “spoke directly about their desire for choices” (p. 215). One student commented, “A method I would use to motivate students is by letting them create more of the curriculum. Kids would enjoy learning and learn more as well” (p. 215).

Their conclusion was that teachers are aware of the different strategies available to motivate students. They felt that research should be done on how often teachers actually implemented the listed strategies in their classrooms.

Senese (2000) designed a study that had his British Literature students design the curriculum for their own elective. Senese proposed to his students that they devise a curriculum that included chosen authors and pieces to be studied and discussed. There needed to be representative pieces from each period in British Literature. The students were then to present and defend their curriculum.

According to Senese,

constructivist principles included in this task were ownership of content, choice of methods for learning and assessment, useful activities based on personal goals and beliefs, shared inquiry, social processes, reflection on learning practices and content, and production of varied and rich outcomes. (p. 7)

Senese's reasoning for this project revolved around his belief that, teachers need to question what skills and processes (as well as content) they are requiring students to learn. Just as we have helped students to learn things such as neatness, punctuality, and responsibility, teachers have unwittingly taught students to become passive, dependent, and competitive. (p. 13)

With the data gathered in this project, Senese believed that his students had benefited greatly from the constructivist principles. They had researched, organized, and defended a British Literature curriculum that had meaning and ownership. They exhibited pride in their curriculum and ownership of their individual educations. One student wrote, "I am no longer a passive learner who does the work just to please the teacher. I take more risks with my learning to gain personal satisfaction from my education" (p. 13). His students speak to the powers of constructivist principles in facilitating ownership and life-long learning.

The literature I reviewed gave me a good grasp of the different methods and strategies that I could use when creating my choices. Choices in the

classroom could be as simple as giving students a choice in how content material was presented, based on student learning styles, or as complex as incorporating numerous intelligences into the projects and activities that are offered. I discovered that there were many ways to allow my students a voice within both our classroom and the curriculum.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research plan called for my ninth grade students to participate in four “choice activities.” These were activities within the regular curriculum that allowed my students to choose their assessment, product, activity, or mode of instruction. The purpose of these activities was to see if having a choice or “voice” within the curriculum would create ownership and therefore motivate students to actually complete assignments and become academically successful in class. According to Freire (1970/2000), this lack of voice within the curriculum is oppressive to students because they have no say in it and therefore no ownership. Freire says, “ Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teacher *and* students. This solution is not (nor can it be) found in the banking concept” (p. 72-73). The banking concept of the curriculum sets the teacher up as the dictator and the students as the dictated. I wanted to change this and have my students and me be partners in the classroom.

I decided that the major choices would revolve around three parts of the curriculum: enrichment, instruction, and assessment. I planned on implementing four choice activities starting in the unit on the French and Indian War. The preceding curriculum should be a review of topics already discussed and learned in middle school.

During my research I found articles and studies on implementing different teaching strategies and methods to enhance learning, understanding, and ownership. As a part of my study, I would use diverse strategies and methods to offer choice within the curriculum. I decided to focus on multiple intelligence activities, contract learning, literature circles, and constructivist student-led instruction (Baskerville & Campbell, 1999; Carlton & Thomas, 2000; Daniels, 2002; Gardner, 1983; Greenwood, 2002; Handler & Niedziela, 1997; Levstik, 1989, 1995; Senese, 2000).

The first choice was an enrichment activity following classroom instruction on the French and Indian War. My students picked from six different historical novels. Their choice in novel indicated the group they would work in. Within these groups they would take on a variety of roles to understand the novel, its information, its relevance to our curriculum, and connections to the real world.

The second choice activity was during the unit on the steps leading to the American Revolution. I created choices within how the steps were taught by allowing the students to work in small groups to create posters with information on the different events. The students received some information from me, had to figure out what their event was, gather additional information, and create a visual representation of the event and information. Each group then presented their information to the class as a whole. The choice was in how to represent the information, through words, pictures, or a combination of both, and what type of

poster they created. Through the first twelve steps, students were investigating and constructing their own learning in small and large groups. Through the next fourteen steps, the students and I were constructing knowledge together as a class. We read about, wrote about, and discussed in detail the different people and events in each of the steps using a graphic organizer shaped like a staircase. Learning styles were also built into the assessments. There was a quiz after each six steps. These quizzes were each different. One quiz was a group quiz where the groups were required to fill in an outline of the steps and their information using an answer bank. Another quiz required individual students to explain each step using words, pictures, or a combination of both. The final quiz asked students to explain four steps in detail and how they influenced the American Revolution.

The third choice activity was within the unit on the American Revolution. As part of an informal contract unit, students were required to define assigned vocabulary, complete a worksheet packet, create a product to enrich instruction, and take a unit test. The choice was in the product. Students could create an illustrated timeline, read an historical novel and create an accompanying poster, or design a lesson and teach the class.

The fourth choice activity involved assessment of what students learned about the creation of the new nation. All students received the same teacher led instruction on the birth of the new nation. As their assessment, students could

choose to either complete four activities from an extensive list of projects or take a teacher-made test. Both options allowed students to create an additional project for bonus points.

Before I began my study, I discussed my study with my building principal to receive his approval. He signed the consent form allowing me to conduct my study within my classroom (see Appendix A). At the same time, my study was reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) at Moravian College (see Appendix B). The purpose of HSIRB is to ensure the welfare and confidentiality of all the subjects involved. Once I received their approval, I explained my study to my students. I told them that I would need their parent or guardian to sign a consent form allowing them to participate in my study (see Appendix C). We reviewed the consent form and students took them home.

Trustworthiness according to Ely (1997) “ helps the reader to understand the empathy of the researcher, and, perhaps, to learn from the researcher’s blind spots and blunders, as well as enabling biases and successes” (p. 358). To ensure ongoing trustworthiness during my study, I collected multiple forms of data. I administered surveys and questionnaires, observed students during activities and discussions, read and reacted to student journal entries, conducted whole group interviews, and analyzed student work over a prolonged period of time. I also periodically made participant checks with my students. I asked them to listen to my reflections and comments about their work. I then asked them for feedback on

what I had written. The multiple forms of data I collected allowed me to triangulate my data. According to MacLean and Mohr (1999), “ You need four or five sources of data from various points of view to compare and contrast as you begin to look for valid interpretations” (p. 52). My use of triangulation helped to ensure the trustworthiness of my study.

As a teacher-researcher, I used qualitative research methods and collected data. I gathered information about the learning styles, multiple intelligences, and previous social studies experiences of the students. I also observed and recorded their interactions, and interpreted their actions and comments. I gathered these data throughout my study in the form of field-notes and kept them in my field log. According to Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997), field-notes are “ the written record of the data as shaped through the researcher’s eyes” (p. 17). The log provided the data for my narrative, and it was collected in a variety of ways.

Student Surveys

At the beginning of the year, I surveyed my students about their previous social studies experiences (see Appendix D). I designed the survey to give me an idea of the instruction methods, activities, and assessments the students had in the past. There were also questions about previous projects, opportunities for choice, and whether or not they completed their assignments in the past. Finally, I asked them if they liked social studies and to explain why or why not.

Online Surveys

In the beginning of the year, students completed two online surveys to determine their preferred learning styles and their multiple intelligence strengths. The surveys were located at www.ldpride.net and www.bgfl.org/multipleintelligences. The surveys asked questions regarding student likes and dislikes for learning and processing information. Once completed, both the students and I printed charts (see Appendix E) that helped us to identify how they learned best and what intelligence areas can serve as a catalyst for their learning. I used the information gained from the surveys to create choices that would appeal to the learning styles and multiple intelligence strengths of my individual students.

Participant Observations

Participant observations were recorded using a field note researcher's log (see Appendix F). I documented observations of student interaction during small and large group discussions of previous social studies experiences, choice and motivation, and the choice activities themselves. I observed and documented student behavior as they worked on choice projects looking for on task behaviors and enthusiasm for the activity or project. According to Arhar (2001), participant observations are a way to create ongoing documentation of our experiences to reflect on and learn from (p. 131).

Student Journals

Throughout the study, students wrote journal entries based on teacher prompts (see Appendix G). The students reflected on specific activities, their individual choices, and the relationship between choice and achievement. I read and commented on the journal entries after each choice activity and at the end of the study. I gained insight and journal prompt ideas from studies done by Miro (2002) and Senese (2000).

Group Interviews

Large group interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the study (see Appendix H). Informal class discussions were held at the end of each choice activity. The questions in the beginning of the study revolved around the students' knowledge of choice, motivation, and how they relate to each other. After each choice activity, I asked questions regarding what they liked, disliked, and would change about their choices. Questions in the middle of the study revolved around why choice was given, what choice created in the classroom, and why activities and projects were not being completed. Questions at the end of the study actually came in the form of a journal entry and included their likes and dislikes of the choices offered, the relationship between choice and motivation, and the relationship between motivation and completion. The data gathered here helped me to steer the path of this study. Students, functioning here as co-researchers, had many suggestions for improving the choices I gave them and the

path of the study. They also had insightful comments about the concepts of choice and ownership.

Choice Activity Questionnaire and Student Log

At the end of the study, students filled out a Choice Activity Questionnaire (see Appendix I) and a Student Log of Choice Activities (see Appendix J). The questionnaire had them comment in detail on two of the activities they chose during the study. The questions explored their motivation for choosing certain activities, whether or not they completed the activity, and suggestions for other choices. The log had them list their choice activity for each unit and comment on what they liked, disliked, whether or not they completed the activity, and what they learned from the activity. The questionnaire and the log served as self-reflection tools for the students. They had an opportunity to re-visit the choices they made and why they made them. They also had the opportunity to comment on the choices that were provided, their motivation for completing the activities, and suggestions for other choice opportunities.

OUR JOURNEY ON THE CURRICULAR PATH OF CHOICE

I teach in a small high school in a small town sandwiched in between much larger towns and schools. Our district has exactly three buildings: an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. Our high school has approximately 500 students in grades 9 to 12. We are becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse each year, but are still for the most part white, eastern European, and Protestant in our makeup. We do have a growing population of transient students. Our students are from all socio-economic backgrounds, but the typical student is probably middle-class.

I have been teaching at this high school for eight years. Prior to coming here, I spent two years in a middle school support program as a para-professional. Prior to that, I spent six years working in the museum and social work fields. At my high school I teach four sections of the required ninth grade social studies class, 19th Century American Cultures, and two sections of junior/senior electives. This year the two electives are Women in History and Sociology. I can honestly say that I love my job. I enjoy interacting with my students and my subject. I also have a personality that pushes me to re-evaluate and change how I do my job on a regular basis. I try to implement different teaching strategies and innovative techniques regularly. I think part of it is that I do not want teaching to become routine for me, because each class and student is different. I think the other part is

based on my previous experiences as a student. I remember what made an impression on me as a student and try to implement choice and ownership through diverse methods, projects, and alternative assessments. The exploration of these topics and others in previous master in education classes at Moravian College served as a catalyst for me to explore student choice and the use of varied strategies in my classroom for my thesis study.

I started this school year with roughly 93 students in my four 19th Century American Cultures sections. Not all of these students are in ninth grade. Some upperclassmen are in this class due to previous failures or moving into the district without having had the class previously. My students are white, African-American, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern. I have a few students whose native language is not English. Social studies students are heterogeneously grouped at my high school, so in any given section I have honors, college prep, applied, gifted, and special education students

My proposed study was to implement choice within the curriculum to foster ownership of one's education. I chose to include three of my four sections of 19th Century American Cultures. All four sections would be doing the same activities, writing in response to the same journaling prompts, and completing the same surveys. I decided not to include my period two section though, because it is just too big. This section has thirty students in it and I sometimes operate the class differently due to its size.

I briefly introduced my study to the students in those sections on the first day of school. I always introduce myself to the class on the first day by telling them about my family, my hobbies, and me. Part of that introduction includes telling them that I am a student as well as a teacher. I explain my involvement in Moravian's Master's of Education program, and, taking this a step further, I told them that as part of my class for this semester I had to do a study of my teaching practices in my classroom, and that I would be asking them later to participate in this study. I told them we would discuss the study and their participation in it at the end of the week. As part of that initial class, I also go through the course syllabus. Included in the syllabus is a discussion of my "project based" philosophy and the explanation of how the classroom and course will be run for the year.

At the end of this discussion, I introduced what I call "core groups." My classroom was set up with stadium style seating with the desks grouped in threes. The threes made up what I call the "core group." This group was the lifeline to the classroom for the students. If a student had questions, he or she asked the group first, then me. If a student was absent from class, he or she went to the group to find out what was missed before coming to me. Unless otherwise specified, these were the groups for all activities and projects. In the beginning and middle of the year, I formed the groups. Group formation was random at first and then, as I got to know the students, was comprised of a high, a low, and a

middle ability student. Towards the end of the year I allowed the students to choose their own groups. I tried to change the groups approximately every six weeks. I did not assign groups until the end of the second week of school, because of the many student schedule changes that take place in those first two weeks. I explained to my students that until I assigned groups at the end of that two-week time period, they were allowed to sit where they wanted in the classroom.

At the end of the following week, I began the class with an explanation of the master's program I was in and what I have learned from it so far. I then told my students the story of my sixth grade experience. Sixth grade was the worst year of my educational experience. From second through fifth grades I went to an open concept elementary school and loved it. I explained to my students that I had the opportunity to go to classes based on my ability and interest, not so much my grade level. I also got to interact with students outside of my grade level. Since I liked to read and was good at vocabulary and reading comprehension, in third grade I was in a reading class with fifth and sixth graders. I moved to different teachers for each subject and was never bored, even in subjects I did not particularly like. In the middle of fifth grade my family moved across town, and for sixth grade I had to go to a different school. My new school was not open concept. I spent the entire day going back and forth across a hall with the same two teachers and the same group of students. I hated it! I was bored and disinterested in most of what went on. I felt very left out of my educational

process. In middle school and high school, I had many teachers who taught the exact same way, so although I went to different teachers for different subjects, the classes were pretty much the same.

I told my students that I did not want to be that kind of teacher, so I try to teach using a variety of strategies and techniques. I told them that my study was about giving students choice in the ways they are instructed and assessed, and that I want them to have a voice in their own learning and within my classroom and curriculum. I got a lot of blank stares, some skeptical expressions, and some smiles.

We then had a discussion about choices they had been allowed to make last year and if they completed their assignments last year. By a show of hands, two-thirds of the students said they had no opportunity to choose last year. Of the third that said they did get to choose, the majority said it was only once or twice. I then asked them to tell me if they completed assignments and activities last year and why. Twenty-four students said they did complete their assignments. They had many reasons for completing them that included getting good grades, because they were easy, because they had to, and because they did not want to fail. Four students said they completed assignments most of the time and for the same reasons as the others. Two students said no, they did not complete assignments. One of the students said it was because he was disorganized and the other said he had no desire to complete them.

At the end of our discussion, I handed out the permission to participate slips. We read through the entire sheet together. I emphasized that participation was voluntary and there would be no penalties for non-participation. I also reiterated that everyone regardless of participation would be completing the same activities, projects, assignments, and assessments. I asked students to take the papers home, read over them again with their parents or guardian, and return them by the following Friday. Thirty of the fifty-three students who took papers home opted to participate in my study.

On the following Monday, I asked all my students to fill out a questionnaire on their previous experiences in a social studies classroom. Some of the questions were the same as I had asked them in the group interview on Friday. I wanted to see if they had the same answers. All students filled out the questionnaires in class and handed them back in. I read over their answers and was pleased that all had pretty much responded in the same way adding a little more detail than they had in our discussion. I thanked them for their candor and honesty. I was very interested in the choice opportunities they had in the past, what they learned from activities in the past, and whether or not they liked social studies. More students disliked social studies than liked it with a few who were undecided. I created the following patai poem with some of their answers to the question about liking social studies.

Figure 1

Do You Like Social Studies? Part One

YES!

- Yes, Summer School brainwashed me.
 Yes, I love to learn about different ways people lived. When we learn it's like WOW! Those people were real, they lived that way.
- Yes, Because it is the past and I love working in the past!
 Yes, I think it's interesting and fun to learn about the past.
 Yes, I love to learn about other cultures. It is like exploring different lands.

NO!

- No, It's boring at times
 No, I don't really like learning about History, geography, etc.
 No, it's boring to me. I've never been interested in it. I try sometimes. I can't pay attention well.
- No, It's boring – I'd rather learn about stuff happening now.
 No, I think it's boring and senseless.
 No, I don't really like to memorize a lot of dates and that's what we usually have to do. But besides that, sure.
- No, I don't like social studies a lot, because in my opinion...what's done is done.

The Jury Is Still Out!

- Yes/No I sort of like it but my last teachers killed it because they made it really boring.
- Yes/No I do sometimes, it pretty much depends on what we are learning, a lot of it is interesting.
- Yes/No It's okay, but not my favorite, it can get boring sometimes.

The next step in the process for my study was to gather some information and data concerning my students, their preferred sensory learning styles, and their multiple intelligence strengths. According to Dunn, Denig, and Lovlelace (2001), the Dunns define learning styles as “the way in which each person begins to concentrate on, process, internalize, and remember new and difficult academic information” (p. 11). According to Reardon and Derner (2004), “...rather than planning lessons that target each modality [style] individually, we need to make each lesson be an experience of modality saturation where learners use all three modalities almost simultaneously. By doing so we ensure each learner, regardless of modality preference uses all modalities” (p. 18). Gardner (1983) originally identified seven intelligences adding an eighth later. He defined intelligence as “the ability to solve problems, or to fashion products, that are valued in one or more cultural or community setting” (p. 7). Gardner’s eight intelligences are as follows: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Kagan (2000) gives the intelligences “smart” titles. These titles help explain how the intelligence is reflected in the student. Linguistic students are “word smart”, logical-mathematical are “logic-math smart”, spatial are “art/space smart”, musical are “music smart”, bodily-kinesthetic are “body smart”, interpersonal are “people smart”, intrapersonal are “self smart”, and naturalistic are “nature smart”. Gardner (1983) and Kagan (2000) agree that there are not only one or two ways to be smart; there are many

ways to be smart. This information helped me to develop activities, projects, and lessons to meet the varied learning styles and intelligences of my students.

The first survey concentrated on identifying preferred student learning styles. My students went to www.ldpride.net and clicked on the icon for taking the free test. The survey results gave percentage scores for each of three sensory learning styles; auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic. Auditory learners learn best when information is presented auditory in an oral language format, visual learners learn best when information is presented visually in either a written language format or a picture or design format, and tactile/kinesthetic learners learn best when engaged in “hands-on” activities or can be physically active in the learning environment. Many of my students had learning style percentage scores that were very close to each other. Using myself as an example, I was 37% visual learner, 33% tactile learner, and 30% auditory learner.

The second survey generated data on each student’s intelligences and can be found at www.bgfl.org/multipleintelligences and clicking on the “take the test” icon. Multiple intelligences tell how a student is “smart.” They help the teacher to see how a student makes connections to information. Students can be strong in one or more than one intelligence. Again, using myself as an example, my two strongest intelligences are linguistic and visual/spatial. This means I am “word smart” and “picture smart”. Each student printed out his or her results. Appendix E has an example of one student’s results for each of the surveys.

We discussed the information each survey provided to them and how both they and I could use that information in class. I then collected them and analyzed their results for implementation. To better use the data created by these surveys, I created tables to visualize the results. Many students ended up with inter- or intrapersonal intelligences as their strongest intelligence. I believe this is a reflection of their personality and their adolescent love of talking. Therefore, I created a chart for the strongest intelligence and for the secondary intelligence. I also created a chart to show the results of the learning style surveys (see Tables 1, 2, & 3).

Table 1

Strongest Intelligence			
INTELLIGENCE	MOD 4	MOD 10	MOD 11
MUSICAL	2	2	1
VISUAL/SPATIAL	0	1	1
NATURALISTIC	0	0	0
KINESTHETIC	0	1	1
LINGUISTIC	1	1	1
LOGICAL	1	0	0
INTERPERSONAL	3	3	5
INTRAPERSONAL	3	2	1

Table 2

Secondary Intelligence			
INTELLIGENCE	MOD 4	MOD 10	MOD 11
MUSICAL	1	1	0
VISUAL/SPATIAL	0	2	1
NATURALISTIC	1	0	0
KINESTHETIC	1	2	3
LINGUISTIC	1	1	3
LOGICAL	1	0	1
INTERPERSONAL	4	2	2
INTRAPERSONAL	1	2	0

Table 3

Preferred Learning Style			
LEARNING STYLE	MOD 4	MOD 10	MOD 11
VISUAL	2	6	1
TACTILE	6	2	6
AUDITORY	2	2	3

At this point, I believed I had collected enough general data on my students to design the choices and strategies I would implement as part of my study. In the proposal for my study I had identified three areas for offering choices. They would be in enrichment, instruction, and assessment. It was time to look at my students and decide what choices and strategies would benefit them the most. My targeted topics for implementing my study were the French and Indian War, the steps leading to the American Revolution, The American Revolution, and the formation of the new nation.

For the French and Indian War, choice was in the form of historical narratives and corresponding literature circles for enrichment. For the steps leading to the American Revolution, choice was in instruction and assessment. Students had the opportunity to choose how to present information on specific events and steps. The activities they participated in to create these representations had instructional components for all three learning styles. They took quizzes in a variety of formats geared again to the different learning styles. Quizzes were in individual and group format, allowed for text and pictures, and provided visual and auditory clues. For the American Revolution, choice was again in the form of instruction with an informal contract and the use of historical fiction, illustrated timelines, and student led instruction. For the formation of a new nation, choice was in the form of assessment with a choice between a series of projects or a teacher made test. Prior to reaching the French and Indian War, I found a way to

introduce an additional choice activity. In the unit on the colonizing of the original thirteen colonies, I have my students create posters on famous colonial Americans. This project is the way I introduce library research methods to my classes. Our librarian does a complete introduction to the library and the research process for all my freshman classes. She likes to do this orientation in conjunction with a content area project. We started this orientation with the colonial person project about four years ago. This year I changed it to a group project instead of an individual project. Each core group received a person to research. They were required to create a poster about that person. Each group received a list of the required information for the poster (see Appendix K), but there were no criteria for the presentation of the information other than it had to be in poster form. Each group could express their own unique creativity. I showed the students examples from previous years. These examples were very diverse yet all contained the same required information about each person. Students had three days in the library for orientation and research and a workday in the classroom.

On the classroom workday, I observed and commented on the groups in my mod 4 class. By this time students had already had a class period to delegate jobs and parts of the project, do research in the library, and work individually on their assigned parts. The purpose of the workday is to pull the individual pieces together and create the finished product. For this assignment the product was the poster. When the students entered the classroom I had them get in their groups

and get out their materials. I showed them where the materials I was providing for the workday and product were located and told them they had the rest of the period to work on their project. I reminded them that the project was due the next time we met as a class. I wandered around the classroom listening to each group discuss what they were doing. Emily was telling her group “timelines are important stuff”. She was trying to sell putting a timeline of their person’s life on the poster. Murray asked me for poster-board and Kathy asked to go to the library to use the computer. Susan asked if the border could be words and I told her yes it could. I observed that one group had done nothing so far. They did not even have materials out. I wonder what they did for the two days we were in the library. They assured me that all of them had completed their parts at home and would be able to put their poster together in the allotted time the next day. I heard extraneous conversations as I walked around the room. Some students were having these conversations instead of working on their project. I redirected them to their task. Murray was cutting out pictures for their poster. Tim used a highlighter to highlight the information they wanted to include from their library printouts. Kori, Tom, and Rachel discussed what pictures to use on their border. Emily sat down to draw and color their person’s name on their poster-board. Dave and Ethan were trying to figure out where to place their information while waiting for Kathy to return from the library. Kori and Tom argued about what to put on their poster. Tom said, “we are running out of room...why put it on

anyway?” Kori answered, “Because we want a good grade...” Murray and Lori were frustrated with trying to make everything fit and each other. Murray said, “maybe if her name wasn’t so long...” Lori answered, “maybe if you worked more and talked less...” As class came to an end most groups had made significant progress on their posters and will be ready to hand them in the next day. Most students were actively engaged in the completion of the project throughout the period. They worked with little redirection from me.

Once the posters were completed, students were asked to list the contributions of each group member and assign a grade out of one hundred points to each group member (see Appendix L). They were also asked to reflect on whether or not they liked being able to choose how to create their colonial person poster as a journal entry. The students had some very insightful comments. Don wrote, “ yes. I liked being able to create our own posters because we were able to express our creativity. Creating the border showed if we could think of what to draw that related to our colonial person.” Anne wrote,

I liked being able to choose how we created our colonial person poster because it was easier to pick how we wanted it instead of being told. Us doing it ourselves made our posters more creative I guess. It would have been harder if someone told us what to do and they wouldn’t be that creative.

Nancy enjoyed the overall project, but commented that, “I did not like working in a group because I like to work alone.” Overall, the students seemed to enjoy the opportunity to be creative within the parameters of the project. Each group chose different ways to express themselves. Examples of student work for this project can be found in Figures 2, 3, & 4.

Figure 2



Figure 3

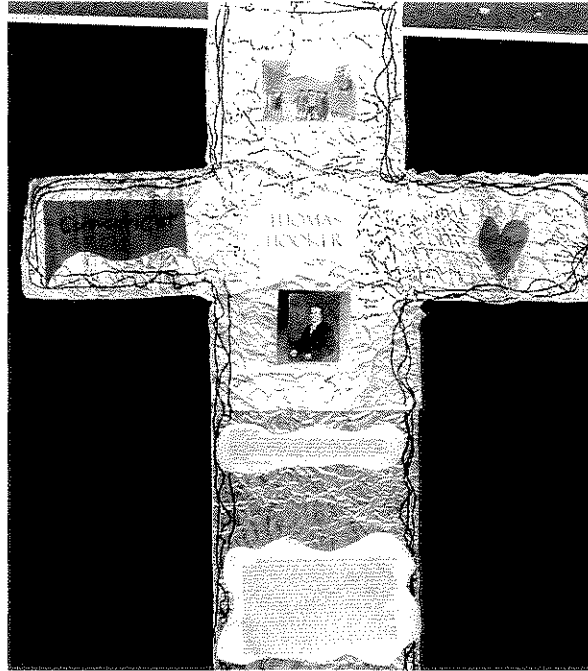


Figure 4



Once we reached the French and Indian War, I was very excited to introduce the concept of literature circles and historical fiction to my students. There was a slight problem though. I had no novels to use. Joe, my special ed co-teacher and I had carefully chosen novels of historical fiction that would work with both my inclusion and regular education students at the end of the previous school year. The problem was that sometime over the summer a decision was made not to order the books. Here we were a few weeks from being ready to go and we had no books. Daniels (2002) emphasizes the need for students to be able to choose their novel, not have them all read the same novel that the teacher has chosen for them. Luckily, our librarian ordered the books with library money and they will become a part of the permanent collection after I am done with them. Without these books there would have been no choice activity for the French and Indian War and no opportunity for literature circles.

With the introduction of historical fiction, I hoped to offer my students multiple perspectives from this time period and a chance to develop empathy for the participants. With the introduction of literature circles, I wanted my students to be able to relate the “stories” to what we learned in class and the world we live in today. Literature circles were not designed for the social studies classroom. Almost all the articles, studies, and books I read talked about the implementation of literature circles in an English/language arts classroom. I had gathered resources from books and articles by Daniels (2002) and Levstik (1989, 1995). I

made sure I had enough titles for the students to choose from. I copied the “job sheets” Daniels created for students to use within the literature circles. These jobs include: The Investigator, The Connector, The Discussion Director, The Word Collector, The Summarizer, and The Task Master (Daniels, 2002). I was ready to go.

I introduced literature circles to my students at the end of our study of the French and Indian War. This unit had included textbook and outside readings, vocabulary, and viewing the movie, *Last of the Mohicans*. An important part of this unit is for students to understand the perspectives of all the different groups living in North America and involved in the war. I explained to the students that we were going to further supplement our understanding of these perspectives by engaging in reading books about the time period. The moans and groans began! I asked the students to hear me out. We would be reading historical fiction novels, many of which had characters close to their ages. I held up each of the novels and gave a short synopsis of the characters and plot. I then allowed the students time to look through the books and read the back covers. They then had to put a first and second choice on an index card with their name on it. One of the tenets of literature circles is that students get to choose their novels, and the groups are created by the choice in novel. I then separated the cards based on their first choice. Only six copies of each novel were available. If there were six or less students for a particular novel, they formed the group. If there were more than six

students interested in the same novel, their cards were folded up, placed in a can, and I drew out six cards. Those students formed the group for that novel. The left over cards were now in the running for their second choice. This was the most democratic way I could come up with for assigning novels and groups. It worked well in all my classes except one. In my mod 10 class, there were two students who did not get either of their choices and were very disgruntled. I apologized and told them that the next time we did literature circles, they would automatically get their first choice.

The next day in class I had students pick their literature circle jobs from a can. I then passed out examples of the graphic organizers for the literature circle jobs. All jobs except the Investigator have organizational worksheets, but since the job of the Investigator is similar to the job of the Connector, I told them both to use the Connector worksheet. The purpose behind worksheets is to help the students delve into the novel and organize what they find there. I talked them through each role and gave examples from previous readings of how to use the worksheets.

I explained that the Discussion Director leads the discussion of the novel by creating mostly open-ended questions for all group members to answer as part of a discussion. It was also his or her job to help the Task Master check that all group members were keeping up with the readings through their questioning. This precipitated a small discussion on what open-ended questions are. I asked for an

explanation and examples of open-ended questions. The majority of my students had very little trouble explaining or giving me examples from the material we had just learned.

I then explained that the role of the Connector was to connect the novel to the world we live in today, and the role of the Investigator was to connect the novel to the unit we had just finished. These were the two jobs that were most important to me. I explained that my purpose for teaching history was to help them connect the past to our lives today. This is a hard concept for ninth graders to comprehend. They think the past is a bunch of dead people who did things that have nothing to do with them today. Again I had to work through the concept with them. My example was from a previous unit where we learned about the religious persecution of Puritans and Pilgrims and their resulting flight to the new world. I asked if there were people fleeing religious persecution today and if there were religious groups in the world today that are actively trying to make everyone else like them. The students immediately used 911 as an example and the religious groups of the Middle East. They also brought up Hitler's persecution of the Jews. We discussed how these events were all related to each other and subsequently to our lives.

After going through the other job descriptions, we were ready to begin. I assigned the first three chapters to be read for the first literature circle discussion. Students also needed to fill in their worksheets based on those three

chapters. They had opportunities to read in class, in study halls, and overnight. Since I only had six copies of each novel and an average of eighteen students were reading each novel, only the first six students for each novel could borrow books for study hall or overnight. Students had the next two class periods to read and discuss their novels. Some groups chose to read together, some chose to read individually. Each group found spots in the classroom or out in the surrounding hallways.

During both reading days, I circled the room and observed the groups. On the second reading day, I took notes about each group. My *Follow the River* group has opted to sit at three desks in the back of the room. This is the smallest group with only three members. I believe this is due to the book being a challenge. The book is over 300 pages in length, but has a very engaging plot and characters. Each group member has two jobs. The discussion director tells the group she will have more questions for the next day's discussion. The group then discusses the troubling vocabulary they have found starting with the word brambles. The *Enemy in the Fort* group has chosen to go out into the hallway and to take turns reading passages out loud. When I sit in with them, David is reading out loud for the group. Katie makes the following connection between the passage David just finished and previous knowledge from the class. She says, "They want to take people as slaves, maybe that is why they take the Mom". She has made the connection between what we previously learned about Native American cultures

and the novel. Different Native American tribes would kidnap and enslave members of enemy tribes. The group continues their discussion of the passage and what we have already learned in class. The *Light in the Forrest* group has also chosen to occupy a section of the hallway in order to read aloud. When the group finishes their reading, Todd, the discussion director, starts to ask his questions. His questions are basic recall questions like “Who is True Son’s guard?” The *Witch of Blackbird Pond* group is silently reading in another part of the classroom. I ask myself why they have not finished the first two chapters yet. With ten minutes left in the period they are all still silently reading. I have observed no discussion or direction in this group for the entire period. As the class period winds down I reiterate to them what each job should be doing and that their graphic organizers need to be completed for the next class. The entire group has a look of terror on their face. At the end of this period, the *Follow the River* group has started their discussion for their meeting with me the next day. Rachel, the discussion director asks many questions that force her group members to recall information about the plot and the characters. These questions include: What group attacks the settlement? Which children are killed, which are spared? What is the relationship between Betty and Mary? What river do they follow? Her group is quick to answer the questions with all members participating. When I ask why they can all participate so quickly, Cindy explains, “we would stop and talk in the middle of reading”. I reflect that all groups were engaged in the

literature activities. Whether they were reading aloud or silently, working on their graphic organizers, or discussing the book and characters, all students were engaged in some activity relating to the literature. They worked well in the classroom or out in the hallway with little direction from me.

On the third day, each group had their first literature circle discussion. I sat in on each group discussion as an observer. I let the discussion director lead the discussion and he or she made sure everyone contributed his or her findings. I concentrated on taking notes on the comments and connections made by the connectors, the investigators, and other members of the group. We proceeded in this fashion through the first six chapters of each of the books. I was then forced to end the formal literature circles due to time constraints. Students had the opportunity to finish the novels on their own time and many did.

Through the French and Indian War literature circles, my students were able to articulate examples of the different perspectives held by the inhabitants of North America at this time period. They made connections between the colonial world and their own as well as connecting what they were reading to what we had already studied in the unit. The connections they made to the French and Indian War unit and our world today are in the following patai poem.

Figure 5

CONNECTIONS!*The Courage of Sarah Noble*

The Nobles are like the Camerons in Last of the Mohicans...have to defend themselves

There are dangerous places to live due to circumstances in the world today [just like them]

Like Little House on the Prairie

The Enemy in the Fort

War with the Indians is like war in Iraq

The people in the fort are like the Camerons on the frontier in Last of the Mohicans

Today she would sell the spoons in a pawnshop not to a peddler

The fight between Ezekiel and Issac is like when siblings fight

Their dislike of Issac is like discrimination

Light in the Forest

He has to move from one family to another like the Fresh Prince of Bel Air or in the Real World where everyone has different perspectives

It is like the Holocaust...had to move and act differently to live

True Son is raised to think he is someone and then needs to become someone else...like in The Jerk, Elf, and The Pretender

It is also like Hook...the kids get sent away

The Witch of Blackbird Pond

Kit coming to America is like the first day of High School
It is like when you are a foster child...new family, new perspectives

Examples from our life are movies like Halloween High, Princess Diaries, It
Takes Two, and Lady and the Tramp

Kit's adventures are like moving to a new school

It is also like being an orphan or the Beverly Hillbillies, or the Real
World...everyone is different but they have to live together to get along...doesn't
always work

[It's like] Princess Diaries and Wife-Swapping

Our next unit of study was the steps leading to the American Revolution. Within this unit I offered choice in the form of instruction. There are 26 events that I teach as steps leading to the revolution. I used a variety of teaching strategies to teach these steps incorporating the needs of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Auditory learners had the opportunity to discuss information about each step, present the information to the class, and hear the other groups present their information. Visual learners had the opportunity to read the information they were given, create new information, create visual cues for the textual information, and copy both the text and cues into their notebooks. Kinesthetic learners had the opportunity to work within a group in a variety of locations throughout the room. They also had information and materials to manipulate when creating their posters. They could also move around the room to copy the information from the posters. They then had an opportunity to present and learn this information through words, visuals, and gestures.

For the first six steps students were placed in random groups and given information about a specific event. The information was on brightly colored pieces of paper and had different fonts and colors for the text. Each group had to determine what the event was and then create a poster for their event using the supplied information. They then created decorations or illustrations relating to the event. Each group explained their event to the class. All students copied the

information from the posters and we discussed each event. The quiz for these steps had the groups recreating the steps with the aid of a term bank.

For the next six steps, groups were again given information about a certain event and needed to again determine what event they had. This time the groups created a poster with visual cues for the information and the event. Each group again explained their event, text, and cues to the class. Students copied the written information, the visual cues, or a combination of both into their notes. Examples of student posters can be found in Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 6

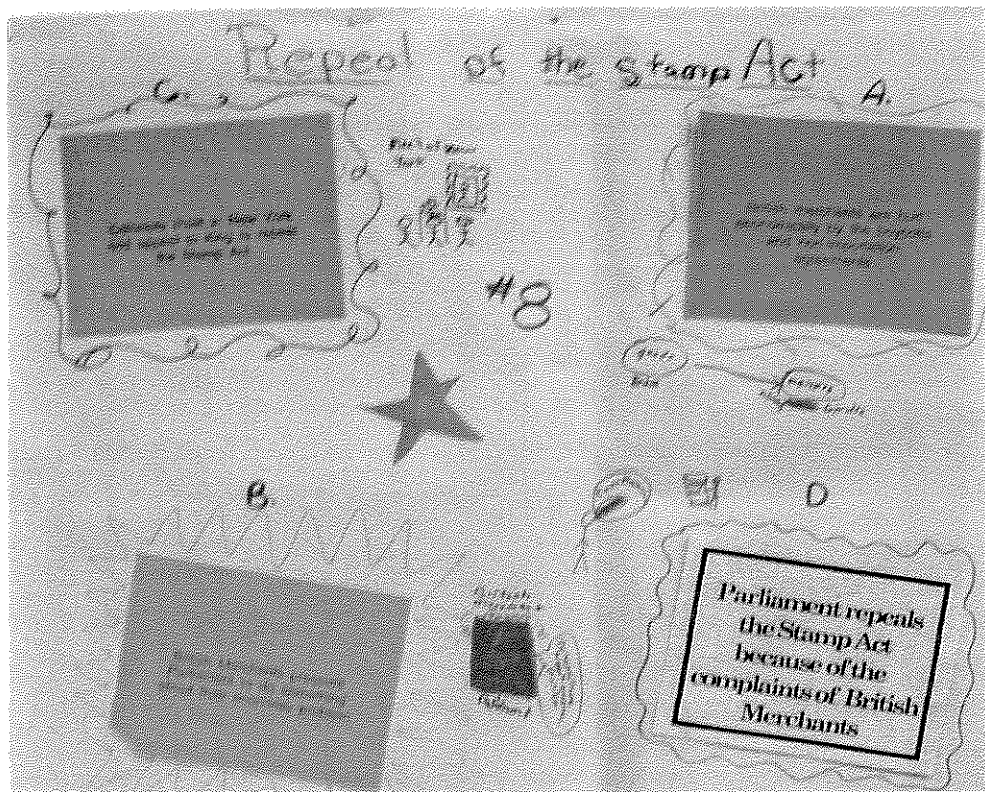
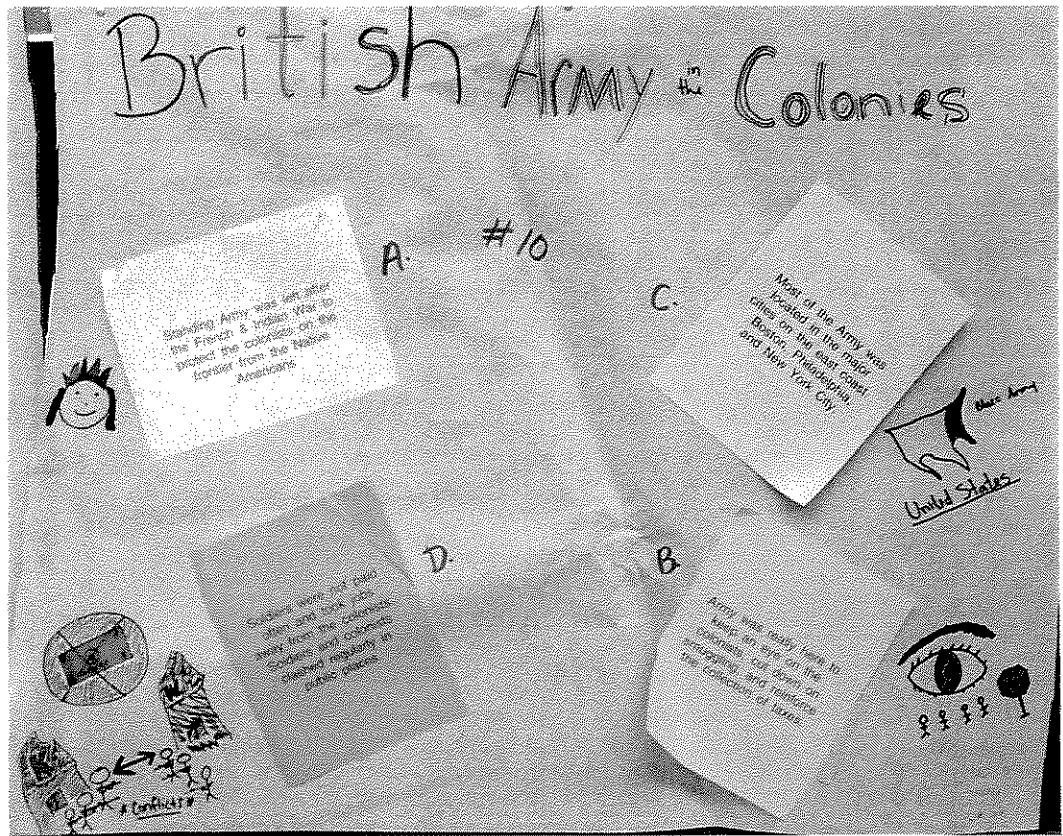


Figure 7



Students took a quiz on these six steps and had the choice of explaining the events in written form or visual form with captions (see Appendix M). Many students liked the opportunity to impart their knowledge in different formats. Students responded to a journal prompt on the back of their quizzes. The prompt was: Did you like this choice opportunity? Shelly said, "I like when we can decide what to do. But my favorite way was filling in the blank."

Emily states,

I enjoyed being given a choice on how to take the quiz. I would enjoy it if all other quizzes were like this one. I chose to write because I read the steps so many times I felt that it would be a waste of time to draw pics. I would draw if I didn't study.

Sandy wrote,

I enjoyed drawing the pictures and writing a short summary for this test because it is easier for me to remember what I saw and draw it along with being able to remember its purpose. Compared to just writing down what I know.

Susan commented, "I like the fact that we can use pictures. Pictures are easy to remember when it comes to tests. I would like to do this in the future. I only think this should apply to tests." Alex on the other hand responded, "I liked having a choice but I didn't like the choices. I chose to mostly write out because I could explain myself that way. Pictures are too complicated."

The last 14 steps I taught using a graphic organizer of a staircase drawn on the blackboard. We listed each step on the blackboard or overhead, brainstormed additional important information, copied it into their notes, and then discussed each step. Students had the option of adding visual cues or illustrations to their own notes. They also had the opportunity to move around the room and switch seats to copy the information. The quizzes for these steps had the students describe in detail four steps, of their choice, and the steps influence on the revolution. There were visual cues offered in partial answer bank. Their explanation could be a combination of written text and visual cues or illustrations. I felt that the variety of methods used to teach the 26 steps allowed each type of learner to make connections and learn material. The diverse assessments that were used also catered to different learning styles.

We had come to the middle of my study. I had covered two units where choices were offered and had two more to go. I decided it was time to conduct interviews with each of the classes involved in my study to gauge if they understood the study and its concepts. I asked each class some of the questions (see Appendix H). Mod 4 answered questions 1, 2, and 3. Mod 10 answered questions 1, 3, and 4. Mod 11 answered questions 1, 2 and 5. Not all participants were present on the day this interview took place and not all participants chose to participate in the discussion. Some student responses to these questions can be found on the following page as a poem.

Figure 8

How Are We Doing?

“ help us learn better...we can do it our own way...like when we took the quiz where you could draw or write...I don't like essay stuff, I like drawing and explaining”

“ learn best...way we want to like lit circles, I like to read and learn that way...learn best the way you like to do things, we get to pick”

“ you get it your own way...like Burger King”

“ it exposes us to different things...not the same as everything else...not only the teacher's point of view”

“ because giving us choices...and letting us choose our own ways to study...if we choose what we are good at we will learn better”

“ let us choose things we like...I tend to try harder if I choose it”

“ letting us choose motivates us by doing things we like”

“ letting us think for ourselves and letting us learn in the way that best suits our needs”

“ want us to learn to our best ability...if someone learns different from another person choice lets us pick how you learn better”

“ in a way it helps us learn at our own pace...stuff we already know and new stuff...helps us to teach ourselves”

“ helping us to figure out how we learn better”

“ options”

“ decisions”

“ free will”

“ think we are responsible enough to pick what we want to do”

“ it is giving opportunities to show we are responsible”

“ learning to communicate with other people...expand our horizons...other opportunities to learn stuff...prepare us for the world”

“ by allowing us to have choices, allowing us to be individuals...I have to see and read and tell it to me to learn”

“ certain decisions might help you and on certain ones hold you back”

“ develop our individual selves”

“ yes, will be more comfortable if we choose it”

“ yes, the class has a say in what goes on”

“ most teachers just go on the board and tell you what to do...this is our class...not boring”

“ it is other people's choice to fail or pass...not forcing things...they choose to do it or not”

“ it is hard working in a group...you can do your part, but if they don't do their part you can't do anything about it”

“ those people who didn't do the project still had the choice. They aren't ready to be independent yet”

“ people who didn't do it...why are they here? They come here to socialize...not here to do their jobs”

The answers my students gave to the interview questions were very exciting for me. They made direct connections between choice and the outcomes I was looking for, motivation and ownership. Comments like “you get it your own way...like Burger King” showed me that students were understanding that they each have different ways of learning material and that I was trying to provide opportunities for each of them to learn in their own way. They spoke directly to motivation with comments like “let us choose things we like...I tend to try harder if I choose it” and “letting us choose motivates us by doing things we like.” They spoke to classroom and curriculum ownership with comments like “yes, the class has a say in what goes on” and “most teachers just go to the board and tell you what to do...this is our class...not boring.” At the mid-point of this study, I felt good about what we had accomplished so far. My students were articulating the connections I was looking to find in my study.

Our next unit was the American Revolution. This unit was an informal contract. Over a three-week period of time all students received teacher instruction on the American Revolution, had to define assigned vocabulary terms, complete a worksheet packet, choose and complete a supplemental project, and complete a teacher made take-home test. Students chose the order for turning in the assignments. They could turn them in as they completed them or turn everything in on the final day. There were both workdays and class days over the three-week period.

Each student chose one of three projects to supplement their instruction on the American Revolution. Students could choose to independently read an historical novel and create a subsequent poster, fashion an illustrated timeline from a list of events and people, or design a lesson on a specific event or battle to be taught to the class.

Students could choose to read either *My Brother Sam is Dead* or *Johnny Tremain*. This option appealed to the linguistic, visual/spatial, and intrapersonal students. The product they created to illustrate their knowledge was a poster that summarized the plot and characters, connected the story to the world today, and connected the story to what we had previously learned in class. The poster also had to include graphics or drawings that connected to this information (see Appendix N). Students who chose to read made great connections to the information we had learned in class as well as to the present war in Iraq. Tim chose to read *My Brother Sam is Dead*. He commented on his student log that, “I liked the book. It was fun and interesting to read.” On his poster he wrote,

The book related to the world today because today's world is having a war too. People are caught in the middle and innocent people die. The book relates to class because...it is told as your in the war as a Tory family. It shows how the people who don't participate in the war feel and what happens to them when it gets tough.

Ethan also read this novel. His comment in his student activity log was as follows, “ I really liked the book it showed how loyalists and patriots were always spying on each other. And the sadness of war even in victory.” In his log, Dave commented on his choice process, “ I liked it because I didn’t have to get in front of the class and teach it” but he makes connections to both the world today and our class on his poster. He wrote,

The book relates to our world today because the United States is at war with Iraq. During the Revolution we were fighting for freedom. The war in Iraq is for freedom of Iraq and [freedom] against terrorism. We were fighting for freedom then and we are fighting for freedom now. The book relates to what we are learning in class because it is about the Revolutionary War and in class we are talking about the war and the steps that lead to the war.

On her poster for *My Brother Sam is Dead*, Anne wrote,

It [the book] shows someone that not everyone will agree with a situation but everyone’s entitled to fight for what they believe in. The story relates a lot to the Iraq situation because there are different opinions about how that nation should be run. We learned about the Patriots and the Loyalists and who they are and how they fought about being loyal or not and how some of the people are in-between.

Cathy read *Johnny Tremain* and had an interesting reflection on the novel's connection to the world today. She wrote, " This book has nothing to do with the world today. Back then they fight for stuff that was worth fighting for now we do it for paybacks or something to do." I was excited about the connections these students made with the curriculum and the world. They used the readings to delve into the concepts, ideas, and perspectives of that time period and their own. Their comments were very insightful. They showed a much deeper understanding of that time period and its relationship to the world today. The next two figures show student posters for the novel project.

Figure 9

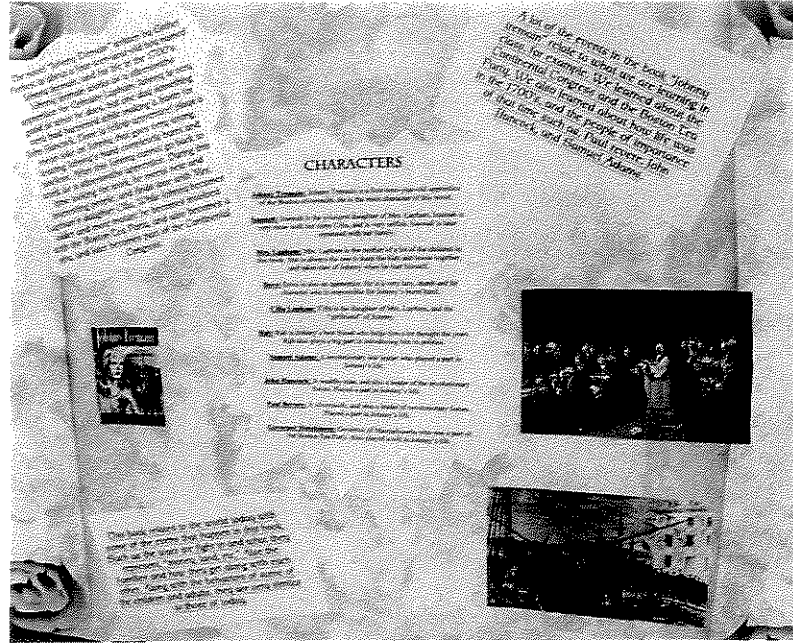
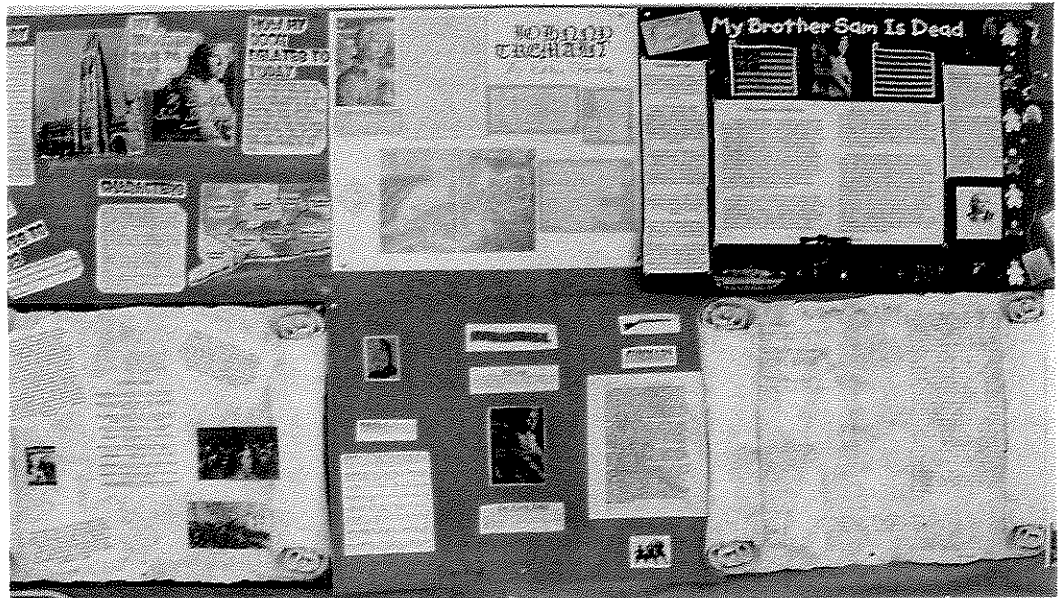


Figure 10



Students who chose the timeline activity were given a list of events, battles, and people to place on their timeline. They were required to create corresponding text and graphics or illustrations for each item. All the material was then to be placed on a chronological timeline (see Appendix O). This option was designed for the visual/spatial, verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, and bodily/kinesthetic student. Although students learned the events and people of the revolution while completing this activity, some commented that it took a lot more time and effort than they thought it would. Lori commented in her activity log, “I absolutely hated it. It was more work than I thought it would be. It took a lot to find research.” Kori wrote in her journal, “I guess I liked it. It was a lot of work and took a lot of time. I did get a good grade so I am happy with my grade.” Susan enjoyed the opportunity to be different. She wrote in her journal, “I liked this choice because I could use creativity and my project looked different from all the others.”

Their comments make connections to motivation and ownership by way of choices. Lori chose this option because she thought it would be easy while Susan chose it because it allowed her to be creative. Each made her choice for her own reasons and each choice resulted in a good grade. In this instance, receiving a good grade seems to be the chief motivator. Their comments also tell me that ease and grades still play a significant role in how my students are choosing activities and projects. Examples of student timelines are in figures 11, 12, & 13.

Figure 11



Figure 12

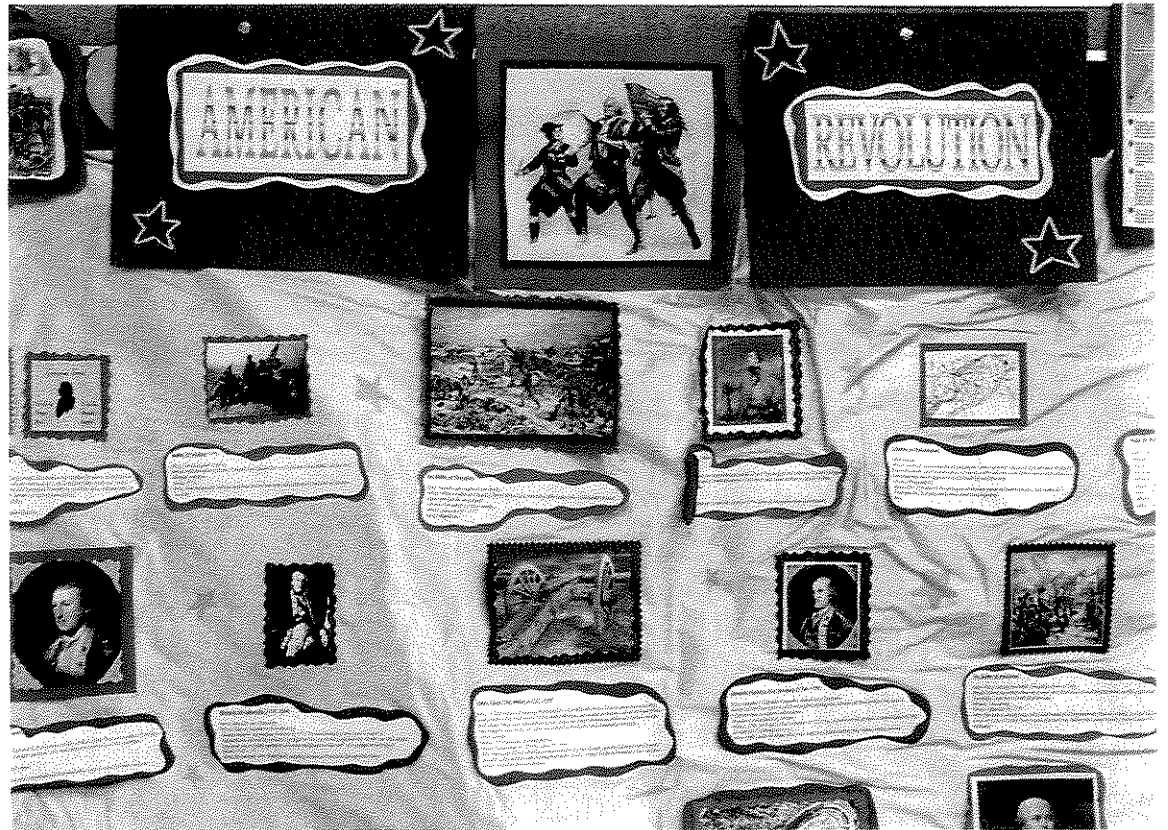
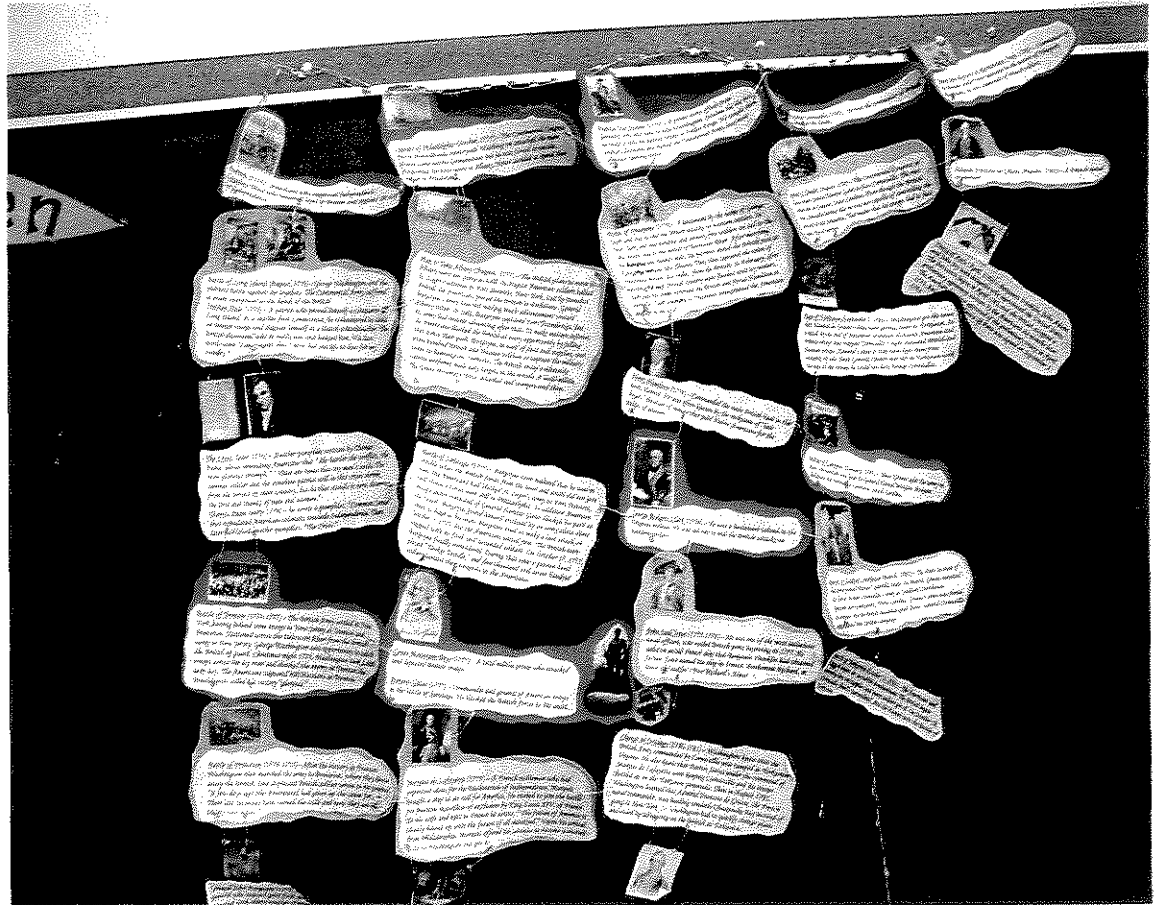


Figure 13



Overwhelmingly, the students who opted to teach a lesson were my interpersonal students like Judy. She wrote in her log, “[I chose this option] because I like to teach and talk and this project I did both.” Others chose this option because they have aspirations to teach. In her log, Kristen wrote, “I loved it. It was sooo much fun. It taught me I’m good at teaching the class and I learned a lot about the Battle of Saratoga.” They were required to teach all relevant information for their event (see Appendix P). This included multiple perspectives, important people, vocabulary, and effects on the revolution. They had many choices in the way they presented their material. Some students chose to create power point presentations. Some designed graphic organizers or worksheets to be filled in as they lectured on their event. Some opted to use transparencies with outlines to be filled in. They wrote about how much they enjoyed creating the tools they used to teach the class. Alex commented in her journal, “This was fun b/c we got to choose our own way to teach our topic and to be creative.” She also wrote, “It was fun because I got to use all my information into an educational PowerPoint and creative little worksheets.” Students who chose this option also wrote about the difficulty of organizing the material and keeping students on task. Shelly addressed this in her log writing, “I didn’t really like teaching the class. I learned that students don’t always pay attention.” Examples of student tools can be found in Figures 14 - 17.

Figure 14

The Siege and Battle of Yorktown

- The Battle of Yorktown was the climax of the Revolutionary War. The combined forces of General Washington, General Rochambeau, Admiral de Grasse, and General Lafayette all converged on the greatest concentration of the British troops in America.
- It took great amounts of planning, courage, and skill to execute this attack.




Figure 15

Battle Of Vincennes

ACROSS

3. in 1778 clark and troops sailed down what river?
4. lovely project made by: ?
7. Lieutenant colonel in virginia.
10. british officer and governor.
11. Hamilton's nickname

Down

1. vincennes was sitting on a ?
2. number of troops with clark?
5. british used _____ to guard american harbors.
6. Hamilton _____ to clark
8. hamilton is in command of?
9. battle took place here.

Figure 16

SIEGE & BATTLE OF YORKTOWN

Name- _____

1. Who retreated North to Virginia in April of 1781?
2. Cornwallis's troops carried out raids throughout the state, almost capturing whom?
3. Who did George Washington send to fight Cornwallis in the south?
4. Who is Rochambeau?
5. Who is de Grasse?
6. When & where did Washington set up camp, waiting for the second fleet of French ships?
7. What does ambush mean?
8. What does ratify mean?
9. Who had followed reports of the fighting in the South during 1780 & 1781?
10. Washington wanted who to still think that they were still planning to attack in New York?
11. Who handed over their weapons?
12. Which band played "Yankee Doodle" and the British band responded with a child's tune "The World Turned Upside Down"?

Figure 17

THE BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

- The Battle of Long Island took place during the _____ war.
- The Battle of Long Island took place on _____, ____ in _____.
- The British had _____ troops against Washington's _____ troops, it may have been fewer.
- Nathan Hale one of Washington's _____ spied on _____ troops.
- Nathan Hale presented himself to the _____ troops as a _____ schoolteacher.
- Later the British found out the true identity of _____ and then hung him.
- Many of the Patriot Soldiers killed in the Battle of Long Island had not been wearing _____, _____, or _____.
- _____ last words before he died were "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."
- Edward Hand sent to the Americans that the _____ were preparing to cross to _____.
- General William _____ had ordered his troops to move against the continental army.
- There was ___ Americans killed during this battle.
- There were __,___ Americans either wounded, captured, or missing.
- There was _ British officers, and __ men killed during the battle.
- The _____ successfully won this battle on _____.
- There were __ officers, and ___ men either wounded or missing on the British side.

All students were then required to take the same teacher created assessment. The assessment was a take-home test as part of the contract (see Appendix Q). This also took into account the different ways students had chosen to supplement their instruction. In a discussion of the series of activities, the majority of the students who created the timelines commented that the test was pretty easy and because of the research they did for their timeline they relied very little on their notes or text to complete the test. Students who taught the class for the most part said that they knew their battle or event very well, but that they needed the aid of their notes and textbook to answer some of the questions on the test. Students who read the book commented the most on using their notes and text for the test, but based on their posters I knew that they had a good understanding of the connections between the American Revolution and the world today.

The last unit for my study was on the formation of the new nation. All students received instruction on significant events, people, and vocabulary. We also discussed the concepts of republic, representative democracy, civil rights, and compromise. The choice for this unit was in assessment. Students could opt to either take a teacher made test or create four projects from a contract list (see Appendix R). Many of the projects on the contract list were geared toward different multiple intelligences (see Appendix S). They required students to comprehend, apply, analyze, and synthesize the material we had covered. All

students then had the option to do one extra project from the list to receive extra credit points.

Three-quarters of my students chose to do the projects with more than half of them completing the extra project also. Of the one-fourth that took the test, many originally chose the project option, but had no projects to turn in on the due date and therefore were required to take the test. Only a few students opted for the test from the beginning.

Many chose the projects because they are more comfortable expressing their knowledge in this genre than they are on tests. Judy expresses this sentiment in her log. She wrote, "I chose to do the projects because I stink at tests but great at projects." Tom agreed, he wrote, "I chose the projects because to me it seemed the better choice. I tend to be more of a 'hands-on' learner." These students as a whole did very well on the projects. Marty wrote in his student log, "I liked this project because they are easy and I knew I could get a good grade and it was fun and easy." Many were creative, insightful, and unique. Alex liked having the flexibility to choose what projects to do. She wrote the following in her log, "I liked making projects with few guidelines, and it gave lots of leeway! I did it because it was fun! And it helped learn of individual events." Student comments reflect their comfort level with projects. For the most part students chose projects that were in line with their strongest intelligences, but I do not think this was the criterion they used when choosing. As reflected in their

comments, they chose the projects that appealed to them and were easy. There were not enough options for them to be able to pick four projects within the same intelligence. Examples of student work can be found in figures 18-22.

Figure 18

The Steps We Took to Get to the American Revolution

The Constitution had many writers,
 The goals were different by the hour.
 State Constitutions gave legislators power,
 For the articles of Confederation, is what congress most admire.

Foreign affairs, money, and trade,
 Soldiers, army, what more is there to say?
 March 1, 1781 is when the government finally decided to govern one.

Thomas Jefferson proposed the plan,
 To divide the Western territory into ten self-governing lands.
 The effects of the Revolutionary war,
 Were no gold, no silver, no money, no more.

Then Robert Morris came up with this plan,
 To collect five percent tax on all goods throughout the land.
 Later on Pennsylvania organized anti-slavery,
 And the states of the South got very angry.

The Constitution began in May,
 And didn't end until one September day.
 To keep Southern states in the nation,
 Congress would not interfere with their slave traditions.

The federal government could tax, trade, and raise an army,
 But it was also necessary to pass, and improve laws.
 The first three articles of the Constitution,
 Described the powers for each branch.

The Legislative branch is the law making branch,
 The decisions here take many hours,
 And is composed of the House of Representatives.

The Executive branch has many powers,
 For this branch consists of many hours.
 For the president, and many others,
 Decided what the laws were going to be, and who would govern.

Figure 19

CD cover #7

ARTICLES

BY

FEDERALISTS

With their hit singles: We ain't British No More, and Read The Articles

We ain't British No more
Keep It Up Shay
The Greatness of Compromise
Virginia Plan ain't gonna work
Read The Articles
Check The Balances
Ratify The Constitution
We Are 13 United States
Lead Us On George
Sign That Declaration



Figure 20

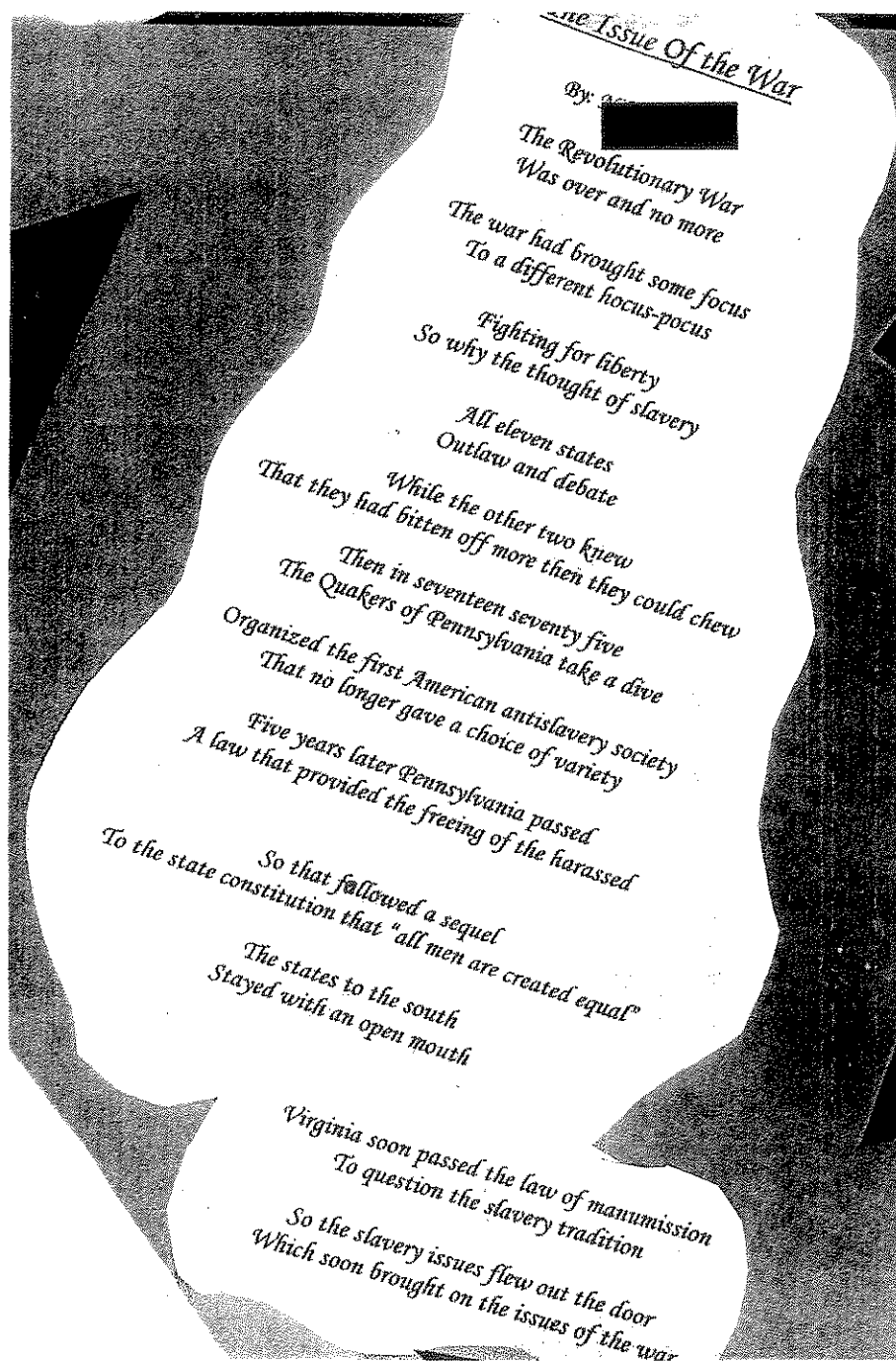


Figure 21

How many lives does it take	How Many Lives
To stop a war	Of people today
One million	Tomorrow you may be dead
Two million	Or I may be too
Maybe even more	So I pass this on to you
What started one day	I want everyone to see
We will never forget	As soon as this is over
Will maybe never end	We will all be free
Now they say to take	
"Under God" out of our pledge	
But now is the most	
We need him	
We are on the edge	
We soon	
Are going to be	
Up to our knees	
In blood and dirt	
Nobody will be able to stand it	
Not the animals or the trees	
Take a stand for what is right	
We all need to stop this fight	
Nobody in this war	
Is going to win	
So tell the soldiers	
To come back in	
On this day	
People are going out of their way	
To save the lives	

Figure 22

Song:

When the sun comes up in the morning
 the war rages on
 the rain comes down ..its pouring
 the blood trickles down on the ground
 I wanna be part of that crowd
 the war rages on

Chorus:
 We will fight
 we will fight
 The war of wars
 all night
 all night

The war is almost over
 we wont start this again
 we don't have to fight this war
 Tell the soldiers to come back in
 We have the power to speak
 We wont stay in our seats
 we have to stick up for ourselves
 we'll be on our feet

Chorus:
 We will fight
 we will fight
 the war of wars
 all night
 all night

The war is now over
 We are now resting
 The president was good
 He thought he did the best thing
 you're the one we saved
 you're the one whose wrong
 we are willing to stand
 Our country is strong..

Chorus:
 we will fight
 we will fight
 the war of wars
 all night
 all night

Faded out...
 ALL NIGHT...

Many of the students who opted for the test did so because it required no outside work. Murray acknowledges this when he wrote, "I did the test cause it was less work, but it was hard and the only reason I passed was because I did the extra credit project." The test was in the same format as all our previous tests with recall, comparison, and short answer questions. The students who took the test did not do as well as those who completed the projects. Very few of these students completed the extra credit project, and realized later that they should have. Ethan realized this and wrote, "I like taking tests better than doing projects, But I would have done better if I did a project with the test."

During and at the end of the study, students completed a log of the choices they had made (see Appendix F). They listed the activity they had chosen and made comments on its completion, likes and dislikes, and what they had learned from the activity and choice. I also had students complete a questionnaire (see Appendix E) regarding two of the choices they had made during the study. Questions asked if having a choice in the activity motivated them to complete it and if they did not complete it, why? In addition, I asked for suggestions for other activities or choices within that chapter. Many students commented on choice being a motivator to complete activities. When commenting on choosing the projects for the unit on the new nation, Dave wrote, "Yes, [having choice motivated me] because I chose 4 that I figured were the easiest and I could do the best on." Lori furthers this concept when she writes, " Yes, because I knew that I

could do well with the ones I chose. I think that if Mrs. Sziy chose for me I wouldn't have done as well." Kori commented, "Yes because it was something I wanted to do and I knew it was something I could complete."

Here, we come to the formal end of my study for the purpose of this thesis. My study does not actually end here though, it will continue for the rest of the year. In the next few units my students will be making more choices in the products they create for assessment and instruction. We will again try literature circles with historical fiction for the American Civil War.

ANALYSIS

Analysis is an ongoing process. It starts with the first piece of data collected and continues long after the completion of data collection. Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) call analysis “taking things apart” (p. 191). Throughout this action research process, I have repeatedly “taken apart” my data. I have used many different forms of analysis. These forms include coding and re-coding my field log, combining the codes into bins, creating reflective memos based on the data I collected, writing analytic memos as I perused my study to relate it to educational theorists, creating theme statements to help me with my findings, and generating narrative forms and tables as a way to share my data with others.

Coding was the first step in analyzing my data. Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) define coding as finding labels to “identify a meaning unit” (p. 162). As my study progressed, I coded and re-coded my observations, student work, surveys, questionnaires, and reflective and analytic memos. These codes were words or phrases that created connections to my question and the data in my log. Towards the end of my study I compiled the codes into a chart with the codes and the pages they could be found on in my field log. I then began the process of combining codes that went together.

The putting together of these codes into related groups is known as binning. Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) refer to bins as “the first broad categories” (p. 162). I created a graphic organizer to look at my bins and the

codes I had placed in them. Creating the bins helped me to look for and identify reoccurring themes within my data. The reoccurring themes within my data aided me in identifying the data that directly corresponded to my question and study. These became my theme statements. Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) define themes as “a statement of meaning that runs through all or most of the pertinent data” (p. 206). These theme statements comprise the major findings of my study.

Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) describe analytic memos as apparatus you can use to “write a memo to yourself about what you see emerging as patterns of behavior, words, key ideas, events” (p. 187). I wrote reflective memos about the figurative language I found in my data. Much of this language was in the form of metaphors used by my students within their literature circles. I wrote analytic memos connecting my data with the ideas of educational theorists like Friere, Dewey, Delpit, and Vygotsky. These were very helpful when trying to analyze the data from a perspective other than my own. I used a number of narrative forms to analyze my data. I created patai poems and pastiches to aid in analyzing and interpreting my data for others as well as myself. These narratives assisted me in learning about and telling my story.

I created poems to relate student comments about their previous social studies experiences, the progress of our study, and the connections they were making to our curriculum, their world, and historical events. These narrative

forms showcase the words and language used by my students throughout this study. Pastiches compile data and shed light on a theme or person. In Figure 23, I created a pastiche that chronicles the walk of two students along the path of our study and their reactions to choice and motivation. Figure 24 is a patai poem of student responses to the question I asked in the beginning of the study: Do you like cultures?

Figure 23

KATHY *and* DAN

Cultures..Choices..Options..Motivation..Ownership

“ I think it is interesting and fun to learn about the past.”

“ I THINK IT IS INTERESTING HOW THE WORLD AND STUFF IN ITS PAST GOT TO WHERE IT IS TODAY.”

“ I complete my assignments because I care very much about my grades.”

“ I COMPLETE MY ASSIGNMENTS BECAUSE I THINK ITS IMPORTANT TO DO WHAT’S REQUIRED FOR SOCIAL STUDIES.”

“ I really enjoy this class because of the choices we have. Instead of class, 11th mod is more like a mini-field trip. It gives us a chance to learn for ourselves and discover things in a unique but fun way. One example was the literary circles. While I was not particularly fond of them, they gave me a first hand look at what life in Massachusetts Bay Colony might have been like.”

“ I HAVE SOME CHOICES THAT I THINK WOULD WORK BETTER FOR ME IN CLASS. MIX UP THE PERIOD, WITH SOMETIME DOING A WORKSHEET, OTHER TIMES LIKE WATCHING A MOVIE, AND THEN DISCUSSING THE TOPIC. AND FOR HOMEWORK HAVE QUESTIONS THAT HAVE LIKE A LITTLE STORY, BUT FACTUAL AND

HAVE QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE STORY BUT IN THE WHOLE SENCE THE CHAPTER WERE LEARNING.”

“ I thought that being able to choose was neat (esp. being able to draw) but if you chose to write, it was too much writing.”

“ I LIKED THIS QUIZ. IT WAS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT BUT IT WAS FUN. BUT IT IS JUST TAKES A WHILE TO WRITE A PARAGRAPH THEN. BUT OTHERWISE IT WAS COOL.”

“ I chose to teach the class because I didn't want to do the literary circle or the illustrated timeline. It helped me learn because I was able to zero-in on one particular battle in the Revolutionary war. I liked my project because I was able to do it on my own, explore on my own, and create on my own. I like working by myself. Choosing this didn't motivate me because I always do my work.”

“ I DID THE PROJECT WERE YOU TEACH THE CLASS. IT WAS FUN FINDING STUFF ON LIKE ONE THING. AND TO REALLY UNDERSTAND IT. AND I CHOSE IT BECAUSE I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE READING A BOOK AND OR LOOKING FOR SO MANY EVENTS FOR A TIMELINE....CHOOSING MOTIVATED ME I THINK. BECAUSE ITS YOUR SAY IN WHAT YOU WANT TO DO AND NOT SOMEONE ELSE'S.”

“ What I love about this class is the choices. They allow us to learn & be creative at the same time. I don't have any other classes that allow me to do this (learn this way).”

“ I LIKED THE BOOK IT WAS GOOD. I COMPLETED IT BECAUSE I WANTED TO. I LIKE HEARING THE INFORMATION. IT WAS GOOD. I HAD TO COMPLETE IT TO PASS. IT WAS VERY FUN. IT WAS DIFFERENT...IT WAS PRETTY FUN..TOOK A WHILE BUT WAS GOOD.”

Figure 24

Do You Like Cultures? Part Two

YES!

- Yes I enjoy cultures better now compared to my past cultures experiences. I love the fact that I can pass Cultures with hard work, concentration, and projects! This year has made Cultures somewhat fun (I can't believe I am saying that). But this made me look at Cultures differently because you can have fun with the past.
- Yes This Cultures was intriguing because there are many different choices and let us learn our way.
- Yes I think that I like it more now because we actually choose how we learn rather than the teacher force-feeding the information.
- Yes Do not opt for test, opt for projects. So far this has been the best social studies experience for me. Its not boring, there is variety this year and its more interesting....and I like the different things we get to do.
- Yes I do. I like it because we get a lot more choices this year rather than other years. I feel as if we have more freedom. I love learning about the past. There is a different thing to do everyday which makes it fun and makes me want to learn.
- Yes I enjoyed Cultures so far in the year. We were able to choose what we wanted to do for each chapter. For each chapter there was also different options to take, so it wasn't the same boring thing day in and out.

NO!

- No I stand by what I said before. I don't see the point about learning about dead people and how they helped us. Plus I can't pay attention to it it's so boring.
- No Cultures is not as fun as it was in middle school. Back then we made things using clay and stuff. This year it is more of taking tests and things but, it's ez.

The Jury Is Still Out!

- Yes/No I think I like it more that the beginning but still don't like it. I still think its boring, I want to learn about something present. Actually I'd rather not learn but I have to.
- Yes/No I still don't really understand somethings. The thing I do like are some projects we do and that we have choices.
- Yes/No I like Cultures because it is easy sometimes but sometimes I hate it because the tests are hard and I hate history.
- Yes/No No because it's still boring and yes because it's sometimes fun.

FINDINGS

In their final journal entry, I had students answer a series of questions in order for them to articulate what they thought about my findings. I asked them to comment on five questions that I created based on what I interpreted from my data (see Appendix G). My students went above and beyond my expectations. I believe they were honest and forthright with their answers. As will be seen in these findings, they created relationships, told me when they saw no relationships, and helped me to see my study through their eyes. This allowed me to compare and contrast what I saw with what they saw.

One of the goals for my study was for the students and me to go on a curricular journey together. I wanted my students to get a sense of ownership: ownership for their learning, for the classroom, and for the curriculum. I definitely feel we accomplished this. In comments throughout this document, students wrote and commented that class was enjoyable and fun and that coming to class was interesting, not boring. They said it was “our” classroom, not just Mrs. Sziy’s. They said the class had a say in what went on in the classroom. They also said choices give them opportunities to show they are responsible. In this final journal entry, they reiterated these same feelings. Ethan stated the relationship between choice and ownership well when he wrote for his journal entry, “I do enjoy coming to class and making decisions on what I want to learn...I think there is no better way to help someone learn than to let them have

an influence on their own learning.” Dave’s comment for the same journal entry was, “Having choices made me remember things better because you have to teach yourself so you have to pay more attention, if a teacher talks you kind of just tune them out.” Even students who did not necessarily do well academically in the class had positive comments about being a part of the classroom. Jackie, a student who struggles academically, commented in her final journal entry, “...being able to choose is fon cuz in any other class we are just told what to do and choosing made me think hey, maybe this isn’t so tough.”

Another part of my study was to introduce personal learning styles and multiple intelligences to my students. I used their preferred learning styles and intelligences to create the choices I offered. The famous colonial person project offered choices for the visual and tactile learner as well as the linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, and interpersonal intelligences when creating their poster. The French and Indian War unit offered choices for the linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences through book choices and literature circles. The unit on the steps to the revolution offered both assessment and instruction for all three learning styles. The unit on the American Revolution offered an informal contract that had choices in its product for the linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, and intrapersonal intelligences. The unit on the formation of a new nation offered assessment choices for all the intelligences except for the naturalist.

I wondered if students were using this knowledge to make their choices. As I stated in my story, although students were made aware of their learning styles and intelligences, I did not think it was a major influence on the choices they made. At least I do not think they were consciously aware of a relationship. Many of their comments throughout the study on how they chose activities, projects, and assessments revolved around what was easiest or would take the least amount of time to complete. I think if I would have pushed them to think about why certain choices were easier for them than others, they would have started to see a relationship, but I did not push them in that direction. Consequently their answers in the final journal entry reflected this lack of using multiple intelligence or learning style knowledge to make choices. Most of them commented that they did not take their learning styles or intelligences into consideration when choosing. They stated that they chose what they could do the best with or what was easiest. Those who said they did use their learning styles and intelligences to choose did not elaborate on how they did that other than that they chose what they could “do best”. The principal benefit of the learning style and intelligence inventories though was for me, the classroom teacher. By gathering this data in the beginning of the year, I could create better choices, projects, activities, and assessments to meet the diverse needs of my students. I used the information from the surveys to tailor the classroom to the students. Therefore there can be a relationship between this information and student choice.

I created the choices from their needs and because of this there were always choices where they could “do best”. I plan on having my students complete the surveys at the beginning of each year from now on.

As an offshoot of creating a variety of choices, projects, activities, and assessments to meet the needs of my students, the greater part of my students were engaged the majority of the time. I had very few classroom management issues this year. I did not fill out one referral for the office in the first half of the school year. This is a difference from the past couple of years. I made this realization after going through the observations and data I had gathered. I definitely feel there is a relationship between that and the variety of strategies and choices I offered as well as their ownership of the classroom. Students were engaged in the activities of the classroom and therefore had little opportunity for off-task behaviors. Student comments in their final journal reflected this. One comment was “Yes, if we didn’t have choices I would probably fall asleep or something. Class would be boring.” Another wrote, “Well without these choices we have a boring class. Being hands on with things makes it fun to learn. When your up and learning but still having fun it is just a good education and good experience.” We all know that when students are bored and not engaged, management issues arise. I appreciated these results because I spent less time managing my students and more time learning with them.

The ultimate question of this study revolved around to what extent there is a correlation between choice and motivation. I believe there is a definite correlation. Throughout this study my students tied their ability to choose activities, projects, and assessments to motivation to complete them. In the "How Are We Doing?" poem students talked about "let us choose things we like...I tend to try harder" and "letting us choose motivates us by doing things we like." They commented on being more comfortable with their choices because they picked them and knew they could do them. In their final journal entries many restated these thoughts again. Scott wrote, "When I am able to pick what I want to do, I do it and do it good." Tom wrote, "Having choices did influence me to complete activities because being able to pick what I wanted to do made it easier." In their journal entries, eighteen of the students said yes, choosing motivated them to complete activities in one way or another as reflected by the above comments. Ten students said choice did not always motivate them to complete projects. Eight of them listed not liking the choices as their reason. Other reasons were not taking advantage of opportunities to choose and because they would have done them regardless of choice. Allan articulated what I have been looking for the best. In his final journal entry he wrote,

I'm not easily motivated, but I found this class enjoyable and the various choices that were given did motivate me enough for me to complete projects, something I couldn't hate more than I do now.

I believe it was important for me to recognize that my choices did not always work for everyone all of the time. But I feel that as long as they helped students to belong, participate, and complete activities some of the time, I have made strides.

I really think that the primary benefit of this study has been connections. My students made connections to the classroom, the curriculum, their own learning, the past and the present, and their forms of motivation. I also made connections. I made connections to my students, connections to the curriculum, connections to educational theory, and connections to my teaching beliefs. I truly enjoyed this year and participating in this study with this group of students. I shared solidarity with my students that was on a different level than past years. We were truly on this journey together. My students were better able to connect the past with the present. These connections are exemplified in the “Connections” poem and the comments on their historical novel posters. They articulated an ownership of both the classroom and their own learning.

My students displayed a deeper understanding of the issues in 19th Century American Cultures. Within each activity or project they reflected their understanding of culture, religion, perspectives, and conflict. At times the learning was not what I had originally intended, but growth and understanding was always shown.

While researching and completing the colonial person project, I observed them gathering information about their person and then delving into it to create their posters. They showed their understanding of the diversity of colonial life and the development of the colonies in the assorted ways they represented their people. Their ideas for the poster's border really exemplified this. Just looking at the three examples I included, I can see their understanding of the importance of religion in the colonies, the role of women, and the diversity of economy and class. Diversity is an important concept for the studying of any time period in History, but especially important in understanding American History.

I emphasize perspectives in my classroom. It is important for students to understand that perspectives have a major impact on what is learned about history. During the French and Indian War unit, it was important for my students to understand that it was differing perspectives that resulted in the ongoing conflict in the colonies. They articulated those perspectives within their discussions of the literature and the connections they made to previous information and *Last of the Mohicans*. I found it very easy to build upon this understanding of perspectives throughout the year.

For the students who chose to do illustrated timeline in either the new nation or American Revolution units, I saw a greater understanding of cause and effect. As they researched and put together the timelines they explained how certain events led to other events. The students who taught the class a lesson did

the same thing. As a part of their lesson they had to explain how this event came to be and what happened as a result of this event. They articulated an understanding that most events in history do not stand alone. This was not my original goal for this activity. I wanted the students to be able to research and explain historical information along a continuum. I did want them to develop a greater understanding for how events are connected, but they went well beyond this.

The students who read *Johnny Tremain* or *My Brother Sam Is Dead* had a different but equally rewarding experience. These students made significant connections to the concepts of conflict and resolution and their affects on people. They reflected on their posters how conflicts beyond the control of everyday people resulted in their families being torn apart. Furthermore, they related those issues to the world today and the United States position in Iraq.

The learning that my students expressed as a result of these activities, projects, and methods was far beyond what I have seen in the past couple of years. I know that all my students will not become historians or history teachers, but as a result of this study they had a better understanding of major concepts for the studying of History. It also made it much easier for me to teach the rest of the curriculum because they were able to “see” the connections.

There were students who did not like this year and did not “buy” into the choices, but the majority of these students did not complete any work whether

choices were offered or not. Their “non-compliance” was not directly linked to choices; it may be linked to their disillusionment with education as a whole. The majority of the “non-compliant” students were struggling in all academic subjects not just mine. Todd articulated this type of student when he wrote, “No, [choice didn’t motivate me] because I couldn’t motivate myself to do anything.” Maybe his comment plants the seed for the next round of study. How do I help those who cannot seem to motivate themselves even with choices? These are the students Delpit (2002) says are “looking for permission to fail” (p. 110). I believe the strides we made this year will be beneficial to all students in the future.

My study does not provide any conclusive evidence that choice can be linked to achievement. The majority of the choice activities were offered in the second marking period. The famous colonial person project and the literature circles were the only ones offered in the first marking period. Of the thirty students participating in my study twenty-six passed the first marking period and twenty-three passed the second marking period. The minimum grade to pass at my high school is a 70. All of the students who failed might have passed with a D at another high school. For the thirty students, 15 of them had grades that stayed the same or improved from the first to the second marking period and 15 of them had grades that declined. All the students except one, who failed either marking period, were in my inclusion class or an identified special education student. I do not believe that choice was the only factor when looking at achievement though.

I believe that my study shows students feel a sense of ownership when allowed choices within the curriculum. These choices can be in the form of instruction, assessment, projects/products, or just general classroom decision-making. The ability to make choices can motivate students to complete assignments and projects. The majority of my students commented at least once that choosing the activity or project motivated them to complete it because it was their choice. I think that choice within the classroom takes the teacher off the center stage as the purveyor of knowledge and transports him or her to the wings as the co-facilitator of knowledge. My students and I created a classroom environment where they felt they had a voice in what they learned and how they learned it within the prescribed curriculum. As a reflection of this voice, they came to class ready to participate and make choices.

I plan to implement choice as I have in this study next year. I will build on this experience by fine-tuning choice opportunities and adding additional choices. I want to create more choice opportunities where my students are “saturated” in the three sensory learning styles like they were during the steps to the American Revolution unit. I will re-write some of my lesson plans each summer to give opportunities for all learners to get information. I want to add more activities and projects for the harder intelligences to meet. These would include more opportunities for the musical, naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. These intelligences are harder to target with activities, especially

because some of them are my weakest intelligences. I would like to keep track of the times I allow students to choose the course we take within the curriculum on a daily basis. This would include when I ask them to choose between two activities on a given day, ask them which movie they would like to watch on a specific topic, ask them if they would prefer lecture, discussion, or activity for a given lesson. I allow them these choices on a regular basis, but do not keep track of them. I would like to incorporate more assessments where students can use text and/or pictures to answer and explain. I would also like to create opportunities for students to choose a written or oral version of an assessment. I want to add additional opportunities to use historical fiction because I believe it is the place where my students made the most connections to the past as well as the present. I plan to spend more time with my students discussing and using the learning style and multiple intelligence information the surveys provide. The first choice activity will force them to choose based on a preferred learning style or strong multiple intelligence and then write about it. The second choice activity will have them make a choice from their weakest learning style or intelligence to “stretch” their learning experiences. I will continue to chart their strengths and use that data to plan the choices I offer to each class.

THE NEXT ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

Through my research this year, I have learned many things about my teaching, my students and myself. I have learned that I can create a classroom where my students and I share in the decisions and the path the curriculum takes. I have learned that my students enjoy opportunities of being in charge of their own educational process, but that there still needs to be direction and formatting done by me. I have learned the benefits of collecting data to gain insights into my students learning styles and multiple intelligences. I have learned the benefits of sharing that same data with my students so they can use it to steer their curricular path. I have also learned that there are many more areas to be studied and researched.

I became more comfortable with the research process and its influence on my students and me. I know I have weaknesses as a researcher and as a teacher and need to improve or shore up those weaknesses. Organization and time management are my two biggest areas for improvement. These areas influence the perception my students have of me and of my role in the classroom. I do think though that through this study and my experiences as teacher, student, and teacher and student at the same time has helped me to be empathetic to the juggling that my students do as well.

My action research continues in my classroom. I am creating and offering new choices in each unit we study. Students are continually commenting and

writing about these choices as well as suggesting other choices. I continue to try new methods and strategies as well as re-introducing the ones we have already tried. This past week, I ordered historical novels to use in our study of The Civil War. The students had choice enrichment activities in our unit on the exploration of the Louisiana Purchase. I guess the research cycle never truly ends it just continues on different planes and levels.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Principal's Consent Form

September 23, 2004

Dear Sir or Madam:

I give my permission for Alexis Sziy to conduct a systematic study of her own teaching practices in her classroom from September 7, 2004 through December 21, 2004. The title of the research will be "What Impact does Student Choice have on Motivation and Ownership of Learning in a Ninth Grade Social Studies Classroom?" Students will benefit from participating in this study because they will be given a voice in their own learning.

As part of the regular 19th Century American Cultures curriculum, all students will be asked to complete assignments, activities, and projects. They will also be expected to journal at least once a week reflecting on instruction, content, enrichment, and/or assessment. They will be asked to complete questionnaires and participate in large group, small group, and one-on-one interviews. In each of four chapters, students will be allowed to choose activities that relate to the curriculum. They will then discuss both verbally and in writing how that choice affected their ownership of learning and motivation to complete the activity. Throughout the study students will be given a voice in the question, the study, and their involvement in the process of research.

Mrs. Sziy will only use the data created by the students who are participating in the study in her final research report. The data collected will be held in strictest confidence. Student names will be replaced with pseudonyms or codes in all research materials. No student identities will be revealed. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet in Mrs. Sziy's home. At the conclusion of the research, all data will be destroyed.

The student or parent/guardian may request withdrawal from the study at any time. This request can be made either verbally or in writing. However, all students are expected to participate in all regular class activities regardless of participation in the study. In no way will participation, non-participation, or withdrawal from the study have any influence on student grades. Your child's participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or consequence.

Any questions about this research, at any time during the study, may be directed toward Mrs. Sziy, Dr. Joseph Shosh of Moravian College's Education Department, or me.

Sincerely,

Principal
Anytown High School

Appendix B: HSIRB Approval Letter



MORAVIAN COLLEGE

September 21, 2004

Alexis Sziy
122 Front Street
Catasauqua, PA 18032
sziya@cattysd.org

Dear Alexis Sziy,

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board approved your proposal: *Student choice, motivation, and ownership in a ninth grade social studies classroom*. Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair.

Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

This letter will be e-mailed and snail-mailed to you. Best of luck with your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "A. Sziy" or similar, written over a circular stamp or mark.

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

September 23, 2004

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am completing a Master's in Education program at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to learn about the most effective teaching methods and relate them to my own teaching. One of the requirements of this program is that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. This semester I am focusing my research on implementing student choice and the impact choice has on motivation and learning. The title of my research is "The Impact of Student Choice on Motivation and Ownership of Learning in a Ninth Grade Social Studies Classroom." My students will benefit from participation in this study because of the opportunities it will allow for them to guide the curriculum, identify and discuss what motivates them, and express their views and ideas both verbally and in written form. Through this study they will be given a voice in their own learning.

As part of our regular 19th Century American Cultures curriculum, all students, whether participating in the study or not, will be asked to complete assignments, activities, and projects. They will also be expected to journal at least once a week reflecting on instruction, content, enrichment, and/or assessment. They will be asked to complete questionnaires and participate in large group, small group, and one-on-one interviews. In each of four chapters, students will be allowed to choose activities that relate to the curriculum. We will then discuss both verbally and in writing how that choice affected their motivation to complete the activity. We will also discuss if the opportunity to choose created ownership for their own learning. Throughout the study students will be given a voice in the question, the study, and their involvement in the process of research.

I will only use the data created by the students who are participating in my study in my final research report. The data I collect will be held in strictest confidence. Student names will be replaced with pseudonyms or codes in all research materials. No student identities will be revealed. I will store my data in a locked cabinet in my home. At the conclusion of my research all data will be destroyed.

The student or parent/guardian may request withdrawal from the study at any time. This request can be made either verbally or in writing. However, all students are expected to participate in all regular class activities, as stated above,

regardless of participation in the study. In no way will participation, non-participation, or withdrawal from the study have any influence on student grades. Your child's participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or consequence.

I welcome any questions or concerns about this research study at any time. Please feel free to contact me, Alexis Sziy, at 610-264-0506 Ext.2117, sziva@xxxxxx.org, or my advisor, Dr. Joseph Shosh, Education Department, Moravian College, 610-861-1482, jshosh@moravian.edu.

Sincerely,

Alexis Sziy
19th Century American Cultures Teacher

Appendix D: Previous Social Studies Experience Questionnaire

*Previous Social Studies Experience
Questionnaire*

1. Do you like Social Studies? Circle one: Yes/No Why?

2. What was your favorite Social Studies activity or project and why?

3. What did you learn from the activity/project in #3?

4. Did you get to choose activities, projects, and assessments in Social Studies last year?

5. Did you complete your assignments, activities, and projects last year?
If yes, why? If no, why not?

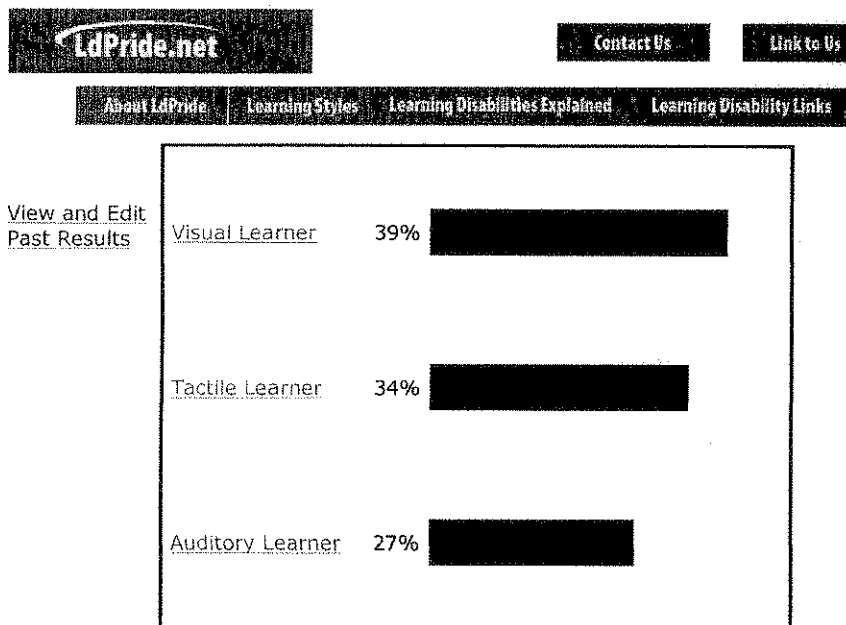
6. Do you have a preferred learning style (like to “hear” info, like to “see” info, like to “do” info)? Which one?

7. Do you know what multiple intelligences are? Do you identify more and/or learn better with music, words, nature, drama, sports/activities, or people?

8. What was your final grade in Social Studies last year?

Appendix E: Learning Style Inventory and Multiple Intelligence Wheel

Learning Style Assessment Results



Have a Comment or Feedback?

Give us your kudos, comments, problems? Please give us your feed

post comments

Visual Learners:

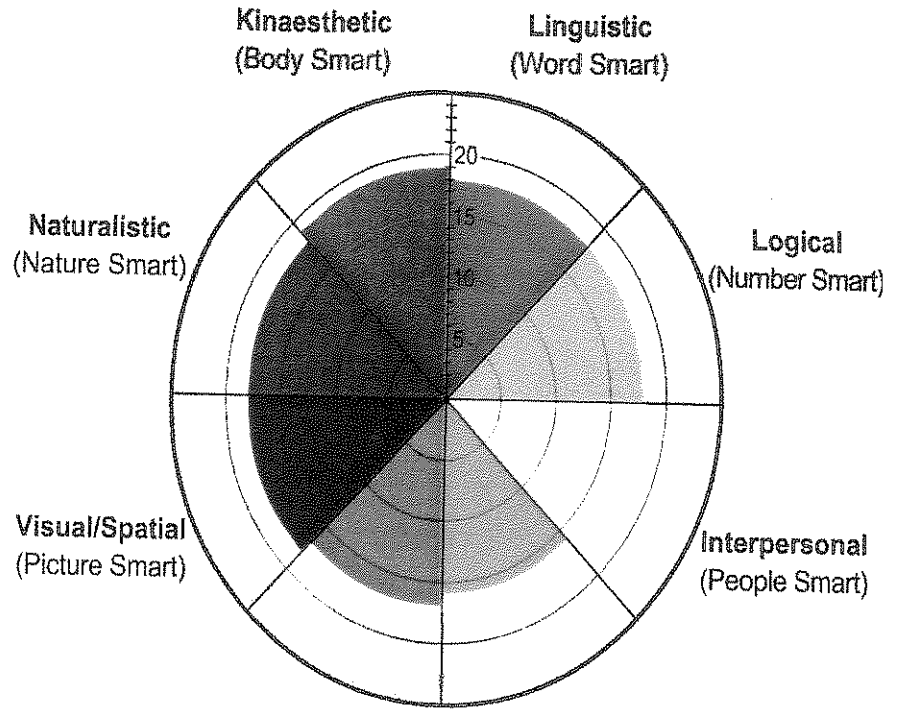
- use visual materials such as pictures, charts, maps, graphs, etc.
- have a clear view of your teachers when they are speaking so you can their body language and facial expression
- use colour to highlight important points in text
- take notes or ask your teacher to provide handouts
- illustrate your ideas as a picture or brainstorming bubble before writing down
- write a story and illustrate it
- use multi-media (e.g. computers, videos, and filmstrips)
- study in a quiet place away from verbal disturbances
- read illustrated books
- visualize information as a picture to aid memorization

Auditory Learners:

- participate in class discussions/debates
- make speeches and presentations
- use a tape recorder during lectures instead of taking notes
- read text out aloud
- create musical jingles to aid memorization
- create mnemonics to aid memorization
- discuss your ideas verbally
- dictate to someone while they write down your thoughts
- use verbal analogies, and story telling to demonstrate your point

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners

- take frequent study breaks
- move around to learn new things (e.g. read while on an exercise bike, mold a piece of clay to learn a new concept)
- work at a standing position
- chew gum while studying
- use bright colors to highlight reading material
- dress up your work space with posters
- if you wish, listen to music while you study
- skim through reading material to get a rough idea what it is about before settling down to read it in detail.



Code
fs1nw4dv2045k

Musical
(Music Smart)

Intrapersonal
(Myself Smart)

Appendix F: Researcher's Log for Field Notes

Field Log Observation Notes

MOD:

DATE:

Observations

Teacher Comments

Appendix G: Journal Prompts

Colonial Person Project Prompt: I liked/disliked being able to choose how to create our colonial person poster project.

American Revolution Prompts: What product did you choose? Are you satisfied with the product you created? Did creating your product help you pass the unit test?

Forming a New Nation Choice Prompt: What assessment did you choose? Why? Did your choice have a positive impact on your grade?

Homework Journal Prompt: What other choice opportunities would you like this year?

Final Journal Entry Prompts:

Did you take into consideration your learning styles and multiple intelligences when you made your choices?

Did having a choice motivate you to complete activities?

Did the projects you chose for the Revolutionary War (read novel, illustrated timeline, or teach the class) help you pass the take-home test for that unit?

Did being able to choose activities and ways to learn things affect your motivation to learn? **Because I could choose I liked coming to class and learning**

Did the choices (novels, projects, class activities) increase your learning? Do you think you gained knowledge of more of the things we have learned this year because you had choices and a variety of activities? Do you think you would have “learned” less if the class were taught without choices?

Appendix H: Interview Questions

Group Interview Questions

****Not limited to these – to be expanded upon by students****

Beginning of Study

*Describe times you have been given choices about how to learn a given topic.

Did you like being given a choice? Why/Why not?

*What things motivate you to complete assignments and projects and get good grades?

*If you could choose the types of activities you had to do, what types of activities would you choose?

Middle of Study

*Why do you think I am giving you choices?

*What does choice equate to? What word can we substitute for choice?

*What does choice create in our classroom? The curriculum?

*Sometimes you choose not to do an activity or project. Why don't you follow through on your choices?

*Does choice give you a sense of ownership in this classroom?

Appendix I: Questionnaire: Choice Activities

Post Choice Activity Questionnaire

1. What type of activity did you choose? Circle one and explain why you chose that activity.

Enrichment Activity

Assessment

Instructional Method/Technique

Project(s)

Choice Book Unit (Literature Circle)

2. Did you complete the activity? Circle one: Yes/No

If yes, Did having a choice in the activity motivate you to complete it?

If no, Why didn't you complete it? What might have motivated you to complete it?

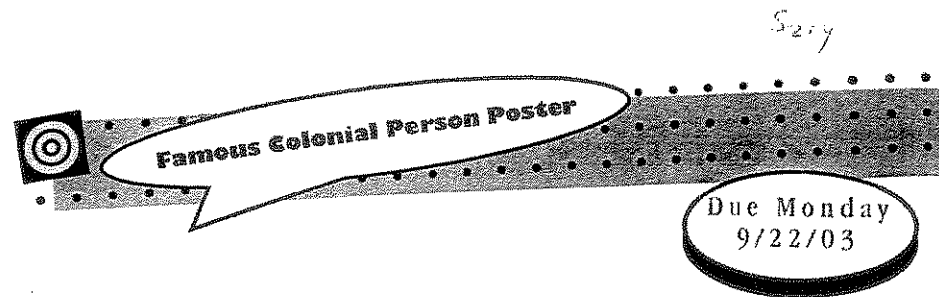
3. Do you have any suggestions for other choice activities for this chapter?

Appendix J: Student Log: Choice Activities

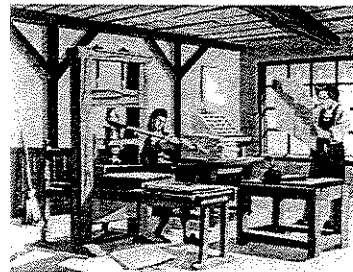
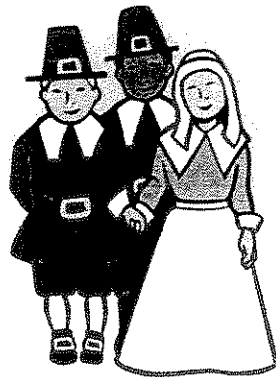
Student Log: Choice Activities

<u>Unit</u>	Choice Activity and Type	<u>Completed:</u> Yes or No	Comments: Likes/Dislikes Why Completed? Why not completed? What did you learn?
<u>EXAMPLE:</u> French and Indian War	<u>Type:</u> Enrichment <u>Activity:</u> Read Book: The Witch of Blackberry Pond	Yes	I liked the book. It was easy to read and had good characters. I learned that Puritan New England was not a good place to live if you were not a Puritan. The Puritans were hypocrites.

Appendix K: Project Criteria: Colonial Person Project



- Name of Your Person
- Birth and Death Dates
- A Picture of the Person
- Basic Biographical Information (parents, childhood, education, occupation, etc.)
- Paragraph explaining why this person is important to the Colonial Time Period (What did they do & Why)
- Minimum of THREE other images that relate to the person and their involvement in the Colonial Period
- A Decorative Border: Bonus Points for one that relates to your person!



WORTH: 100 POINTS!
PUT in the EFFORT!
EARN the GRADE!

Appendix L: Group Project Scoring Grid

Group Project Scoring Grid

*Write out what each member contributed to the project – use detail.

*Give each member, including you, a grade out of 100 points for his or her contributions to the project.

Group Members			
Contributions			
Grade	/100	/100	/100

Appendix M: Choice Quiz: Steps to Revolution

Steps To The Revolution (13-16) Quiz

DIRECTIONS: For each step to the revolution, choose one of the following options:

- a. Draw pictures with captions that represent the events in the step.
- b. In your own words (3-4 sentences) explain the step.

Step 13: Boston Massacre (March 5, 1770)

Step 14: Spreading the Word

Step 15: Crisis Over Tea

Step 16: The Boston Tea Party (December 16, 1773)

Appendix N: Project Criteria: Novel Poster Project

Historical Novel Project

Step Number 1: Choose a Novel – *Johnny Tremain* or *My Brother Sam is Dead*.

Step Number 2: Read the Novel!

Step Number 3: Create a Poster

Include: Summary of the Plot
List of the Characters
Relation to This Unit
Relation to World Today
2-4 Graphics or Illustrations

Step Number 4: Turn Your Product IN ON TIME!

Appendix O: Project Criteria: Illustrated Timeline Project

Illustrated Timeline

All the following events and people need to be placed chronologically on your timeline. Each item should be explained (5 W's) and be accompanied by an illustration. Illustrations can be hand drawn, clip art, Internet image, or photocopies.

Patriots
Loyalists
Battle of Long Island
Nathan Hale
The Crisis by Thomas Paine
Thomas Paine
Battle of Trenton
Battle of Princeton
General John Burgoyne
Capture of Philadelphia
Plan to take Albany
Battle of Saratoga
Green Mountain Boys
Horatio Gates
Marquis de Lafayette
Valley Forge
Friedrich Von Steuben
Battle of Vincennes
Henry Hamilton
George Rogers Clark
John Paul Jones
Change of Strategy for British (1778)
Charles Cornwallis
Battle of Camden

Battle of Kings Mountain
Nathanael Greene
Battle of Cowpens
Battle of Guilford Courthouse
Siege of Yorktown
Battle of Yorktown
General Jean Baptiste de Rochambeau
Admiral Francois de Grasse
Treaty of Paris

Appendix P: Project Criteria: Teach The Class Project

TEACH THE CLASS

You will be assigned a person, battle, or series of events.
You will design a lesson and teach the class your assigned topic.

You should include:
The 5 W's
Vocabulary
Graphics/Illustrations

BE CREATIVE

USE GOOD SPEAKING SKILLS

CPT. 6 “ Student Teaching”

Event(s) 5W's	/40
Graphics	/20
Vocabulary	/10
Speaking Skills	/10
eye contact	
voice	
pace	
Creativity	/20
	<hr/>
	/100

Appendix Q: Test: American Revolution Take-Home Test

Chapter 6 Assessment

I. Create chart by writing the facts in the appropriate box. (2 points each)

	Patriots	British
Advantages		
People		
Victories		

The Crisis	Long Island	Valley Forge	Loyalists
Mercenaries	Saratoga	Washington	Strong Navy
G. Rogers Clark	Yorktown	John Burgoyne	Lafayette
Blockade	Far from Home	Wm. Howe	Trenton
Short of Supplies	Horatio Gates	King's Mountain	Cowpens
Home Field	Ethan Allen	Francis Marion	

Guerilla Warfare	Vincennes	Admiral DeGrasse	Nathan Hale
Nathaniel Greene	Thomas Paine	Gen. Rochambeau	Wealth
Cornwallis	No Money	Wealth	Lafayette
Von Steuben	French Allies	J.P.Jones	Privateers
Volunteer Militia			

II. Chronological Order: Put these events in order from 1-10 (1 point each)

1=first event 10=last event

_____ Saratoga	_____ Treaty of Paris
_____ Trenton	_____ Valley Forge
_____ Yorktown	_____ Cowpens
_____ Camden	_____ Vincennes
_____ Princeton	_____ Long Island

III. Short Answer: **Answer only 2** (10 points each) ***Write everything you know***

A. Describe the two different military strategies tried by the British.

Appendix R: Project List: Forming a New Nation

Chapter 7 Projects

***** You must do 4 projects out of the 15. Due January 10, 2005*****

1. Create a political cartoon that illustrates one of the problems with the Articles of Confederation. At least three cells.
2. Create a chart outlining the Virginia Plan, the New Jersey Plan, and the Great Compromise.
3. Create a crossword puzzle or word find using 20 of the terms and/or people highlighted in chapter 7.
4. Create a poster explaining the three branches of the government use pictures to illustrate their duties.
5. Create a poster or power point explaining the system of checks and balances set up in the Constitution for the government.
6. Write lyrics to a song that would be associated with one of the topics, events, or people in chapter 7. Minimum of 3 verses and a chorus.
7. Create a CD cover that depicts one of the topics, events, or people in chapter 7. Should be on standard, unlined white paper and should include the name of the group and the songs featured on the CD, and a graphic.
8. Create a memory box that contains symbolic representations of 8 to 10 events, people, or issues in Chapter 7. Decorate the box appropriately.
9. Using newspapers and magazines create a poster with 9 examples of the workings of the three branches of the federal government today. Three examples for each branch. Explain your examples.
10. Create a chart showing the order of the states in ratifying the Constitution. Include the state, date ratified, process used to ratify, and a picture to illustrate.
11. Write a biography on a person in Chapter 7. Minimum of 350 words. Include birth, childhood, education, and relevance to this chapter and time period.
12. Construct a map showing the western land claims of the original 13 states. Construct a second map showing what states compose that territory today.
13. Construct an illustrated timeline of events that happened in the United States between 1770 and 1790. Minimum of 15 events and all must be illustrated.
14. Write a report on the history of the Liberty Bell from its' creation to present day. Minimum 350 words.
15. Write a poem about one of the events in Chapter 7. The poem should have a minimum of three stanzas.

***** MUST DO FOUR OR YOU WILL RECEIVE NO CREDIT.
MUST TURN IN PROJECTS ON DUE DATE OR
AUTOMATICALLY TAKE THE TEST.*****

*****EITHER CHOICE CAN DO ONE EXTRA PROJECT
FOR BONUS POINTS*****

Appendix S: Targeted Intelligences Chart: Chapter 7 Projects

Project #	Product Description	Targeted Intelligences
1	Create a Political Cartoon	Visual/Spatial, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Verbal/Linguistic, Intrapersonal
2	Create a chart	Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Verbal/Linguistic, and Intrapersonal
3	Create a Crossword Puzzle or Word Find	Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal
4	Create a poster w/ text, pictures, and illustrations	Visual/Spatial, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal
5	Create a poster or PowerPoint	Visual/Spatial, Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal
6	Write Lyrics to a song	Musical, Verbal/Linguistic, Intrapersonal
7	Create a CD cover and selected song titles	Musical, Visual/Spatial, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal

8	Create a Memory Box with symbolic representations	Visual/Spatial, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal
9	Create a Poster with Newspapers and Magazines	Bodily/Kinesthetic, Visual/Spatial, Verbal/Linguistic, Intrapersonal
10	Create a Chart	Visual/ Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal
11	Write a Biography	Verbal/Linguistic and Intrapersonal
12	Construct Maps comparing and contrasting the U. S.	Logical/Mathematical, Visual/Spatial, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal
13	Construct an Illustrated Timeline	Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal
14	Write a report	Verbal/Linguistic and Intrapersonal
15	Write a Poem	Verbal/Linguistic, Musical, Intrapersonal

****All students had class workdays to work with each other to complete individual projects. They could use each other for ideas, problem solving, and resources. This met the Interpersonal intelligence needs.****