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Assessing Competing Demands and Charting a Course: A Phenomenological Study of Advanced Placement U.S. History Teachers' Decision Making and Course Planning

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Assessing Competing Demands and Charting a Course: A Phenomenological Study of
Advanced Placement U.S. History Teachers' Decision Making and Course Planning

by

Kerry D. Poole

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Curriculum and Instruction
with an emphasis in
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ABSTRACT

Florida has experienced some of the greatest growth of Advanced Placement (AP) programs in recent years and student scores on the AP exams have evolved into a highly significant metric in evaluating student proficiency and teacher and school effectiveness. Despite this growth, it is not well known how AP teachers make decisions about the content they teach, what learning activities they select, how much the AP exam influences their decision making, how they modify learning opportunities for diverse learners, and how they prepare their students for the College Board AP exam. This interpretive, phenomenological study examines the lived experiences of four AP U.S. History teachers whose students consistently achieve pass rates above the Florida average. The study examines how these teachers interpret competing environmental factors, construct meaning, and develop course plans and classroom environments for their students that lead to successful outcomes.

Four successful AP U.S. History teachers were selected from a large school district in central Florida and invited to participate in the study. Participants were purposefully selected to create a sample where all participants possessed the “intensity” characteristic of successful student performance but where variability in the high school settings and individual teacher demographics were maximized. Data collection consisted of a pre-interview survey, a classroom observation, and three one-hour semi-structured interviews for each participant. The four participants’ data were used to construct interpretive phenomenological narratives to share the lived experiences of these successful AP teachers. Additionally, analysis of participant data

yielded participant and inter-participant themes. Findings indicate that the successful teachers in this study were highly organized, developed supportive and caring classrooms, and designed their courses, in large part, based on their own personal beliefs about what a college experience should be like. While all teachers in this study reported considerable academic diversity in their individual classrooms, the greatest effects of academic diversity were seen when comparing teachers in different academically performing schools where teachers adapted their pacing, content, and methods to the academic skills of their students. The significant impact of the AP exam on all dimensions of teacher course planning and decision making was clearly evident throughout this study. Implications of these findings are that educators and administrators should select AP teachers carefully, recognize that the academic characteristics of students influence these classrooms, and be cognizant that they surrender a significant degree of control over content and skills taught in these types of classes. Furthermore, given the nature and size of the current AP program, policymakers and the College Board should examine whether they provide sufficient curricular-instructional guidance to teachers, students, and other stakeholders.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Teachers today are working in a standards-based, accountability environment where policymakers, administrators, and the public demand increased learning from students and teachers (Grant et al., 2002; Paek, Braun, Ponte, Trapani, & Powers, 2010). Quantitative data are increasingly becoming the preferred means of assessing learning and making inferences about what is going on in our nation's classrooms (Madaus & Russell, 2010). Quantitative data can be used in a variety of ways in education from describing the characteristics of students in a classroom to inferring causation about learning. When meaningful consequences are attached to quantitative data results, they become high-stakes events for those involved (Madaus, 1988). High-stakes testing has both intended and unintended consequences (Madaus & Russell, 2010).

Policymakers intend to influence classrooms with high-stakes testing as administrators and teachers are driven to organize curricula in ways that will increase student performance on the assessment. Additionally, there is the expectation that administrators', teachers', and students' goals will be aligned toward increasing academic performance as measured by the standardized assessment (Grant et al., 2002). However, possible unintended consequences of these two objectives are that the curriculum can become overly aligned with expectations of items on the test (narrowing of the curriculum) and the students and teachers can become excessively motivated to maximize test performance and so test preparation and test performance

become major learning objectives in and of themselves (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003; Madaus, 1991).

This research examines the experiences of teachers who have considerable autonomy in making curricular-instructional decisions yet are evaluated predominantly on their students' performance on a high-stakes end-of-course exam: Advanced Placement (AP) teachers. The AP program has been in use since the 1950s but its use has grown dramatically in the last 20 years, expanding at a rate of roughly 10% per year (College Board, 2012a). Florida's recent expansion of AP exceeds the national average, and the growth of AP history programs are some of the fastest growing AP programs of all (College Board, 2012a). While data are collected on annual student performance on the AP exams each year, there has been little research on how the growth of AP programs affects teacher curricular-instructional planning and decision making in these high-stakes environments (Paek et al., 2010).

Student pass rates on the AP exam are of great significance as they can have a variety of high-stakes implications for students, teachers, and administrators. AP course pass rates can be used in a variety of ways in Florida, including being used to grant students college credit, as a factor in the college admissions process, for teacher evaluation and merit pay processes, establishing and maintaining teacher reputations, and as a factor in calculating high schools' annual grades under the Florida A+ Program (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2012). AP teachers consistently report that the AP exam is a significant factor when making curricular-instructional decisions (Hammond, 2009; Lurie, 2000; Paek et al., 2010). Given the high stakes associated with AP pass rates, one would expect that most teachers would like to improve their rates and that students, parents, and administrators have a stake in increasing these pass rates as

well. Because student performance on the AP exam often serves as public validation of the AP classroom learning experience (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Lichten, 2000; Lurie, 2000) and because these performance rates can have high stakes associated with them for teachers, teacher AP pass rates have become a critical metric by which AP teachers' effectiveness are assessed as successful or not. Given that high student AP exam pass rates have become a significant objective for teachers, schools, and administrators, this study examines the curricular-instructional decisions and experiences of AP U.S. History teachers with high pass rates. This study seeks to inform how AP U.S. History teachers, who are highly effective in achieving high student pass rates on AP exams, make curricular-instructional planning decisions in light of competing curriculum and instructional goals, increased diversity of student needs, a single high-stakes end-of-course exam, and the expectation of a college-level classroom experience.

Teacher decision making and planning are complicated processes that are affected by structural elements such as policy and organizational factors but also by the personal characteristics of individual teachers (Grant et al., 2002). While the degree of teacher autonomy may ebb and flow depending on policy and organizational factors, teachers remain the “gatekeepers” (Thornton, 1991) because they interpret the external factors and bring to bear their personal interests when making curricular-instructional decisions for classrooms. One approach to earnestly study this complex phenomenon is to examine the lived experience of the classroom decision makers, their concerns, and how and why they make the decisions they do. For this study, the researcher selected a qualitative analysis in the tradition of interpretive phenomenological inquiry to capture the lived experience of highly successful AP teachers, their challenges, and how and why they make decisions in the current AP environment. Narratives for the four participants in the study were produced to share the individual and collective

experiences of AP U.S. History teachers and to further understanding of the curricular-instructional challenges, decision making, and the classroom learning experiences they create for their students.

Statement of Problem

The AP program is growing at a very fast pace nationwide and Florida has experienced more growth in AP than any other state over the last decade (College Board, 2012a). AP course pass rates can be used in a variety of ways in Florida: students can earn college credit, they can be a factor in teacher evaluations and merit pay, they can help establish and maintain teacher reputation, and are a factor in calculating school grades under the Florida A+ Program (FLDOE, 2012). There is research that suggests that high-stakes testing can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum and a reduction in the types of instructional methods and inquiry that occurs in classrooms subjected to these tests (Madaus & Russell, 2010; Tai, 2008; Vinson et al., 2001). AP classes are high-stakes testing environments for students, teachers, and administrators –given the pressure to do well on the AP test, teachers may attempt to target the course content and select instructional methods in ways they believe would best support improved performance on the exam (Hammond, 2009; Lurie, 2000; Madaus, 1991). When teachers take these kinds of actions, a narrowing of the curriculum may occur and selected instructional methods may encourage more superficial learning rather than the deep conceptual understanding intended for a college-level course (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005; Von Blum, 2008). Furthermore, the rapid growth of Florida’s AP program has meant increased academic diversity of students in these classes, and subsequently, an increase in student needs, abilities, and interests. If teachers are

overly focused on pass rates, it is possible that some students may not receive the academic attention or support that they need (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Klopfenstein, 2003).

There are many different factors—personal, organizational, and policy—that impact teacher decision making, thinking, and planning for their AP courses (Grant et al., 2002). While there are many different ways to evaluate whether a learning experience is successful or not, pass rates on the end-of-course AP exams are a widely endorsed metric (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Lichten, 2000; Lurie, 2000). Teachers have to address a variety of competing demands when planning their AP courses and preparing their students for their AP exams. The expanding AP program, and the way it is utilized, has led to increased numbers of students taking AP courses, increased student diversity relative to needs and interests, increased numbers of teachers (some of them inexperienced) teaching AP, and increased stakes associated with student performance on the AP exams (Sadler, 2010). There are many competing demands in the AP classroom: content breadth versus depth, teacher-led versus discovery instructional strategies, a one-size-fits-all approach versus differentiated learning, as well as a constant demand to attend to exam preparation (Paek et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2011). It is not well known how AP teachers with highly successful pass rates make decisions about the content they teach (and what not to teach), what learning activities they select (and what they omit), how much the AP exam influences their decision making, how they provide learning opportunities for diverse learners, and how they prepare their students for the exam (Paek et al., 2010), particularly in light of the significant expansion of AP programs (Lichten, 2010).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to further understand how teachers with highly successful AP exam pass rates address the competing demands placed upon them and make curricular-instructional decisions in light of increased diversity, high-stakes testing, and the expectation of a college-level experience. There are many learning objectives in an AP classroom but the pass rates on the exam are frequently the *de facto* standard for validating AP learning (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Lichten, 2000; Lurie, 2000). Research suggests that in a high-stakes test environment teachers can be driven to focus instruction toward content on the exam and select instructional methods that support exam performance, thus narrowing the curriculum (Madaus & Russell, 2010; Tai, 2008; Vinson et al., 2001). Research that informs and furthers understanding about how AP teachers with high exam pass rates make curricular-instructional decisions in light of increasing diversity and high-stakes testing could be theoretically informative for teacher education programs and beneficial to practicing AP teachers and administrators in understanding how these celebrated teachers achieve high AP exam pass rates.

Significance/Rationale

AP is marketed as a rigorous, college-level program that can expand equity in our education systems (College Board, 2012a). AP programs have grown greatly in the last two decades. Given the rapid expansion of AP in our education systems, there is some concern that AP courses and scores are being utilized in ways that go beyond their original purpose (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2010) and this could eventually lead to a reduction in the overall quality of these programs (Sadler, 2010). Many believe that our AP classrooms should be characterized by deep conceptual learning (Parker et al., 2011) where students learn content and

skills that enhance their likelihood of success in college (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005). Furthering our understanding of the competing demands placed upon AP teachers, how teachers make content and instructional planning decisions, how teachers address increased academic diversity in their classrooms, and how teachers maximize student performance on the exams, will promote conceptual understanding of the challenges teachers face and the decisions they make in the present AP environment. Furthermore, these data could increase the practical understanding of what curricular decisions, instructional strategies, and student academic diversity accommodations are effective in facilitating student performance on the AP exam. At the conceptual level, understanding how teachers view AP course competing demands and make decisions in a challenging AP environment could aid in development of teacher education programs while at the practical level, teachers, administrators, and other educational authorities might better understand how successful AP teachers address curricular-instructional challenges, develop their courses of instruction, and achieve high AP exam pass rates.

Qualitative Research Questions

1. What personal beliefs and structural factors impact teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions in AP classes?
2. How does increased student academic diversity in AP classes affect teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions?
3. How does the end-of-course AP exam affect teacher curricular-instructional planning decisions?

4. How do teachers construct a college-level experience for their students given the competing demands of teaching AP courses?

Theoretical Framework

Interactional interpretation of decision making

This study is intended to further understanding of teacher planning and decision making by examining the curricular-instructional decisions of AP teachers whose students have high exam pass rates. As Grant (1996) and Thornton (1991) have noted, teacher decision making is a critical element of the education process and it has many external/structural and internal/personal influences. Given the complex nature of the decision making process, one must not only account for the various external structures impinging on teachers but one must also account for the personal characteristics of the decision makers as their interpretation of these structures translates into the types of decisions they make (Grant, 1996). Grant's study (1996) recommended that future studies be as holistic as possible in their analysis by merging a structuralist perspective with an interpretivist one to arrive at an interactional view. An interactional view of the decision making process was employed in this study; this view considers the organizational and policy structures influencing the decision makers as well as the personal characteristics affecting the decision-makers' interpretation of these structures.

Interpretive phenomenology

Interpretive phenomenology is a framework for conducting qualitative research that focuses on the lived human experience and how we create meaning from our experiences to

make sense of the world around us (Benner, 2008). Interpretive phenomenological studies aim to describe and interpret participants' lived experiences and how participants interpret their experiences to develop a worldview (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Phenomenology can be described as the reflective study of the pre-reflective or lived experience (Adams & Van Manen, 2008). While Martin Heidegger, one of the original architects of phenomenology as a philosophy, asserted that any description of human experience is an interpretation, phenomenological inquiry becomes interpretive (or hermeneutical) when "its method is taken to be interpretive rather than purely descriptive" (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 615). While describing and sharing participants' lived experiences was an objective of this study, description of participants' interpretation (in the interpretive phenomenological tradition) of their environment and decision making experiences was a further objective.

At the core of phenomenological inquiry is the assumption that lived experiences are accessible by other persons who share a common humanity, language, and have access to the culture (Benner, 2008). The researcher in this study is a practicing AP teacher who has been teaching in the same school district as the participants for eight years, has taught five different social studies AP courses, and is currently teaching AP U.S. and AP World History courses. Qualitative studies in general, and phenomenological studies in particular, lead to "more experientially sensitive epistemologies and ontologies of practice" (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 615). By examining the lived experience of the decision maker, it is possible to "see something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday life experience and may transform our practices (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 615). Examination of the lived experiences of the participants in this study will inform readers about how structural factors affect the decision making process, how personal factors affect interpretation of those structures,

and how and why participants make the curricular-instructional decisions they make in the present AP environment.

Standards, accountability, and neoliberalism

The context of events should be considered when attempting to understand any phenomena. The analysis of teacher decision making in this study occurs in the context of competing curricular-instructional demands in a high-stakes testing environment. Establishing standards and ensuring accountability using metrics is a major component of our current standards-based education reform movement (Hursh, 2007). While the AP program was not necessarily established with these purposes in mind, it can be used as such and provides an excellent context for examining how AP teachers make curricular-instructional decisions and design courses for their students that lead to highly successful outcomes in a high-stakes testing environment. In a larger context, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its standards and accountability mandates are part of a general neoliberal ideology (Hursh, 2007). According to neoliberal theory, the nation state should embrace individual private property rights, the rule of law, and institutions associated with freely functioning markets and free trade (Tabb, 2002; Ward, 2012). Neoliberal theory maintains that it is paramount that businesses are permitted to operate freely and unfettered, most public institutions and assets should be privatized, and that competition between individuals and organizations is virtuous (Ward, 2012). This concept applies to most institutions including areas typically considered the realm of government service like education, social welfare, and social security (Tabb, 2002; Ward, 2012). Neoliberalism embraces individualism and competition and success and failure are seen as the result of personal

virtue and enterprise rather than any systemic, societal factors (Auerbach, 2007; Harvey, 2007; Ward, 2012).

NCLB has incorporated standards, accountability, and choice in our education system. Using the power of the federal treasury, the national government has encouraged states to create standards, testing, and reporting systems that comply with the standards-based education provisions of NCLB. Standardized testing provides accountability for students, teachers, and schools; consistent failure to meet standards in schools mandates choices for parents to move their children to other schools (Ravitch, 2010). The standardized testing element of this system is viewed as a means of providing an objective, quality indicator to the consumer of student learning within the education market (Hursh, 2007).

Rational choice theory

The standards-based education and accountability movements are grounded in neoliberal theory (Groenke & Hatch, 2009; Hursh, 2007) and the focus of this research is teacher curricular-instructional decision making in the context of challenging classroom objectives and high-stakes testing evaluation. Interpretation of decision making necessitates a theoretical perspective by which the interpreter can interpret. Rational choice theory (RCT) is traditionally viewed as an economic model of decision making but has flourished as an explanation of human decision making and choice (Scott, 1999). Its use has expanded such that one can find examples of RCT being used to explain virtually any human behavior (De Jonge, 2012). The classic economic notion of RCT is that people are motivated by self interests (e.g., making a profit) and will calculate the costs and benefits of any action before making a decision (De Jonge, 2012). Since the 1960s, sociologists in particular have embraced the model and theorized that most

human decision making can be explained by the same model, albeit more complicated (De Jonge, 2012). In its most basic sense, RCT asserts that individuals will make rational decisions to serve their self interests. According to this theory, individuals are motivated by their personal wants and goals and are driven by personal desires which are continually affected by the human condition, e.g., time, information, approval, and prestige (De Jonge, 2012; Scott, 1999).

Critics of the use of RCT to explain human decision making maintain there are key problems with RCT in that it is over simplistic in explaining human decision making in terms of rationality, individuality, and temporal factors (Archer & Tritter, 2001) and that it cannot account for human behavior related to social norms and collectivism (Scott, 1999). If individuals are making rational choices to serve their self interests, it is unlikely they will make decisions to accept and follow social norms that often lead them to act in selfless ways or even to feel a sense of obligation that overrides their self interest. Likewise, if individuals only based their decisions on self interest, it is unlikely they would choose to do something that would benefit others more than themselves (Archer & Tritter, 2001; De Jonge, 2012; Scott, 1999). RCT suggests that in a high-stakes environment, teachers will make decisions to serve their personal interests, beliefs, and objectives. Development of personal interests, beliefs, and objectives is complex and is influenced by structural factors in an individual's environment (Grant et al., 2002).

The educational reform movements of the 1990s and 2000s were infused with the idea that the private business model would unquestionably improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector, including education (Ravitch, 2010). Establishing goals and standards for an organization and developing metrics to determine efficiency and effectiveness of outputs are integral parts of a private business plan and with the mandates of NCLB these same principles

are now part of our public education systems (Hursh, 2007). RCT is an economic decision making model that has been adapted by many theorists to explain human behavior (De Jonge, 2012). As an economic model, it follows that RCT fits naturally within the neoliberal ideas of reform of our education system. For example, states and schools will establish standards-based systems or lose federal funds; students will learn and teachers will work hard to achieve the rewards or suffer the punishments associated with success and failure; schools will organize and train their staffs to establish successful schools or suffer the consequences of failure; and parents will be provided information about their schools' achievement and empowered with choice to transfer their students from failing schools to a better setting (Hursh, 2007).

Hursh (2007) maintains that when standards and accountability reforms are applied to our public school systems, defining and measuring individualized outcome indicators are emphasized, complex education processes are reduced to what can be measured, and decision makers increasingly focus on those processes that can be measured (Archer & Tritter, 2001). Consistent with RCT is the notion that increasing the stakes associated with a test will influence the behavior of students and teachers because the cost or benefit of not changing one's behavior is significant (Madaus & Russell, 2010). A single high-stakes output measurement can be detrimental to learning as the measurement can evolve from an assessment of output to the focus of output itself and thereby encouraging "teaching to the test" and excessive test preparation (Madaus, 1991). However, we know that teachers teach content, use instructional methods, and engage in other activities that are not directly in support of increasing test scores—these decisions may serve some personal belief or objective, be part of a societal norm, or the pursuit of some other collective good (Archer & Tritter, 2001; De Jonge, 2012; Scott, 1999).

While the AP program was not conceived to establish standards and create accountability in our education system, it can be used to achieve these ends and provides an excellent context to examine teacher decision making in a high-stakes environment. Given that policymakers and administrators use tenets of neoliberal theory to evaluate the success of AP programs by emphasizing the measurable output of student performance on the standardized end-of-course exam, it is logical and consistent to examine individual teacher decision making process within the same conceptual framework of neoliberal reform and rational choice theory. AP teachers continually make decisions about content, instructional strategies, diverse student needs, and exam preparation (research questions in this study). The teachers in this study are highly effective in meeting the measured output of the AP program—they have achieved the policymakers’ objectives. The degree to which key teacher decisions relative to content, instructional strategies, diverse student needs, and exam preparation are “rational” in the context of RCT is a conceptual consideration in this study.

Overview of Method

Four highly successful AP U.S. History teachers were selected from a large school district in central Florida and invited to participate in the study. Participants were purposefully selected to create a sample where all participants possessed the “intensity” characteristic of highly successful (AP pass rates that exceed the Florida state average for the past three years) and within this characteristic “maximum variability” was sought in two areas:

1. High school characteristics. The selected school district is large with many diverse high schools: urban and suburban, magnet and traditional, with a range of SES and prior success

with state standardized testing. Teacher participants were selected to maximize variability in these school characteristics.

2. Teacher characteristics. The selected sample sought to maximize variation between the four teachers participating in the study; variation factors included: teaching experience, type of degree/training (education versus history majors in college), age, and gender.

Data collection consisted of participant completion of a pre-interview survey (see Appendix B) to collect demographical and general personal teaching characteristics, a one-hour classroom observation, and three one-hour semi-structured interviews (See Appendix C for semi-structured interview questions). The pre-interview survey and the semi-structured interview questions were modified from a survey instrument used in a study (Paek, Ponte, Sigel, Braun, & Powers, 2005) sponsored by the College Board to examine the curricular-instructional practices of AP U.S. History teachers. The interview questions were modified and developed by the researcher and are targeted to elicit responses aligned with the study's basic research questions. The classroom observations were designed to help the researcher better understand the teachers' classroom challenges, curricular-instructional decision making, and the classroom experience provided to his/her students.

Participants completed the pre-interview survey and then the researcher conducted a classroom observation and three one-hour interviews with the participants. The data were collected for the purpose of creating interpretive phenomenological narratives that describe participants' experiences in addressing the multitude of challenges associated with teaching an AP U.S. History course and achieving high pass rates on the AP exam. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using established qualitative analytic procedures. Analysis of the data

has yielded participant and inter-participant themes that capture common lived experiences of the participants in this study. The four participants' data were used to construct interpretive narratives designed to inform readers of how these successful AP teachers address current AP curricular-instructional challenges in a high-stakes environment where they are expected to provide a college-level experience.

Before collecting any data from the four participants in the study, a pilot study was conducted on a single AP U.S. History teacher with the intent of: gaining feedback about the clarity of researcher instructions and the pre-interview survey, conducting cognitive interviewing of the semi-structured interview questions, and to generally to serve as a trial run of the practical and analytical procedures planned for the study participants. The pilot study participant was a successful AP U.S. History teacher from the same school district as the participants, participated in all phases of planned data collection (pre-interview survey, classroom observation, and three one-hour interviews), and received the same compensation as the actual research participants. The pre-survey questionnaire, interview questions, and data collection and analysis protocol were adjusted and clarified based on feedback from the pilot study participant and researcher determination of what worked and what needed revision from the trial run of established study procedures.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the researcher defines the following terms as indicated:

1. Highly successful AP teacher: AP teachers who have a history of student exam pass rates that exceed the Florida state average pass rate during the last three years.

2. Organizational factors: agencies with a stake in the education setting that can influence the teacher decision-making process.
3. Personal beliefs: internal values, experiences, and motivations of the teacher participants in this study.
4. Policy factors: organizational plans and procedures intended to influence the decision-making process.
5. Structural factors: phenomena in the education setting that intentionally or unintentionally affect the teacher decision-making process; organized into organizational and policy factors for this study.

Delimitations

The participants in this study are four AP U.S. History teachers from the same school district in central Florida who were determined to be highly successful based on their student pass rates on the College Board AP Exam. This study only addresses AP U.S. History teachers and is delimited to teachers who are highly successful at teaching this course. The teachers in this study are considered successful because they are able to meet established organizational and policy goals. The study intends to offer a degree of insight into the lived experiences of these successful teachers as they make decisions and plan a course of study for their AP U.S. History classes in light of the numerous personal, organizational, and policy factors impinging on them. While variation across participants and the schools they teach at was built into the study, the study only addresses the lived experiences of these four participants as determined through a background information survey, a classroom observation, and three one-hour interviews with

each participant. The study did not investigate the experiences of teachers whose students have more modest success at passing the AP exam.

Limitations

The extent that this research is generalizable outside of the established research context is constrained by the nature of qualitative research and this interpretive phenomenological inquiry. Interpretive phenomenology focuses on the particular rather than the general, it is idiographic rather than nomothetic (Smith et al., 2009), that is, it seeks to describe specific, subjective phenomena rather than general, objective phenomena. Because interpretive phenomenological inquiry focuses on small sample sizes with purposefully selected characteristics, results and claims are bounded by the group and the characteristics studied. This does not mean that there is no generalizability, but rather the findings must be considered in light of the characteristics of the study and readers should use their professional and experiential knowledge to determine generalizability (Smith et al., 2009). To that end, the researcher has attempted to clearly describe the theoretical and methodological orientation and the process of inquiry in this study. Furthermore, the participant case studies and research findings have considerable description as every effort was made to inform the reader and earnestly share their detailed accounts so that readers can assess if the study is generalizable to another setting under consideration (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

“Standards” and “accountability” are words that are often used to describe current educational reform in the United States today. It is difficult to argue against the need for standards in education or the need to hold students, teachers, and schools accountable for what happens in our schools in general and progress toward meeting standards in particular. However, the recent debate in education has demonstrated that there is significant disagreement about what our education standards should look like and how we determine accountability for students, teachers, and schools (Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan, 2008; Mathison, Ross, & Vinson, 2006; Ravitch, 2010). Despite ongoing debate, the mandates of NCLB have forced states and school districts to create measurement and reporting systems and integrate these systems into their education programs. Assessing and measuring learning in some way is an integral part of the educational process but there is often disagreement about the format of measurements, the quantity of measurements, and how measurements should be used (Clarke, Madaus, Horn, & Ramos, 2000; Madaus, 1991). Despite the widespread use of high-stakes testing, there is considerable concern when a single, objective, high-stakes measurement is used to assess whether students have met standards and whether education systems are effective (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003; Amrein & Berliner, 2003; Vinson et al., 2001) . While a single objective measurement is typically the least expensive, attaching very high stakes to a single measurement is likely to have the intended or unintended side effects of making the measurement the focus of

instruction which can change teacher and school behavior in ways that narrow school curricula, encourage excessive test preparation, and ultimately corrupt the ability of the measurement to accurately assess learning as designed (Madaus, 1991; Madaus & Russell, 2010). States like Florida have taken account of this and have broadened the way they assess student learning to include more measurements and more indicators of learning. Instead of a single reading and mathematics test (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) in high school, Florida is currently moving toward assessment of standards compliance that includes individual end-of-course exams for the core disciplines and adding factors like graduation rates and participation rates in advanced coursework like the AP program (FLDOE, 2012).

The AP program has expanded dramatically throughout the nation in the past ten years and Florida has experienced more growth than any other state (College Board, 2012a). The AP program has been in existence since the 1950s and has experienced steady growth until the past 10 years or so where it has experienced growth at an increased rate (College Board, 2009). A possible factor contributing to its recent expansion is the perceived rigor embodied in the program (standards) and its built-in measurement system to assess learning (accountability), which fits nicely within our climate of NCLB, standards, and accountability. AP was originally designed to create a track for exceptional, college-bound high school students to work at an advanced level and demonstrate learning at the college level so that they could earn credit for some basic courses and begin college at a point ahead of typical freshmen (College Board, 2003). The program has essentially the same purpose today, but given the far greater numbers of students taking AP courses now, there is far greater variability in all student demographic factors. There are proponents and opponents of the expanded use of the AP program, its value in substitution for college courses, and the merits of reliance on a single, objective measure of

success. As stated earlier, the use of a single objective high-stakes measurement is often viewed as controversial as some suggest that it may lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, excessive test preparation, and corruption of the measurement instrument (Madaus, 1991; Madaus & Russell, 2010). The AP test has become a high-stakes event as student performance on this test leads to significant outcomes for the students, teachers, and schools. For example, AP scores are used to grant students college credit, as indicators of success by college admissions offices, in the calculation of teacher evaluation scores and pay (SDHC, 2010), and as a factor in the calculation of overall annual school grades (FLDOE, 2012), which affect schools' status in the community and staff performance pay. Given the nature of AP courses and the high-stakes testing associated with them, one should anticipate some degree of narrowing of the curriculum and institutional test preparation, effects that are often viewed as undesirable in a classroom created to provide a college-level experience (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Madaus & Russell, 2010).

While there are many external factors that influence what teachers do in their classrooms, teachers generally have considerable control over curriculum content and methods of instruction (Thornton, 1991). In history AP courses the level of control can be significant. While guidelines are provided by the College Board, AP teachers make individual decisions about content, instructional methods, preparation for the end-of-course exam, and how to provide their students with a college-level experience. While data are collected on student performance on AP exams, there is scant research of the demands that the AP program places on individual teachers and how these demands affect curricular-instructional planning (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2010). The College Board encourages AP history teachers to generally tailor their courses to provide a rigorous college-level experience but they also provide curriculum guidance in the form of content breadth and depth, recommended course themes and historical thinking skills, and

student test-taking skills that include multiple choice and specific essay-writing formats (College Board, 2010). Given the broad nature of the AP curriculum guidance and specific skills the students need to be successful on the exam, teachers face difficult decisions when planning a course even before considering the diverse needs of the students in the classrooms that they teach. Recognizing the ongoing expansion of the AP program and the complex nature of teaching an AP class, it would be valuable to better understand the challenges teachers face and the process by which they make planning decisions for their students. The intent of this literature review is to explore the research and scholarship pertinent to AP teacher planning and provide a conceptual framework for this research.

Teacher Planning: Theory and Practice

Teacher planning is recognized as an important part of the teaching process (Clark & Yinger, 1979). Planning can include all actions that a teacher takes prior to instruction, adjustments made during instruction, and reflection after instruction (McCutcheon, 1980; Young, Reiser, & Dick, 1998). Planning can be done on a macro level such as yearly planning, course planning, and unit planning and occurs at a micro level with regard to daily and weekly lesson planning (Brown, 1988; Clark & Yinger, 1979; Yinger, 1980). Specific aspects of planning can include establishing learning objectives, identifying content to be addressed, selection of learning activities, and creation of formative and summative assessments to evaluate learning (Brown, 1988; Clark & Yinger, 1979; Yinger, 1980). Virtually all instruction is preceded by some level of planning and most instruction is the result of substantial planning (Kerr, 1981; McCutcheon, 1980; Yinger, 1980).

Teacher planning is one of the most important activities that teachers routinely engage in (Clark & Yinger, 1979; Young et al., 1998). Early models of teacher planning established a linear relationship between teacher conceptualization of the learning process and teacher execution of learning activities in the classroom. One of the first widely accepted planning models was developed by Tyler (1950). Tyler's model has been rewritten in several similar forms and is still widely accepted today, at least in principle, as the basis for curriculum planning. Tyler's model essentially has four stages: establishment of the purposes of education (goals and objectives), determination of educational experiences that will best attain the purposes of education (content and learning activities), determination of how the experiences can be effectively organized, and verification that objectives have been met (assessment). This general model became the basis of many other seminal planning models such as ones developed by by Taba (1962) and Popham and Baker (1970), and while they elaborated on the Tyler model, they were in most respects the same. This basic linear model of establishing objectives, selecting learning activities, organizing instruction, and assessing learning has been the most frequently used model to explain teacher planning in introductory teacher education texts (Kerr, 1981).

While the linear teacher planning model has been extensively used in teacher education programs, many researchers have found that what is taught in theory and what occurs in practice is often quite different. For example, research performed by Clark and Yinger (1977), Yinger (1980), McCutcheon (1980), and Parker and Gehrke (1986) found that instead of using a proactive, deliberate process like that proscribed by Tyler (1950), teacher planning is much more ad hoc and reactive to events confronting them in the classroom. Teachers invariably take their student and school needs into account, envision learning experiences more frequently than objectives, and have to deal with unplanned events in the classroom and school. These

immediate considerations often force teachers to be reactive and impromptu and assume the role of problem solver more often than strategic planner (Kerr, 1981). Kerr's 1981 research study, involving four groups of practicing teachers and graduate students who were tasked to design lessons, drew similar conclusions in that teachers in the study did not begin the planning process from specifically defined objectives but rather began with a conceptualization of the teaching environment comprised of content, possible activities, and challenges posed by the learners and environment. In a laboratory study of twelve experienced teachers teaching a social studies lesson, researchers found that teacher planning didn't follow a linear model and instead was centered on the subject matter itself with teacher cognitive styles and abilities influencing their eventual planning decisions (Peterson, Marx, & Clark, 1978). In a qualitative study of superior teachers' planning, Young et al. (1998) found that teachers in their study engaged in substantial planning but that their planning was not linear or systematic in the way that the linear models proscribe.

Research by Clark and Yinger (1977), Yinger (1980), and McCutcheon (1980) highlight the importance of teacher thinking and the effects that it has on teacher classroom decisions. Teacher thinking includes judgment, decision making, and planning. Their research questioned the adequacy of the linear planning model, or rational means-ends model, in explaining what actually occurs when teachers plan. Their research suggests that when it comes to the instructional planning process there is significant difference between what traditional theory describes as the rational way to proceed and what teachers actually do when they plan. Clark and Yinger (1977) conducted a three-pronged study including a survey of teacher planning, a laboratory study of teacher judgment in planning, and a field study of the relationship between teacher planning and teacher implementation of instruction. Results of this study indicated that

teachers do plan for a variety of purposes but seldom begin their planning with objectives in mind as they focus on the development and execution of the learning activity and associated content rather than the purpose of the event. Yinger's study (1980) involved a five-month, participant-observer case study of an elementary school teacher. Among Yinger's conclusions were that the teacher planning process was a very complex phenomenon not adequately explained by a linear model, that teachers rarely consider objectives and goals when the plan, and that teachers do consistently consider the needs of their students when planning and develop a mental image of the learning experience and its associated content, activities, and materials. McCutcheon (1980) conducted a qualitative study of 12 elementary education teachers through observation, interview, and document analysis. McCutcheon's study (1980) also concluded that linear planning does not accurately represent how teachers actually plan as most teacher planning is ad hoc rather than deliberate. Teachers in this study reported that they had little knowledge of how to formally plan (little formal training in planning in their education programs) and that textbooks and other ancillary materials contribute considerably to the ways teachers organize their curriculum.

A research study by Zahorik (1975) addressed teacher planning and found that only about a quarter of teachers in his study began the planning process by focusing on student behavioral outcomes and instead a majority focused on content as their first planning decision—depth and breadth of the content being the overarching primary concern. Areas of classroom planning most engaged in during the research were learning activities, content decisions, followed by behavioral objectives. These findings are contrary to traditional planning approaches because activities are not assumed to be ends in themselves but rather a means to achieving ends. Earlier studies by MacDonald (1965), Eisner (1967), and Macdonald, Wolfson, and Zaret (1973) also

found that teachers do not begin with goals and objectives in mind but rather focus on the learning activities. A common finding during these studies was that teachers focus on learning activities because they take into account the needs and demands of the learners. There is substantial research that suggests that establishing goals and objectives without taking the learning context and activities into account is at best an academic pursuit and in many ways meaningless to the teacher (Clark & Yinger, 1977). Furthermore, it is possible that failure to account for the learning context when planning is counter productive. Zahorik's (1970) empirical research compared teachers who followed a structured planning process with those teachers who did not and concluded that those teachers who followed a linear planning process were less sensitive to their students and showed less "honest" or "authentic" use of the students' ideas during the lesson. While linear, rational theories of the planning process persist in our teacher education programs, it is clear that substantial research suggests that classroom learning activities are often the central focus of teacher planning and this should be carefully considered in any examination of the planning process (Parker & Gehrke, 1986; Young et al., 1998).

Though teacher planning may differ in theory and in practice, few would question that the teacher plays a key role in the planning process. The degree of influence and control of the curriculum from external sources varies greatly from school to school; however, ultimately it is the teacher who is the decision-maker in planning and conducting the learning activities in the classroom (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Acknowledging this, one must consider the teachers' motivations and actions when examining the planning process. Thornton (1991) refers to the teacher as the curricular-instructional gatekeeper who operates within a frame of reference or viewpoint that influences the way they tend the gate. Thornton asserts that teachers play a critical role as they make day-to-day decisions about the content and activities students have

access to. Specifically, Thornton maintains that teachers' beliefs concerning the meaning of social studies, the decisions they make concerning planning, and the decisions they make concerning instructional strategies are of particular importance when examining the teachers' role as gatekeeper. Teachers are at the center of decision making relative to curricular-instructional decisions in the classroom, but these decisions are not made in a vacuum (Grant, 1996; Thornton, 1991). Researchers have attempted to determine the factors that influence teachers' decision making relative to content and pedagogy. For example, Kirst and Walker (1971) mapped a considerable number of influences located all levels of education, Cornbleth (1990) conducted a critical examination of the vast number of internal and external social, political, and cultural factors impacting the curriculum and teacher decision making, and Thornton (1991) conducted a literature review of the factors influencing teacher beliefs, conceptions, and choices as curricular-instructional gatekeepers.

Grant (1996) conducted a multi-year study of the impact of national, state, and local education reform efforts on teacher practices in schools and classrooms. In this study, Grant (1996) and his colleagues were specifically interested in how the external structures of reform impacted teacher decision making. The study included interviews, observations, and document analysis at the district, school and classroom level. The qualitative research found that there are widely varied impacts of reform on teachers' decision making and this was in large part due to the individual beliefs and characteristics of the teachers themselves. Grant concludes that when examining teacher decision making one must account for the various external structures that swirl around individual teachers but one must also account for varying personal characteristics because it is how individuals interpret these structures that translates into the types of decisions that they make. Grant's study (1996) recommended future studies be as

holistic as possible, merging a structuralist perspective with an interpretivist one to arrive at an interactional view. The following is a summary of the structural and internal factors Grant (1996) considered important in affecting teacher planning and are included here as the researcher intends to investigate these structural and internal influences in the interview protocol, interviews themselves, and subsequent analysis and reporting:

- PERSONAL INFLUENCES
 - Teachers' experiences as learners
 - Teachers' interactions with family & friends
 - Teachers' beliefs
 - Teachers' perceptions of social studies as a school subject
- ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCES
 - Influence of individuals and groups
 - District Supervisor, Principals, Colleagues, Students
 - Organizational Norms, Structures, Resources
 - School culture, structures, resources
- POLICY INFLUENCES
 - Textbook adoptions
 - Testing programs
 - Curriculum directives

Standards, Accountability, and High-Stakes Testing

With regard to planning, it is clear that teachers have historically been given significant control over all levels of the planning process but this began to change in the 1980s. Many

recognize the publishing of *A Nation at Risk*, the seminal report decrying that U.S. education was in need of dire reform, as a key event that shaped the modern standards-based education reform movement (Madaus, Russell, & Higgins, 2009; Ravitch, 2010). *A Nation at Risk* maintained that the U.S. education system was failing to produce the kind of graduates needed to compete globally. To remedy the situation, it made general recommendations with regard to fiscal support to schools, time students spend in school, and content to be taught in schools and specifically addressed a need for greater teacher competence and recommended standards be established for students in their classrooms (Ravitch, 2010). If not explicit, the implicit message was that governments should exert greater control over teachers and what they are doing in their classrooms. From this point to the present, there has been a trend toward increasing state control over local school systems as there has been a prevailing view that these systems lack direction and appropriate forms of accountability (Ravitch, 2010).

The national standards-based reform movement began in earnest in the 1990s with legislation under the Clinton Administration with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the latter having “teeth” as it tied federal funds to establishment of state standards and general compliance with the provisions of the legislation (Madaus, Russell, & Higgins, 2009). Under the Bush administration, the ESEA was again renewed and renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—this legislation went further in the scope of its mandates and requirements to demonstrate compliance. NCLB required states to not only establish state standards but to create aligned accountability systems to hold students, teachers, and schools accountable as well as specific directives to monitor teacher qualifications and progress of low-performing schools and traditionally underperforming demographic subgroups. There has been little change in the federal government’s position on

standards-based reform as the provisions of NCLB have essentially been continued under the Obama administration.

Americans have long accepted testing as a fair, unbiased method of assessment and evaluation (e.g., civil service, intelligence, and education). Everyone who has attended a public school has taken tests and virtually everyone accepts their use as appropriate to some degree (Madaus et al., 2009). Given our familiarity with and acceptance of testing, it is not surprising that we welcome, encourage, and trust testing as the preeminent way to measure learning and evaluate our educational systems (Madaus & Russell, 2010). Exit examinations are an integral part of many education and professional certification programs worldwide as a measurement instrument external to the teacher and student is thought to be more objective (Bishop, 1999). In a quantitative analysis of nations using exit exams and those who do not, Bishop (1999) found that nations using exit exams demonstrated a higher degree of achievement than those who did not. Though testing has been commonplace in our education system since its inception, in the past 30 years student test performance has been used in ways that are relatively new: to implement and evaluate education policy, to assess equity of education, to assess the effectiveness of education programs, and to classify the quality of schools and districts (Airasian & Madaus, 1983).

The increased demand for standardized tests and testing systems has led to the creation of a substantial testing industry which, like any business, emphasizes increased efficiency. Increased efficiency in the test development business has led to a proliferation of multiple choice tests as they are easy to grade and standardize (Clarke et al., 2000). Efficiency and cost concerns are issues for any industry but its use as the chief criteria to develop a means of assessment limits

what we measure and how accurately we measure it. Furthermore, there is a need to evaluate testing in terms of whether a particular test is appropriate for the use in which it was designed (Clarke et al., 2000).

Testing fits well within the standards and accountability movement as tests provide a standardized way to judge how well students and teachers have used their time—they are used to determine the quality of the teaching and learning experience (Madaus et al., 2009). While objective, multiple-choice tests can effectively measure knowledge and basic skills, they are not as effective at measuring higher levels of learning, comprehension, and critical thinking (Grant et al., 2002). Testing does have the stated objective of obtaining accountability information about the educational system but it also serves to drive change in the classroom in intended and unintended ways (Madaus & Russell, 2010). It is possible that over-reliance on testing can undermine goals of high-quality education, discourage genuine student and teacher motivation, and ignore the benefits of academic diversity and inclusion in classrooms (Vinson et al., 2001).

Because of its perceived objectivity and ease of standardization, testing is the instrument of choice in the standards and accountability movement. In fact, the current high stakes movement is built on the symbolic importance of test scores (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003). Testing is seen as a worthy reform tool as there is a belief that testing makes everyone try harder, including students, teachers, and schools in general (Madaus & Russell, 2010). Testing is now used to show increased rigor in schools and to make comparisons between test takers, teachers, schools, districts, and states (Clarke et al., 2000). Tests are used as an incentive to improve performance, a stick to punish lack of performance (Grant et al., 2002), a method to reward effective teachers, and a means to humiliate underperforming teachers (Madaus & Russell,

2010). Theoretically, testing can be viewed as a way to motivate the unmotivated through rewards (Bishop, 1999); however, for students and teachers who, through a variety of circumstances are not likely to do well, the possible negative effects on motivation should be cause for concern (Amrein & Berliner, 2003; Madaus, 1991).

Policymakers influence the classroom by creating standards and mandating testing that is accompanied by high stakes—the higher the stakes the more influence on the classroom (Madaus & Russell, 2010). A survey of 1,000 teachers in Colorado found that teachers welcomed the creation of standards as it clarified expectations but the accompanying high-stakes test led to more test preparation, shifting of attention away from non-tested disciplines like social studies, and an overall decrease in teacher morale (Taylor, Lorrie, Freya, & Justin, 2003). High-stakes testing influences what is taught and what is learned (Amrein & Berliner, 2003; Madaus & Russell, 2010). As tests become an important arbiter of future education or life choices then society begins to treat the test results as the major goal of schooling rather than a useful indicator of achievement (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003).

There is disagreement among proponents and opponents of high-stakes testing. Proponents believe high-stakes testing focuses instruction and give students and teachers specific goals to attain. They contend that good tests can be constructed that evaluate higher order thinking, skills, problem solving, and the use of knowledge (Madaus et al., 2009). Opponents disagree and contend that the efficiency required of large-scale, standardized tests dictates the format which leads to measurement of predominantly lower level learning. Assigning high stakes to the outcomes of testing encourages excessive attention to the measurement and this

corrupts the learning process by focusing instructional time toward material that is covered by the exam and brings about a corresponding narrowing of the curriculum (Madaus, 1991).

The greater the stakes, the greater the likelihood that teachers will orient their focus, curriculum, and instruction to what they believe will be on the test (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003; Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Standardized tests often lead to teachers moving through the curriculum more rapidly as they feel compelled to cover all the content and coverage often means a quick mention of the content rather than deep learning (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003). Teachers frequently report that they feel they are capable of raising high-stakes testing scores by focusing their instruction on testable material and report a belief that the increased test scores do not necessarily mean improved learning (Pedulla et al., 2003). When content appears on an exam it can serve to signify relevance to teachers. In an ethnographic investigation of four secondary school teachers in a remote, rural setting in England, Thomas (2005) investigated the degree to which teachers altered their planning and instruction based on a high-stakes test, the UK Annual Accountability Assessment. Teachers reported that confidence content would appear on the exam validated their belief that the material is important enough to teach and they liked this as they felt it helped them sort out what topics were important enough to cover. When teachers accept anticipated test content as the *de facto* curriculum it tends to encourage a narrowing of content taught and skills practiced (Madaus and Russell, 2010).

In a high-stakes environment, teachers not only pay close attention to the content they expect to appear on the test but the format of the exam becomes important and instruction and activities are adjusted in light of anticipated student exam performance activities (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003; Grant, 2007). Teaching methods in high-stakes test environments tend to be

more limited as teachers are less likely to use methods and practice skills that do not directly contribute to success on the test. Studies have demonstrated that teachers report decreases in the use of more time-consuming instructional strategies and lengthy enrichment activities (Pedulla et al., 2003; Taylor et al., 2003). For example, teachers are less likely to use computers to teach writing because students have to handwrite their essays on the exams, even though it has been demonstrated that computer writing activities improve general writing ability (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003). Critical thinking exercises are more infrequent and replaced with multiple choice decision making and recall, research papers replaced with free response essay questions, and generally less time-intensive strategies. As high-stakes testing narrows the content and instructional methods of a classroom, it has the effect of diminishing teachers' judgment and decreasing their responsibility (Madaus & Russell, 2010). In a qualitative study by Gerwin and Visone (2006), the teaching methods of two history teachers, one state-tested and the other teaching an untested elective class, were compared using document analysis and interviews. In the untested history class, ambitious history teaching activities were routinely employed while in the state-tested class the teacher emphasized content coverage and more rote learning of content facts. High-stakes testing has the effect of decreasing the use of instructional methods designed to create the lived experience described by John Dewey to a classroom dominated by lecture, recitation, and memorization of factual information (Vinson et al., 2001). Teaching skills can be negatively affected and diminish when teachers teach to the test and employ a one-size-fits-all strategy rather than providing individualized instruction as may be needed (Madaus & Russell, 2010). A one-size-fits-all strategy encourages teachers to discount the unique qualities students bring to the classroom and instead encourages evaluation in terms of test score increasers or suppressors and unwittingly teachers can begin to think of their students as winners and losers on

the basis of their anticipated test scores (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). In the end, worthwhile educational objectives and experiences may be excluded from the classroom simply because we do not know how to test them properly (Madaus, 1991).

When teachers and students overly focus on a measurement, the measurement can become corrupted as obsessive focus on the measurement distorts its ability to validly portray true student achievement (Madaus & Russell, 2010). When a quantitative indicator becomes of great importance, the resulting test preparation that follows can compromise the credibility of the measure of achievement (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003). The exams may come to determine the shape of the curriculum rather than the curriculum determining the shape of the exams (Madaus, 1991). Test performance becomes to be regarded by students, teachers, parents, and administrators as the main, if not the sole, objective of education (Madaus, 1991). Tests are frequently designed for one purpose and then used for another. For example, the SAT may be used for athletic eligibility, the basis for scholarships, and student loan eligibility and AP enrollment and pass rates may be used for school quality rankings (Madaus, 1991). High-stakes testing can effectively transfer the control over the curriculum to the agency that controls the exam (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003). As the content and instructional strategies become aligned with the exam, teachers and schools begin to surrender a degree of control over their curriculum to the test-developing agency. Surrendering control over the explicit curriculum also means accepting the implicit or hidden curriculum, those topics that are not taught, and this communicates notions of value to the students (Thomas, 2005).

The Role of the Advanced Placement Program in America's Schools

In the early 1950s, the Ford Foundation created the Fund for the Advancement of Education which conducted two studies to examine coursework taken by high school students most likely to attend college. The objective of the studies was to identify content repetition in the secondary education and post-secondary levels with the goal of providing highly motivated students an opportunity to earn college credit in high school so that they could advance more quickly through post-secondary education. The first study was comprised of educators from elite prep schools (Andover, Exeter, and Lawrenceville) and prestigious colleges (Harvard, Princeton, and Yale) and recommended that schools create programs to engage promising high school seniors in independent study and college-level work where they could enter college with advanced standing after passing achievement exams (College Board, 2003). The second study by the Committee on Admission with Advanced Standing, formulated a plan for curricula that could be employed in high schools and then followed up on this plan by organizing discipline specialists to develop high school course descriptions and assessments that would be rigorous enough for colleges to agree to grant college credit to high school seniors. The program was piloted in 1952 and began in earnest in the 1955–1956 school year (College Board, 2003). Summative end-of-course exams were created to measure and validate student proficiency in course content and requisite academic skills. AP exams are standardized and, depending on the course, are made up of multiple choice questions, free-response sections, or a combination of the two. The AP U.S. History course exam is comprised of an 80-question multiple choice question section and a free-response essay section where students are assigned a grade of 5, 4, 3, 2 or 1 (5 = “extremely well qualified,” 4 = “well qualified,” 3 = “qualified,” 2 = “possibly qualified,” and

1 = “no recommendation”) with a 3 generally being the minimum qualification accepted by colleges for college credit.

The College Board’s AP Program mission statement is “to connect students to college success and opportunity” and elaborates that:

The College Board’s AP Program is a rigorous academic program built on the passion, dedication and commitment of a community of students and educators from around the world. For more than 55 years, it has fostered collaboration among college faculty and AP teachers to prepare students for college success and advance academic excellence in high schools. In May 2011, nearly 2 million students representing more than 18,000 schools around the world, both public and nonpublic, took 3.4 million AP exams across the 34 subjects. Additionally, more than 3,600 institutions worldwide annually receive AP scores. (College Board, 2012c)

Since the 1950s, the program has steadily grown but the past 15 years of growth have been particularly dramatic; today Florida’s high school students, as a percentage, take more AP exams than any other state (College Board, 2009).

College-level learning in high school is intended to challenge students with a rigorous curriculum and instill study skills and habits of mind that are necessary for college success (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001). AP students are able to learn and practice these skills and habits in a familiar high school environment with individualized instruction and attention that is not available in most colleges and universities (Klopfenstein, 2003). The College Board provides general curriculum guidance for social studies courses that address areas of each discipline that

should be addressed in the course of study. In order to carry the College Board's AP designation, teachers are required to submit a course syllabus and gain approval from College Board. AP teachers' syllabi are evaluated for course compliance with College Board recommendations in the areas of content, course resources, and academic skills:

The AP Course Audit was created at the request of both secondary school and college members of the College Board who sought a means for the College Board to:

- Provide AP teachers and administrators with clear guidelines on curricular and resource requirements that must be in place for AP courses.
- Give colleges and universities confidence that AP courses are designed to meet the same clearly articulated college-level criteria across high schools.

All schools wishing to label a course "AP" must submit the subject-specific AP Course Audit form and the course syllabus for each teacher of that AP course.

(College Board, 2012d)

The College Board indicates that it reviews syllabi to ensure quality control over content taught, skills addressed, and resources available. As stated above, the course audit is designed to create a higher degree of standardization throughout the program. The College Board conducted its first audit of AP course syllabi in the 2007–2008 school year: it involved 839 college professors who reviewed more than 134,000 syllabi from more than 14,000 high schools (Tai, 2008). While the College Board reviews course syllabi for compliance with guidance on course content, resources, and skills, there is no regular check for compliance and it is up to the teacher to follow the syllabus they have submitted. The scores on the AP exams and the syllabi audits

are the only formal means of gauging what occurs in most AP classrooms and both of these methods emphasize content addressed (Tai, 2008).

The expansion of AP programs serves a variety of interests, including the growing demand for rigorous, college-preparation classes in high school, the perception among students and families that AP classes are required for college admission, the calculation of rankings of high schools based on AP enrollment, and the belief among education reformers that expanding access to AP courses among disadvantaged student groups will help close academic achievement gaps (Dougherty & Mellor, 2010). The College Board has provided a clear message that AP programs should expand as they believe that AP is a good fit for most students and virtually all college-bound students. An article that Michael Riley, Superintendent of Bellevue School District in Washington, wrote for the College Board web site typifies the message from the College Board which is that all students should have access to a rigorous college-level experience, AP is an excellent college preparatory program, and students who take an AP courses perform better in college than those who do not (Riley, 2012). There is ample political support for AP expansion as well. The U.S. Department of Education (2012) is supportive of the College Board AP Program and offers funding assistance to increase the participation of low-income students in both pre-AP and AP courses and tests by funding professional development for teachers, AP curriculum development, the purchase of books and supplies for AP programs, and other activities directly related to expanding access to and participation in AP courses and tests for low-income students. In “Raising Rigor, Getting Results: Lessons Learned from AP Expansion,” the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices report set a goal to grow AP programs to include one million students by the class of 2014 as “this would help raise

college graduation rates and help maintain the nation's workforce quality and economic competitiveness" (Wakelyn, 2009, p. 1).

The College Board supports their claims of the benefits of AP with research that supports the notion that students who take AP classes perform better in college than those who do not (Aldeman, 1999; Hargrove, Godin, & Dodd, 2008; Murphy & Dodd, 2009; Patterson, Packman, & Kobrin, 2011). Much of the research available supporting this claim is in the form of quantitative data analysis including correlation analysis, means-testing using multivariate analysis of variance, and regression analysis. Critics who question the validity of conclusions drawn from these analyses note that AP courses typically draw in the most motivated and brightest high school students and comparison studies often do not have sufficient controls built in to account for this (Duffy, 2010; Sadler & Sonnert, 2010; Sadler & Tai, 2007). The frequent claim suggesting that students who take an AP course perform better in college has been challenged by research suggesting that students who pass the AP exam do better in college but with those students who do not pass, no advantage is seen (Dougherty & Mellor, 2010; Geiser & Santelices, 2004; Sadler & Tai, 2007).

Over the past decade, the explosive growth in the number of students participating in the program has raised questions about its role in education (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009; Lichten, 2000). No doubt, there exists a need for rigorous, challenging courses in our schools as well as the specific need for college preparatory and college level, the former is designed to teach the skills needed to be successful in college and the latter assumes you have them (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009). There are different types of college-level learning available in high schools; AP is one that uses an examination-based format that verifies the credibility of the learning

experience with student performance on the end-of-course examination. In this manner, college-level achievement is certified by acceptable performance on an examination that is external to the high school and to the college offering credit (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001).

The AP program's reliance on a single measurement of learning to verify quality is frequently questioned in terms of validity, particularly as these types of exams are biased toward those with good test-taking skills (Duffy, 2010; Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001). Proponents of other types of high school college learning, such as dual enrollment and high school-college agreements, contend that a teacher's monitoring of students throughout the semester on a variety of assignments and activities can better assess the quality of the learning and more fairly monitor deep conceptual learning (Klopfenstein, 2003). Countering this argument is the position that only an evaluation administered by an organization external to the classroom can provide the kind of measurable, comparable data that are favored by proponents of the type of standards and accountability we currently see in our educational system. In any case, when a single high-stakes measurement becomes the intense focus of study and preparation, the resulting test preparation that follows can compromise the credibility of the measure to validly assess true student achievement (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003; Madaus & Russell, 2010).

While performance on the AP exam is widely accepted as the metric of a successful college-level learning experience, Klopfenstein (2003) contends that the college-level experience, not a passing score on an AP exam, should be viewed as more important because students need not to have learned the material required to pass the AP exam in order to have had a quality college-level experience. For example, she notes that many high schools serve predominantly black, Hispanic, or low-income student populations who have traditionally been

underrepresented in higher education. If students begin AP courses with large academic deficits, it is unreasonable, and even undesirable, for teachers to attempt to cover the entire AP curriculum (Klopfenstein, 2003). Klopfenstein notes the important difference between college preparatory and college level and contends instead of celebrating scores on standardized tests we should emphasize student preparation for the academic demands of college in our college-preparatory and high school college-level programs. AP students should be challenged by advanced material but should also learn the study skills and habits of mind essential to success in college. While a rigorous high school curriculum clearly impacts the likelihood of early success in college, AP courses are not a necessary component of a rigorous curriculum. While an AP experience may serve as a signal of high ability and achievement, it does not by itself indicate superior academic readiness (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005).

AP exams are essentially based on one teaching approach which may be generally reflective of what occurs at large universities, but is not necessarily reflective of what is best (Klopfenstein, 2003). Objectives for college-level learning are not perfectly correlated with performance on end-of-course standardized exams. For example, states like Texas identify objectives for their AP programs that include advanced study in academic subjects and learning at the college level while in high school; these objectives can be achieved even though AP student performance on the exams may be below other AP students nationwide (Klopfenstein, 2003). Advanced study should provide students the opportunity to develop a deep conceptual understanding of the discipline's content and unifying concepts so these programs need to be designed well with the primary intent of helping students develop skills of inquiry, analysis, and problem solving so that they become superior learners (National Research Council, 2002; Parker et al., 2011). There is a concern that a single end-of-course exam may not address deep

conceptual learning and that a multidimensional measure should be developed. A student portfolio of learning achievement could be an example of a multidimensional approach that would be consistent with recommendations from the National Research Council (Klopfenstein, 2003).

Because of the wide breadth of content in AP courses, teachers are typically forced to use instructional methods that lend themselves to coverage of large amounts of information. Additionally, student activities typically encourage recitation of this material so that adequate retention occurs such that it leads to successful performance on an objective three-hour test. In a College Board-sponsored research study on AP teacher instructional practices, researchers found that AP history teachers relied extensively on previous AP tests and test preparation materials, predominantly used lecture and teacher-led instructional methods, and spent considerable course time preparing for the exam (Paek et al., 2005). Given the volume of research critical of this type of learning, many private schools are moving away from the AP program and instituting other programs that involve rigor in a more meaningful way (Briley, 2000; Hammond, 2009).

Given the expected rigor of AP courses, AP teachers need to have a deep conceptual understanding of their discipline (Klopfenstein, 2003). The College Board does not place any requirements for qualifications of AP teachers, though they do recommend that teachers participate in AP course training, summer institutes, and summer conferences (College Board, 2012b). The expansion of the AP program has led to an expanding requirement for AP teachers, many of them with little experience in their disciplines. These new AP teachers often find themselves learning the content along with their students (Klopfenstein, 2003). It is probable that most AP teachers are motivated to provide their students with a quality, college-level

learning experience, but some question whether many of them have the background, experience, and skills necessary to do so (Klopfenstein, 2003; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005; Lurie, 2000).

It is clear that AP teachers are faced with a challenge of teaching substantial breadth of content and deep conceptual understanding but have limited time to do so (Parker et al., 2011). While there is substantial breadth of content in AP history course curricula, AP teachers are largely judged on how many of their students pass the exam, so the anticipated content of the exam may become the *de facto* standard curriculum and what they teach (Tai, 2008). Because most of the exams survey a broad curriculum, teachers are under pressure to cover a large breadth of content, and while college-level work is supposed to go beyond memorization of facts, AP classes can devolve into lessons on how to take and pass the exam (Hammond, 2009; Lurie, 2000). Von Blum's (2008) analysis of his university history students has led him to conclude that many high school AP courses consist mainly of factual information while historical inquiry is largely ignored. Findings from Schwartz, Sadler, Sonnert, and Tai's (2009) analysis of over 8,000 college students at 55 universities indicate that students who reported covering at least one major topic in depth for a month or longer in their high school science classes earned higher grades in college science than did students who reported no coverage in depth in high school science classes.

Very often the critical thinking activities that are a part of AP classes are aligned with expectations on the essay portions of the exam, so historical thinking, use of primary source documents, and writing may be limited to what is beneficial to enhancing exam performance. Previous AP exam and AP study guide multiple choice and free response questions (FRQ) are extensively used throughout AP courses to prepare for the exam (Lurie, 2000; Paek et al., 2005).

Even when teachers recognize that addressing fewer topics in more depth would result in a higher level of learning and better prepare their students for college, AP teachers face strong incentives to exchange breadth for depth as students generally have a better chance of scoring higher on the AP exam if they do so (Hammond, 2009; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005).

As the scope of students taking AP continues to increase, there is an increased academic diversity of student interests, skills, and abilities which makes covering a large breadth of content even more challenging. In fact, critics argue that AP exams cover too much material even for students with strong academic backgrounds (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005; Parker et al., 2011). Klopfenstein's research supported the National Research Council's position that advanced learning occurs best when teachers are not pressured to sacrifice depth for breadth (National Research Council, 2000). As the AP Program continues to grow, it will be increasingly important that teachers be trained in how to design courses that provide a quality college-level learning experience for their students. The College Board should target resources towards ongoing professional development for AP teachers and administrators to assist them in cultivating AP Programs that engage students in deep conceptual learning alongside factual information and provide them with the skills necessary for college success (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009).

Good scores on AP tests are what teachers work to attain because it serves to validate their teaching of a quality learning experience to colleges, administrators, and the College Board (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001). Unlike the college dual enrollment program where colleges have some authority over teacher and curriculum selection before the course is taught, virtually any teacher is eligible to teach AP classes and the validation of the learning experience occurs

afterwards, on the test (Madaus & Russell, 2010). Due to the high stakes and pressure to be successful, exam preparation is a necessary part of AP courses; the College Board recognizes this and provides and sells previous exams and other preparatory materials to teachers (Abrahms & Madaus, 2003; Lurie, 2000). To be successful, teachers must orient their curriculum as dictated by the College Board and anticipate testable content, use instructional methods that support performance on the exam, and extensively prepare for the exams using College Board and other commercial study guides (Paek et al., 2005). As with the narrowing of any curriculum due to high-stakes testing, states and districts should acknowledge, albeit voluntary, a diminishing ability to influence curricula taught in their schools and an associated loss of educational freedom for teachers, districts, and state boards of education (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001).

The original intent of the AP Program was to provide an opportunity for highly motivated, college-bound students the opportunity to engage in college-level work where they could enter college with advanced standing. While this objective remains today, the characteristics of students taking AP classes has expanded along with program expansion. The College Board believes that school districts should open programs to all students willing to take the challenge of Advanced Placement and school districts have agreed. Though the AP course may offer increased rigor over standard courses taught in high school, it may not provide the best intellectual challenges for some of our brightest students (Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, & Kyburg, 2006). On the other hand, if students with weaker academic skills enroll in AP courses, they will need extra support from outside the classroom. If they do not receive this support, there is a concern that rigor will suffer, the course will become diluted, and this can give students the wrong impression about the level of effort required to be successful in college (Klopfenstein,

2003; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009). In a qualitative study of 48 college-bound high school students in a low-income, urban school setting, Hallet and Venegas (2011) interviewed participants to ascertain their perceptions of their experiences with the AP program. While there was appreciation for the availability of the program, a recurring theme was that there was inadequate structural support to students and teachers. Researchers note concern that the negative experience with an AP college-level experience could have a lasting effect on students' self efficacy relative to their future endeavors in college.

Case study research by Booher-Jennings (2005) concerning the Texas Accountability System indicated that in an effort to maximize pass rates a kind of "educational triage" often exists where teachers mentally divide students into "will pass," "on the bubble to pass," and "will not pass." Teachers then focus their attention on the "bubble" as this is the group whose scores can be raised through practice and attention, while the students at both ends of the spectrum are often ignored. Booher-Jennings (2005) concludes that high-stakes testing by its nature provides differential incentives and disincentives to focus on some students rather than others. Districts need to be careful when overemphasizing pass rates as exam scores are calibrated based on the performance of the national group of students taking the exam and many schools are responsible for educating students who are at an academic disadvantage relative to the national group (Klopfenstein, 2003).

Many researchers, education professionals, and the College Board have celebrated the expansion of the AP program and the increased numbers of students taking the courses as a success story representative of the democratization of education (Lurie, 2000). If there are increased numbers of students engaged in rigorous college-level learning then it is truly a success

story, but if the courses suffer from a watered down curriculum with diminished expectations of learning, then this notion of success is questionable (Vinson et al., 2001). It is possible that what began as an enterprise to identify the best and brightest of high school students and place them in advanced courses with the reward of taking an exam where they could earn college credit, could become a mere test of minimum standards that reputable colleges and universities may soon see as inadequate to grant college credit. In this scenario, AP is no longer advanced placement (Lurie, 2000).

Research indicates that a growing number of high school students see AP courses as just another hurdle to be overcome in gaining admission to selective colleges and universities (Hertberg-Davis et al., 2006; Von Blum, 2008). Conversations with high school and university students have reinforced her beliefs that AP classes are essentially exercises in memorization and exam preparation rather than genuine learning; but more importantly, AP courses can have lasting negative effects on some of the brightest students by creating a philosophy of learning that focuses on “results” rather than the educational process itself. Using interviews and observations of 200 gifted teachers and 300 gifted students in 23 high schools, Hertberg-Davis and her colleagues (2006) found that most teachers’ decisions were driven by the extensive breadth of the AP exam and resulted in superficial student learning. While the students often reported satisfaction with the rigor associated with the AP classes, researchers note that few rigorous alternatives were found in these schools because AP had become the default concept of rigor. Given the widespread use of AP and few other rigorous alternatives, we may not be developing learners who have an earnest intellectual curiosity and a passion for authentic learning, but rather nurturing learners who value outcomes achieved through memorization, test-taking skills, and formulaic learning (Vinson et al., 2001; Von Blum, 2008).

A consequence of the standards and accountability movement and expanded use of the Advanced Placement program has been a proliferation in the ways that AP scores are used by district and state educational authorities. Scores are being used in ways they were never intended; for example, some states like Texas and Florida use AP participation in their annual school ratings (Klopfenstein, 2003). Using AP exams, designed to measure individual knowledge, as indicators of group behavior calls into question the construct validity of the instrument when used for these purposes (Airasian & Madaus, 1983). In a quantitative study of data collected on over 15,000 10th graders by the National Center for Education Statistics, Jeong (2009) analyzed the effect of state incentives on the AP program. Incentives to increase the quality of state AP programs have grown considerably in the past 20 years and include paying the student exam fee, scholarships for students, cash bonuses to teachers, and additional funds for schools. Jeong's (2009) multivariate analyses indicated that the only incentive that was statistically significant was when districts paid the student exam fee as that directly increased the number of students taking the test. There were no performance-based incentives that were statistically significant in increasing exam performance and he also found that student characteristics were far more significant with prior student achievement being the most significant factor in influencing exam performance.

Florida has recently incorporated AP scores into its teacher evaluation and accountability programs (FLDOE, 2012). Administrators should recognize that AP exams are aligned with the overall AP curricula and that students with teachers who choose to cover fewer topics in greater depth are likely to score lower on the AP exam (Klopfenstein, 2003). Assessing AP course and teacher quality based entirely on AP exam scores could penalize teachers who exchange quantity for quality and attempt to tailor their courses to their students' needs.

As a widely accepted measure of college-level learning, consideration of a student's performance in the AP program has increasingly become a factor in the college admissions process. The AP program was not originally intended for use in the college admissions process as students enrolled in AP were expected to go to college (Tai, 2008). Tai notes that considering the emphatic response to the research findings of Geiser and Santelices (2004), who questioned the use of AP courses as a factor for admission to the University of California system, it seems apparent that the College Board endorses the use of AP courses as an indicator of academic excellence for colleges and university admission, though it was never designed to be such.

Conclusion

AP courses are intended to provide a rigorous, college-level experience for students and enable them to earn college credit while still in high school. By design, the quality of the college-level experience and the possibility of college credit are determined by a single, objective end-of-course exam. The stakes associated with student performance on these exams has increased in recent years, as they are used not only for student college credit, but as a factor for student college admission, teacher incentive pay, evaluations, and salaries, and school quality rankings. Increasing the stakes associated with an exam will have intended and unintended consequences. Many of these consequences affect teacher planning of curricular and instructional methods which in turn affects the quality of the learning experience. There are many structural and personal factors that affect the decision making of the teacher as curricular-instructional gatekeeper. The lived experiences of highly successful AP teachers, when confronting these divergent factors and deciding what and how to teach, could be of theoretical

value to teacher education programs and serve as practical examples of what is possible to struggling AP teachers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate the curricular-instructional decision making of four AP U.S. History teachers with high AP exam pass rates and to construct narratives that capture the lived experience of curricular-instructional decision making in light of the many challenges AP teachers confront given increasing student academic diversity, a high-stakes end-of-course exam, and the expectations of a college-level learning experience. The goal of this inquiry was to compose narratives that capture the lived experience of the curricular-instructional decision making of these AP teachers by identifying themes, paradigms, and exemplars through analysis of the participants' interview and classroom observation data. The purpose of the narratives and thematic analysis is to further our knowledge and understanding of how AP teachers with high exam pass rates address the demands of AP curricular-instructional decision making, accommodate students' diverse needs, prepare their students for high-stakes end-of-course testing, and meet the expectations of a college-level classroom experience. A qualitative, phenomenological study is appropriate to address the research questions in this study as the intent is to further understanding of the teacher decision making process through the lived experience of a small number of teachers and to inform readers in a rich and meaningful way (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Decision making is driven by many intrapersonal, social, and structural inputs (Grant, 1996) and only through in-depth, iterative interviews can one "explore the meaning of individual lived experiences" (Rossman & Rollis, 2003, p. 97) and reflect upon

the factors influencing decision making, the context in which the decision is made, and the decision themselves. Furthering insight and understanding of how and why these successful teachers make their decisions in this particular setting will inform teacher education theorists and provide practical information for practicing teachers in similar settings and confronted with similar decisions.

Research Questions

1. What personal beliefs and structural factors impact teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions in AP classes?
2. How does increased student academic diversity in AP classes affect teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions?
3. How does the end-of-course AP exam affect teacher curricular-instructional planning decisions?
4. How do teachers construct a college-level experience for their students given the competing demands of teaching AP courses?

Interpretive Phenomenological Methodology

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological study is to investigate the lived experience of the decision making of four AP U.S. History teachers, to construct interpretive narratives that share their experiences, and to analyze their narratives for common themes that will inform readers about the curricular-instructional decision making of participants in this study. Qualitative research is an interpretive examination of phenomena where the researcher attempts to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative inquiry is most appropriate to answer the research

questions in this study as the questions pertain to human experience, decision making, and the basis for it. Other characteristics of qualitative research that are pertinent to the design of this study are:

- An assumption that social reality is constructed by the participants in it
- An assumption that social reality is continuously constructed in local situations
- An assumption that human intentions play a major role in explaining causal relationships among social phenomena
- Researchers become involved with research participants, to the point of sharing perspectives and assuming a caring attitude
- Study a small number of participants
- Study the meanings that individuals create
- Make holistic observations of the context within which the social action occurs
- Discover concepts and theories after data have been collected
- Generate verbal data to represent the social environment
- Use analytical induction to analyze data
- Prepare interpretive reports that reflect researchers' constructions of the data and an awareness that readers will form their own constructions from what is reported (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 32).

Interpretive phenomenology is a framework for conducting qualitative research that focuses on the lived human experience and how we create meaning from our experiences to make sense of the world around us. Interpretive phenomenological studies aim to describe and interpret participants' lived experiences and how participants interpret their experiences to

develop a worldview (Benner, 2008). Qualitative studies in general, and phenomenological studies in particular, lead to “more experientially sensitive epistemologies and ontologies of practice” (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 615). By examining the lived experience of the decision maker, it is possible to “see something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday life experience and may transform our practices” (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 615). Examination of the lived experiences of the participants in this study will inform readers about how structural factors affect the decision making process, how personal factors affect interpretation of those structures, and how and why participants make the curricular-instructional decisions they do.

Interpretive phenomenological inquiry has two primary aims: to perceive and document the lived experience of subjects (phenomenological) but also to interpret and understand the meaning of human experiences as they relate to the phenomena (hermeneutical) (Smith et al., 2009). Interpretive phenomenological inquiry therefore dictates phenomenological and hermeneutical objectives during interviews. The phenomenological interview is used as a means to explore and gather experiential material and the hermeneutical interview is used to explore the interpretive meaning aspects of the lived experience material (Smith et al., 2009). For this study, each participant was interviewed three times, the first two interviews focused on collecting experiential data (phenomenological) and the third interview focused on exploring the interpretive meaning of the experiential data (hermeneutical). A narrative text was created for each participant based on interview data with the intent of informing readers of participants’ subjective experiences because, as Adams and Van Manen (2008) note, good phenomenological text can “make us suddenly see something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday experience and may transform our practices” (p. 616).

Sampling

In qualitative studies, sample participants are selected, purposefully, because they have a particular characteristic pertinent to the study (Patton, 2002). This study seeks to inform how AP U.S. History teachers, who are highly effective in achieving the goal of high pass rates on AP exams, make curricular-instructional planning decisions in light of competing curriculum and instructional goals, increased academic diversity of student needs, a single high-stakes end-of-course exam, and the expectation of a college-level experience. To accomplish this, a combination of two qualitative sampling techniques were used, “intensity” and “maximum variation” sampling. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) explain intensity sampling as purposeful sampling that identifies participants with some high degree of a characteristic—in this study, AP U.S. History exam pass rates. They explain maximum variation as purposeful sampling that includes multiple cases that exhibit maximum variation in characteristics other than the one used to establish intensity: In this study, AP U.S. History teachers with high pass rates who teach at different schools with different student demographics and organizational leadership, maximizing teacher variation within personal characteristics of teaching experience (i.e., teacher training, years of service, age, and gender). All participants have a history of high AP exam pass rates; maximizing variation among these AP teachers enriches the data and increases validity as it is possible to capture common experiences and themes and isolate exceptions across a greater variety of situations and characteristics than if one did not maximize variation.

In qualitative inquiry, sample size is largely a matter of judgment where considerations of depth, breadth, and saturation must be taken into account (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Smith et al. (2009) note that the number of interviews can be as important as the number of individual

cases in a study. Patton (2002) explains that the objective of a purposeful qualitative sample is to achieve information saturation or redundancy, where adding to the sample would not reveal new insight. Given that the initial sampling criteria addresses successful pass rates (intensity sampling) and a belief that adequate variation within the intensity group can be achieved with a sample size of four, the initial sample size was set at four with the understanding that if analysis revealed shortfalls in the data further participants could be added. It is believed that this plan achieved the necessary depth and breadth required of a qualitative study of this kind (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) as it complied with the number of interviews recommended for an interpretive phenomenological analysis by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) and ensured saturation and redundancy (Patton, 2002).

The pool of teacher participants for this study all worked in the same large school district in central Florida. The University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school district administration required the researcher to obtain permission from the school district before collecting any data from employees in the district. The researcher requested and received approval to conduct this study from the school district. One of the conditions of approval was that the researcher work closely with the District Supervisor of Social Studies. The invitation and selection of the participants was accomplished by identifying teachers who had a history of high AP exam student pass rates (history of exceeding the Florida state average pass rate over the past three years). Consultation between the researcher and the District Supervisor of Social Studies occurred to identify a pool of teachers that fit the AP U.S. History pass rate criteria. Participants were sought through an email message from the District Supervisor of Social Studies describing the studying and soliciting volunteers. After identifying potential participants, the District Supervisor of Social Studies certified that they met the criteria of

successful AP teachers and participants were selected based on maximizing variation considering the high schools that they taught at with regard to school mission, demographics, and prior state standardized testing performance. After ensuring variation among schools, participant characteristics were considered and maximum variation was sought in the demographics of teacher experience, training, age, and gender. Once the researcher and District Supervisor of Social Studies had agreed upon the four participants, they were contacted by email and invited to participate in the study.

Participants

Four highly successful AP U.S. History teachers were selected from a large school district in central Florida and invited to participate in the study. Participants were purposefully selected to create a sample where all participants possess the “intensity” characteristic of highly successful (AP pass rates that exceed the Florida state average for three consecutive years) and within this category “maximized variability” sought in two areas:

1. High school characteristics. The selected school district is large with many diverse high schools: urban and suburban, magnet and traditional, with a range of SES and prior success with state standardized testing. Schools and teacher participants were selected to maximize variability in these characteristics.

2. Teacher characteristics. Sample sought to maximize variation between the four teachers participating in the study; variation factors included teaching experience, type of degree/training (education versus history major in college), age, and gender.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participants:	Alice	Susan	Thomas	Gloria
<i>School Characteristics</i>				
Standardized Testing	Excellent	Average	Good	Good
Magnet / Traditional	Magnet	Traditional	Traditional	Traditional
SES (free or reduced lunch)	46%*	65%	18%	18%
Minority	52%*	76%	34%	31%
Urban / Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Urban	Suburban
<i>Teacher Characteristics</i>				
Degree	History/Ed	History	Soc Sci Ed	History/Ed
Level	BA/MA Ed	BA	BA	BA/MA Ed
Teaching Experience	10yrs	15yrs	6yrs	13yrs
Age	low 30s	low 50s	low 30s	high 30s
Race	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian

*data reflects overall school characteristics, not IB program

The teachers selected as participants in this study possess similar characteristics: teaching in the same school district, teaching an AP U.S. History course, and end-of-course pass rates that have been highly successful (history of exceeding state average over past three years). Variation exists within the teachers' high schools, teacher experience and training, and personal characteristics. The purposeful sample was selected with the expectation that teachers selected are as generally representative of the demographics found among AP U.S. History teachers in the district as possible; demographics relating to teaching experience, training, age, and gender were

considered and maximized when selecting the sample. As all teachers are teaching in the same school district, all are subject to the same state and district policies. Variation in structural factors occur at the school level so maximum variation in teachers' schools were sought and accomplished by: selecting participants from different schools and maximizing diversity of school selection within key demographic factors of urban versus suburban, traditional versus magnet school, higher versus lower SES, and the racial and ethnic makeup of student bodies.

Location of Interviews and Remuneration

The three interviews were arranged at a location of the participants' preference. All participants were told that they would be paid \$75.00 in the form of Publix (supermarket) gift certificates for completing the three scheduled interviews and verifying the final transcript. Furthermore, they were told that if they withdrew from the study before completion, they would be paid \$20.00 in the form of a Publix gift certificate for each complete interview and \$15.00 for verification of the interview transcripts. Participants incurred no costs as a result of being in this study. All participants completed the study, participated in all three interviews, and verified their transcripts. One participant declined any remuneration but participated in all phases of the study and two participants declined the final \$15.00 for reviewing their transcripts.

Data Collection

Pilot Study

Before collecting any data from the four participants in the study, a pilot study was conducted on a single AP U.S. History teacher with the intent of: gaining feedback about the clarity of researcher instructions and the pre-interview survey, cognitive interviewing of the

semi-structured interview questions for validation and possible revision, and generally to serve as a trial run of the practical and analytical procedures planned for the study participants. The pilot study participant was a successful AP U.S. History teacher from the same district as the participants, participated in all phases of planned data collection (pre-interview survey, classroom observation, and three one-hour interviews), and received the same compensation as the actual research participants. The pre-survey questionnaire, interview questions, and data collection and analysis protocol were adjusted and clarified based on feedback from the pilot study participant and researcher determination of what worked and what needed revision based on the trial run of established study procedures.

Pre-Interview Survey

Before the interviews occurred, the researcher asked participants to complete a pre-interview survey that contained questions about the participants' teaching background and personal data. The survey questions were modified from a survey used in a study (Paek et al., 2005) sponsored by the College Board to examine the curricular-instructional practices of AP U.S. History teachers and can be found at Appendix B. The survey was used to inform the researcher of background information about the participants prior to the interview. The researcher had never met three of the participants but had met and worked with one of the participants for a short time at a school four years earlier.

Classroom observation

To aid the researcher in better understanding teachers' classroom challenges, curricular-instructional decision making, and the classroom experience provided to his/her students, the researcher observed each teacher during a class lesson of their choice. Classroom observation

allowed the researcher to observe the teachers in their classroom environments and see them interacting with their students. The observations were scheduled before the semi-structured interviews so that the researcher could meet the teacher, establish some rapport, and be generally familiar with the participants' teaching environments during the subsequent interviews. The observations were used to augment the interview data by providing the researcher with a deeper understanding of the teachers' lived experience by seeing them in their classrooms with their students.

Interviews

Three semi-structured interviews with each participant were conducted for the purpose of data collection during this study. The interviews were all held in locations of the participants' choosing, which included classrooms and public places, and lasted for one hour each. The interview questions were designed to elicit responses that would provide commentary and serve to address the research questions. Many of the questions were modified from a survey instrument used by Paek et al. (2005) in their investigation of AP U.S. history teacher planning practices. Research questions were revised and edited as a result of cognitive interviewing during the pilot study. Questions used during the semi-structured interviews can be found at Appendix C. This approach provided 12 hours of interview data for analysis and construction of narratives that are intended to inform readers of the shared experiences of the four participants in the study. To facilitate analysis and ensure reliability, all interviews were recorded for transcription; therefore, participant permission to record the interviews was necessary and acquired as a condition to be a participant in the study. The interviews were accomplished and structured in accordance with guidance recommended by Seidman (2006) in *Interviewing as*

Qualitative Research, a Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences. The researcher scheduled each of the individuals' three interviews approximately a week apart so that participants completed their three interviews in about two weeks' time. All of the interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes and were structured with a specific purpose in mind:

1st interview. The first interview was designed to establish context for the curricular-instructional decision making experience, specifically the teachers' personal backgrounds, beliefs, and philosophies as well as organizational and community structural influences that affect the planning and decision making process. This interview was specifically designed to address research question one: "What personal beliefs and structural factors impact teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions in AP classes?"

2nd interview. The second interview was designed to elicit sharing of participant teaching experiences and was specifically structured to address research questions two and three: "How does increased student academic diversity in AP classes affect teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions?" and "How does the end-of-course AP exam affect teacher curricular-instructional planning decisions?"

3rd interview. The final interview was designed to elicit reflection and meaning from the participant and was specifically structured to address research question four but did, as necessary, revisit the first three research questions. Research question four asks "How do teachers construct a college-level learning experience for their students given the competing demands of teaching AP courses?"

As stated above, the interview questions were designed to elicit description and explanation from participants about the challenges they face, the curricular-instructional

decisions they make relative to content and instructional strategies, how they address the increasing levels of diverse student needs in their classroom, the influence of the AP exam, and how they feel about the college-level experience they provide to their AP students. Data collected during these interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted for the purpose of creating narratives that capture participants' shared experiences and identification of common themes that inform the reader.

Analysis

The qualitative analytic process involves systematically organizing data into themes and patterns, bringing meaning to the themes to convey a coherent story, and writing it all up to share so that other may read what has been learned (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). All interviews were audio recorded (participant approval was obtained beforehand) and transcribed by a transcription services company. After the participants' three interviews were transcribed, the researcher forwarded the interview transcripts to the participants via email and asked them to review their transcripts, verify for accuracy, and make changes to the record that were inaccurate. Following participant verification of the transcripts, the interview data were analyzed using established qualitative analysis procedures (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Saldana, 2009; Smith et al., 2009), first by hand for a general overview and then using ATLAS.ti software. Using the ATLAS.ti software, coding of the interview data were accomplished, analytic memos undertaken, and intra-personal and inter-personal themes explored. The qualitative ATLAS.ti software enabled the researcher to effectively code large amounts of data, extract key portions of interview text for examination, explore themes within and between participants, and manage key data to be used as support for the narratives. The coding process had three phases: first, an initial analysis of the

interviews with general codes applied and then a second, in depth analysis of the interviews with more specific, detailed codes applied. In the third phase, two doctoral candidates provided support to this study by reviewing all of the second-phase coding to validate the legitimacy of the coding and to verify consistency in application of the coding. Differences or discrepancies found during the validation process were minor and these were resolved and adjustments made to the coding.

Quotations from interview transcripts that were coded using ATLAS.ti have been used in this study to develop the case study narratives and to identify the major themes in this study. A table of codes used in this study is included for information at Appendix G. It should be noted that the coding table identifies most codes used and lists their frequency by participant but there is no way to reflect the saliency of a comment in the table and one should use caution when attributing meaning to the frequency of a code. To interpret the interview data, three discovery and presentational strategies typically used in interpretive phenomenological inquiry were used: thematic analysis, paradigm cases, and exemplars:

Thematic Analysis: themes within and across participants were identified. Themes were kept as close as possible to the text.

Paradigm Cases: strong instances of a phenomenon. The paradigm case stands out to readers as being a strong example of ‘something’ often before the interpreter understands what the paradigm case illustrates. Gives the interpreter an open-ended inductive approach to the text – used as a discovery method and presentational strategy.

Exemplars: illustrated common patterns of meaning, common situations, and embodied skilled know-how. They were useful in presenting the interpretation so that the readers understand the practical worlds being articulated. (Benner, 2008, p. 463)

Reliability and Role of the Researcher

Procedures to increase reliability were built into the research design in the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation to minimize inconsistencies and to strengthen overall verisimilitude of results. During data collection, all interviews were recorded and transcribed to capture the entire interview and ensure transparency of data. After the data were collected and the transcription process was complete, participants were asked to verify their transcripts for accuracy and identify text that was inaccurate either by way of transcription or inaccurately spoken by the participant. These inaccuracies were noted and corrections made to the text as warranted. This procedure ensures accurate transcriptions of the interviews were in place for analysis. Benner (2008) also notes that “it is useful to have an interpretive team to reach consensual validation of interpretations of the text” (p. 462). During the coding process, a panel of two doctoral graduate students volunteered to serve as a peer validation panel to review the coding of the transcripts and corroborate emerging themes from the analysis. Using a procedure that has multiple researchers verifying consistency of coding and identification of themes helps ensure the generated narrative has the highest level of verisimilitude possible, or that the likelihood that our interpretation remains as true to the participant experiential text as possible.

Benner (2008) notes that “researchers should take note of their assumptions coming into the research with the aim of making them as clear as possible” (p. 462). To that end, as the researcher I would like to be clear about my own experience and feelings about the AP program.

The AP program was created long before standards-based education reform became main stream in this nation and I do not believe that the College Board operates with the intention of implementing standards and ensuring accountability in our education system; however, I do have concerns that some states and school districts may be using the program to that effect which could have detrimental effects on the program in general. As a practicing high school teacher, I have taught AP classes for the past seven years, including AP U.S. History, AP World History, AP Government and Politics, AP Psychology, and AP Macroeconomics. In this short time, I have seen the program grow dramatically from a point where, arguably, too few AP social studies classes were offered in high schools to a point where AP classes are becoming main stream and the traditional Honors and Regular social studies classes are serving reduced numbers of students. The increased numbers of students taking AP classes has led to an increase in demand for AP teachers and an increase in academic diversity of students and their needs in classes that traditionally had been rather uniform. My own struggles in making curricular-instructional decisions for my students when considering what I believed was best for their learning, development, and appreciation of the subject matter, balanced with the need to shepherd them all towards successful performance on the AP test, was in large part the impetus for my interest in this study. I do believe that AP has a role in our education system today, but I also believe these programs should be expanded carefully with a well-informed understanding of what the curricular-instructional effects are as there is disagreement among researchers about the college-preparatory value of the program as well as its effects on our education system, both intended and unintended.

Ethical Considerations

Before the interviews began, participants were advised of the study purposes, procedures, and confidentiality and signed an Informed Consent Agreement (Appendix E). The informed consent is used to ensure participants understand their rights as participants, confidentiality, access to transcripts and recordings, and that they may choose to leave the study at any point. To facilitate confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the study and reporting to disguise the names of participants and their work locations. Permission was obtained from the school district to conduct this study and one of the conditions for approval was that the researcher work with the District Supervisor of Social Studies during all phases of the study. The Supervisor promoted the study, assisted with identification of potential participants, and was aware of the selection of participants for this study and participants were informed of that and are aware. Only the researcher and the Supervisor are aware of the actual identities of participants in this study.

The role of the researcher in this study was to attentively listen, record, and share the experiences and stories as accurately as possible. Participants were viewed as experts in their lived experience. My duty as the researcher was to facilitate communication of their experiences, accurately document them, and share their experiences with readers with as high a level of fidelity as possible. The researcher understands that he has an ethical obligation to equitable treatment of all participants during data collection, analysis, and reporting and is taking all actions necessary to ensure equitable treatment as they arise.

To maintain confidentiality, participants were given a pseudonym and during reporting of data and findings participants and their schools were not identified. A professional transcription

service was used to transcribe the audio files. The audio files are locked in the researcher's house. Each participant was provided a copy of their own transcription. The participants and principal investigator are the only ones with access to the original transcripts. The master audio file and original transcripts will remain in the researcher's possession and will be destroyed five years after the publication of the dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The four teachers in this study were selected because they were considered highly successful in teaching AP U.S. History. All four of these teachers have a record of success as defined by student performance on the AP exam that exceeds Florida averages over the past three years. Additionally, each one of these teachers was assessed as a highly successful teacher by the Supervisor, High School Social Studies in the district that they teach in. These four teachers work at high schools that represent a range of student academic achievement and demographics. Alice teaches in an IB program at an urban Magnet School—her students have a history of high academic achievement. The overall high school performance is lower than that of the IB students and SES and minority rates are close to the district average. Both Thomas and Gloria teach at high schools with similar levels of high academic achievement, though Thomas’s school is urban and Gloria’s is suburban. Both of these schools have students that come from above average SES levels and have student bodies with lower than average minority rates. Susan’s school has a more modest record of achievement—it underperformed in the couple of years before last year but last year it received Florida’s highest rating. Minority rates are higher than the district average and SES levels are lower than the district average. In Susan’s case, she was teaching AP U.S. History at an out of state high school where her students had outstanding pass rates on the AP exam; she acknowledges that the pass rates of students at her current high school have not been as high and she is working hard to find methods that are more effective for

these students. Once a range of schools was established, teachers were selected to maximize variation among them. A priority was placed on maximizing teacher experience and the types of degrees teachers had received; finally, gender, age, and race were considered. A table of participant characteristics can be found in the Sample section of Chapter Three and a brief description of each teacher and their schools can be found at the beginning of each of their narratives.

All four teachers were interviewed during three one-hour interviews occurring during a period that lasted approximately two weeks. Procedures for the interviews, transcription, and qualitative data analysis are outlined in Chapter Three. The purpose of this study is to further understanding about how teachers with highly successful AP exam pass rates address the competing demands placed upon them and make curricular-instructional decisions in light of increased academic diversity, high-stakes testing, and the expectation of a college-level experience. To do this, this study had four basic research questions:

1. What personal beliefs and structural factors impact teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions in AP classes?
2. How does increased student academic diversity in AP classes affect teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions?
3. How does the end-of-course AP exam affect teacher curricular-instructional planning decisions?
4. How do teachers construct a college-level experience for their students given the competing demands of teaching AP courses?

The study attempts to determine how personal, organizational, and policy factors affect teacher decision. To do so, Grant's et al. (2002) recommendation for merging a structuralist perspective with an interpretivist one to arrive at an interactional view was adopted. Research question one is the fundamental question in this study; research questions two, three, and four address factors that are of specific interest in this study but are all factors that affect teacher decision making and some combination of personal beliefs, organizational structures, and policy initiatives. As this study attempts to ascertain how personal, organization, and policy factors affect teacher decision making, the participant narratives are organized in this way. Each participant narrative has a brief introduction and then their individual, lived experiences are organized into personal, organizational, and policy sub-sections to help the reader see how these factors affect their decision making. These three major sub-sections are further organized into the factors that affect teacher curricular-instructional decision-making. The actual subheadings found in this section are written in first person from the teachers' perspectives and the intent is to help organize the teachers' data for the reader. Table 2 below provides a summary of the participant demographics.

Table 2. Teacher Characteristics

<i>Teacher Characteristics</i>	Alice	Susan	Thomas	Gloria
Degree	History/Ed	History	Soc Sci Ed	History/Ed
Level	BA/MA Ed	BA	BA	BA/MA Ed
Teaching Experience	10yrs	15yrs	6yrs	13yrs
Age	low 30s	low 50s	low 30s	high 30s
Race	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian

Alice

Alice has been a high school teacher for nine years, six in the current school district and three in another Florida school district. She teaches AP U.S. History and Government classes. She received her Bachelor's Degree in History and Master's Degree in Education from a public university in Florida. She teaches five International Baccalaureate (IB) classes on a block schedule with about 23 students per class. She spends 15-20 hours per week preparing for class and offers after school sessions, including Saturday study sessions two months prior to the AP exam. She uses the textbook, internet, and AP guides to prepare for her lessons. She expects her students to spend about three hours per week on homework for her class.

Alice teaches in the IB program at an urban magnet high school. Students selected for the IB program have a record of high achievement and typically possess well-developed academic skills. The urban high school she teaches at received a B grade by the state of Florida in the 2011-2012 school year and the previous two years' grades were also Bs. The school has a diverse student population with a minority rate of 52% and 46% receiving free or reduced lunch. The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) student percentages for 2011-2012 are as follows: 59% passed reading, 86% passed math, 81% passed writing and 60% passed science benchmarks.

On the day her classroom was observed, Alice's students interacted with her in a casual warm manner not only discussing AP U.S. History but also commenting on other topics such as sports, concerts, and foods. Her demeanor with her students was very friendly and personal. She had an average size classroom with large pull down maps and two bulletin boards, one of which displayed some of the students' work, and her desk displayed many photos of her students.

There is no assigned seating but the students were orderly when coming into the room and taking their seats. She began the class with a question and answer session based on the homework assigned the previous night. The students displayed an impressive level of knowledge and understanding of the material as well as a sincere intellectual curiosity about the subject. Alice then transitioned into the lecture, which was very detailed with a rapid pace. She was very organized and detail oriented, demanding but warm and interactive with students. The students asked good questions and the lesson appeared highly effective due, not only to Alice's preparation, but to the student's preparation as well, clearly having done their homework and being attentiveness during the class.

Personal

What I believe AP U.S. History should be like. Alice believes AP begins with the rigor of the course. Students are expected to engage with the content in ways that go beyond what one would find in a traditional history classroom. She thinks AP U.S. History classes should challenge students in ways that they haven't been challenged before in a history course:

It's essentially just stepping up the rigor of the course, challenging students to think in a collegiate way, putting forth greater analysis and critical thinking, more in-depth thinking, taking it a step further than the normal high school standard. I think it should be intellectually stimulating and challenge them to think about things in a way that they haven't thought about them before.

Alice believes that the pace should be much faster than traditional high school classrooms. The AP environment means that students must develop and practice self-motivated studying and put forth more effort than a traditional high school class would demand. She feels this is grooming

for what will be expected of them at the college level. She wishes she didn't have to move through the content so quickly but conversely she feels this sort of instructional pace will prepare them for what they will encounter in college. Alice feels that her AP class would be enhanced by including more outside, supplementary readings but recognizes that there is no time to include them. While adding additional readings and analysis might make the course more college level experience, she feels the overall effect on her students would be negative as they are so busy with work for their other AP classes. She feels that her instruction and their performance warrants college credit when a successful score is achieved on the exam even if the actual college level experience might be different.

Alice sees her class as a high school-college class hybrid. The environment is similar, the content and analysis is of sufficient rigor, but the attention they receive from their instructor is more of a high school nature because their age and circumstances demand that. She believes that the experience her students get in her class is sufficiently rigorous and that they learn content and skills in ways that often exceed what occurs in a college history class. She states that the course itself provides an experience that is similar to college, but recognizing that her students are only 16 to 17 years old, she feels AP is really preparing students for college success by engaging them in an experience now that is similar to college and providing an opportunity to learn the skills that will be expected of them when they get there. Alice stated:

I think my class is similar to a college class in the details that I give because when I taught traditional it was more of just basic general ideas about what's going on at the time. I require greater analysis on their part, and more in-depth reasoning about why things were going on as far as – instead of me just giving them all the answers. It's

different in the fact that they still do have homework every night. They still do have chapter quizzes, so it's more like a high school class in that where I'm keeping them all on pace, making sure they catch up. It's also stepping up the requirement [now] of their intellectual capabilities, as well as requiring greater analysis, greater in-depth thinking which may not be required at high school level. I think if they do well it's because I think the AP exam is high enough of a testing level that if they can pass it, then they should earn college credit. I think they probably do more work in our AP classes than what's required in college because the college is just going to be a lecture-based history class, and they might have a couple of tests, maybe a paper for the whole course.

In particular, she feels AP U.S. History is college preparatory with regard to writing as many of them haven't developed solid writing skills, specifically, writing objective evidence-supported arguments. In AP U.S. History they practice and improve their writing:

I think just figuring out how to answer questions with substantiated facts for different perspective because they're not opinionated questions and a lot of students try to write [their] opinions ... So when they can be taught to think critically and bringing outside information to support their claims whether it's for or against whatever just showing different perspectives of history and not just embracing one perspective.

She has tough standards and expects her students to rise to those standards. She reports that her students quickly see that she is unwavering in her administration of the rules. She feels that the rules she puts in place and consistently administers teaches them responsibility and time management and provides an environment similar to that which they will encounter in college:

In college you don't get to just turn in stuff whenever you want, so I'm trying to prepare

them for that as well, which is why I think my students are so successful in my course because I kind of force them to keep up so they know what's going on all the time.

Alice believes AP should embrace a collegiate level of professor-student relationship that might be found at a small private college. She sees tutoring and reviewing with the students as a collegiate, scholarly, and fun endeavor for them and she makes time for them during class hours, after school, and on weekends. She believes that college credit is warranted because they learn a commensurate level of content and put forth a level of effort that exceeds a similar college level class and that all of this is validated by a nationally implemented, standardized exam:

I think for the effort they put in, they should earn credit because they essentially know the same thing. They're demonstrating that they know the same things with their exams again, and they probably put forth greater effort as far as work and projects than would be required then in college, so I definitely think they should earn their college credit

The learning experience I create in Advanced Placement U.S. History. Alice feels that it is important to establish routines for students. When students have routines they know what is expected of them and they are more comfortable and not surprised by not knowing what's coming up next for them. There's significant breadth of content and Alice believes that repetition of content helps them remember and see connections which helps provide meaning for students. She tries to get her students to understand why some people and events are more significant than others rather than simply accepting it because an authoritative source says so. Seeing historical cause-effect, conducting historical analysis, and making historical predictions based on what they have already learned are major elements of her learning philosophy:

I'm always digging deeper with them, trying to get them to understand what it is they're

writing down, why what they wrote down is important to what we're studying and again making those connections to things we've already studied ... predicting things that might happen as a result of what we've studied ... just critically thinking ... [and] analyzing why and how and seeing the connections between things.

She has students focus on big themes that are clearly related to other content and then she feels it is her responsibility to provide the supporting detail. Alice believes in content repetition: covering the content in a variety of ways, helping students see connections between content, and having the students think critically about the content to promote historical analysis and see historical themes. In this way students remember the content and attach meaning in ways that are more meaningful to them:

[I] teach the knowledge through repetition ... make connections over and over again ... make strong connections from things we've already studied to things in the past to things we just recently studied ... reiterating the small details for content knowledge. [I] develop critical thinking and analytical ability ... showing how this led to this which caused this and later this happened ... showing the big picture.

When deciding on instructional methods, she tends to favor teacher-directed instruction. She feels it is the teacher's duty to make sense of the large volume of content and steer the students toward the important content while reducing the "noise" or perceived excessive historical detail. She feels that too much detail can be detrimental as it over-complicates the issues and students become confused. Alice believes that history is traditionally taught via lecture more often than other subjects. She sees herself as a visual and oral learner and recognizes that has some impact on why she feels it is the most effective means to cover a significant volume of content:

History is typically a lecture based type education, it has been traditionally just lecture based and when you want the details, if you really like history, you absorb those details through a lecture versus other subjects.

Alice believes lecture allows her to help make the connections with her students through repetition but also to assess whether they have done their assignments and determine the quality of comprehension. Students have reading assignments and answer prepared guided reading questions. She uses vigorous question-answer sessions to orally evaluate whether students have read their assignments and understand the material. Often she seeks feedback from her students as to whether they are satisfied with so much lecture and they most often report that they enjoy class lectures. Even though students indicated a preference for lecture, Alice does believe that student-centered activities can be helpful in retaining information better and can be more enjoyable for some students. Alice believes student-centered methods are valuable but limited time to cover the amount of breadth in the course, student preferences, and her own perceptions of what's effective impact what instructional methods she chooses. That being said, she does feel that it is necessary at times to vary instruction so that students don't become bored or complacent with too much lecture and discussion so she varies the methods as she has time:

I've done the 1920s like radio broadcast where they have to perform as if they were doing the old radio show and I assign them different groups ... I have done an Antebellum Reforms group project where they have to create a presentation for the reform ... I do a pre-Civil War tension newspaper project, they get in groups and they have to write articles from the perspective of either the North or the South so I do integrate different things when I can.

While there isn't a wide variety of writing types in her class, she doesn't feel like any further writing is necessary for their learning; she notes that IB students are taught how to write a research paper as part of the IB curriculum and they must be able to successfully do that to meet the requirements of the IB program. "They are required to do research papers in their subjects in IB, so that's kind of nice because I don't feel the need to necessarily integrate that in my class."

How my beliefs shape my AP U.S. History classroom. Alice is organized in her planning and places her assignments and class lecture presentations on line for students to print for class so they can take notes and then go back and review if they need to. Students know what's coming in the near future and can see major upcoming events on a calendar—furthermore, there's a historical trail of documents if the students want to backtrack in preparation for an assessment. "I am pretty routine and I'm pretty organized. I have a website and I use Engrade and it's a calendar basically with all my assignments listed and they can go back."

She establishes quite strict standards for her students and she expects them to rise to the standards. She finds that they do and her sound policies and consistent application combined with a significant degree of rapport and caring leads students to understand that she has their best interests at heart and they respect her for it. She works hard to get them to realize that she has their best interests at heart and that the hard work that she has them complete will result in dividends. She has developed a trusting relationship with her students—she is demanding and firm, yet caring and supportive. She wants them to understand that they have a difficult task before them which will require hard work on everyone's (including her) part but that it will be worth it in the end:

Because of that, they buy into what I'm doing for them because – I follow through. I

never have to get mad. I never have to yell. If they don't do something, they know they have a consequence - they make a choice, I give the consequence. It's not a big deal.

Everybody's human, we all make mistakes, we move on.

Alice characterizes her classroom as a place of standards for all rather than any significant degree of differentiated instruction. She feels that all students should meet the same classroom objectives and notes that they will be assessed using the same standardized exam from the College Board:

My classroom would probably be targeted more towards the standards for all because they do have the AP guidelines in which they're all going to be tested on the same thing. I pretty much target the curriculum to the objective rather than the student. I make sure that all the students meet all the objectives to the best of my ability as opposed to just doing what they can do for their level.

Alice is not afraid to be herself, to have fun with the students, and she believes this helps create good student – teacher rapport leads to strong bonds over time. She believes in continuous improvement and enjoys meeting with other teachers to discuss and get their feedback and ideas for alternative instructional methods. As she continually searches for ways to make her course better, she sees her own effectiveness as a factor of their performance. For Alice, seeing student improvement is rewarding. In fact, seeing students make large learning gains is the most satisfying:

What I really like is just seeing them improve – because again, I have the ability to look at their AP Euro scores from 10th Grade and see where they were as a base. So then I can see, “Okay this kid had a 1. I need to get him to a 2 or at least a 2, hopefully a 3.” But

I've had kids jump from 1s in AP Euro to a 4 under me. So that gives me that motivation to keep working hard because I can bring them out. I can help them succeed... my passion is to help them do well.

Her position takes considerable time and work as a lot of time is required to prepare, assess, and tutor students outside of the classroom hours. This significant allocation of her personal time has effects on her family life at times.

She feels the IB program facilitates interaction between herself and parents (often she has siblings in her class over time) and because of those family connections she feels more comfortable getting closer to her students which manifests itself in Saturday classroom sessions and even out of the classroom meetings from time to time. This type of relationships takes the teacher-student rapport to a higher level and also reinforces her caring nature:

It's a different environment IB. Because it's the same 100 kids, 120 kids in the program moving together, it's more of a family type of environment I think. For a lot of my students I've known their parents for a few years because I've taught their siblings, so I've kind of built this reputation of just kind of being a teacher that people can relate to, and the parents are comfortable with me.

How I feel about teaching AP U.S. History. On one hand Alice feels like she has autonomy in making curricular-instructional decisions. However, with the large scope of the content combined with the high expectations of student performance on the AP exam, she indicates that she feels compelled to try to teach as much content as possible and feels that lecture and discussion are the most efficient methods to do so. She notes that she feels she teaches to the test. Performance on the AP exam matters for students and teachers as student

performance on the exam is considered as part of the teacher's evaluation; therefore, curricular-instructional decisions have to be carefully considered. Despite the fact that she has more autonomy in many ways as an AP teacher, Alice feels more constrained when she teaches AP U.S. History than a traditional U.S. History class as her curricular-instructional decisions may impact student performance on the end-of-course exam:

I feel like I'm teaching to the test. I feel like if I was able to come up with a way to shake things up then I would have the independence to do that. But then it's scary too, to try and do that, because of course with our pay for performance, everything comes back to pass rates ... I feel I'm more constrained by my curriculum as far as how I have to teach versus when I teach honors or traditional U.S. History.

Alice feels she has to rush through the curriculum and this usually translates into the need to lecture for time efficiency and to help ensure the kids "get it." If she had more time for the curriculum she may choose different methods or vary the methods more. Given that IB is on a block schedule, she only sees them two to three times a week. This means she feels constrained as far as classroom time. She feels pressure to make sure the AP U.S. History content is covered—because of that, she doesn't include as many student projects or alternate versions of history (for analytical comparison) that she'd like:

If [there were] more time, [I'd do] more projects and do a lot of document reading; let's really take our time and get into the nitty-gritty. I feel like for only seeing them twice a week, maybe three times on a off week, I have to just beat it in as quickly as possible with whatever method works ... I don't bring in a lot of outside stuff from historians, for comparison ... Unfortunately, it's just I got to get the content covered, so that's where I

feel like I'm restrained.

Alice bluntly points out that student performance on the AP exam is critical in AP classes. Because of its paramount importance, she ultimately feels like she has to teach to the test and, as a teacher, she does have some reservations about it:

You always have the AP exams in the back of your mind ... to get them to that point where they need to pass the exam. I feel like I'm teaching to the test. I know I'm teaching to the test. And it does bug me a little bit.

In preparing her students for the exam, Alice feels that her experience in teaching AP U.S. History has led to an improved ability to see what's key within the College Board stated and tested curriculum. When she reads College Board documents, AP prep materials, various AP textbooks, and AP training, she begins to see some events, people, themes commonly emphasized as well as recurring, cyclical or progressing themes in history. This enables her to treat those as important and she has her students focus on those common concepts and recurring events and themes. As the College Board does not provide a detailed AP U.S. History curriculum and the AP exam can cover a vast amount of information, Alice works hard at anticipating the "testable" College Board curriculum as seen in College Board documents, released exams, and other AP U.S. History readings and preparatory materials. "If I've been seeing it multiple times then there's a good likelihood that it would be something they need to know."

Alice views getting students to pass the AP exam as a challenge. While she embraces the "AP challenge," she does feel like the boundaries of the curriculum are not well-defined so she has to teach "everything" which is disconcerting. She tries to consistently improve her own

performance as measured through student success rates on the AP exam:

I want to do well because I challenge myself every year. You know I don't want higher pass rates just for the bragging. I want the higher pass rates because that means I'm reaching my students in a better way. I'm doing my job better is what it tells me... it makes me happy to know that I'm continuing to improve.

Because passing the AP exam is important to students and teachers alike, teachers' needs and students' needs become aligned with regard to AP exam performance. Alice makes it clear though that she values student growth and finds it rewarding. "I mean I want to have a good pass rate but ultimately ... I want them to do well for them." Though she acknowledges that AP pass rates are important in determining her reputation as a teacher, she feels that they are not the only consideration. For example, she believes it's a teacher's responsibility to be organized and she takes measures to ensure she is organized so that her students know exactly what is being asked of them and that they have the tools to accomplish the tasks. Ultimately, Alice feels that the AP exam is an adequate measure of student success in AP U.S. History. The exam gives the students a chance to demonstrate knowledge based on recognition in the multiple choice section but also knowledge based on recall with the three essays:

I would consider it (AP exam) an adequate measure. Not great but adequate. I mean I think the division between multiple choice and essay gives certain students the ability to recall information through recognition versus recalling it straight from memory. So I think that's a good fair way.

Organizational

How my students affect my classroom. On average, the students selected for the IB program are more academically inclined than you would find in a traditional high school. This enables Alice to establish procedures that place demands on the students with regard to preparation which they in turn meet. For example, she places her lecture notes and presentations online and the students print them before they come to class so they can take notes. Since IB students tend to be high-achieving, Alice believes she can focus almost exclusively on content because the vast majority of her students have the requisite reading and writing skills when they enter the class in August:

I figure if I focus on the content, they can ramble on in an essay if they know the content because they're not graded on format and structure and grammar so that's not really as important to me.

Alice explains that her students demonstrate a significant degree of intrinsic motivation. IB students are college-bound and are highly competitive about what college they get into. Most of her students aren't content with passing the AP exam with a score of "3" they want a "5:"

My students are typically intrinsically motivated, most of them want to do well ... they want to go to good colleges so they still are intrinsically motivated to accomplish those things even if they don't have that love of History ... I have so many kids this year who proclaim, "I want a 5. I'm going do what I have to do to get a 5." And so they're taking it much more beyond the typical student I think.

IB students tend to be highly competitive and receptive to peer pressure to succeed:

Most of them are pretty motivated so there's not a lot of diversity with motivation – ... for the most part positive peer pressure surrounds these IB students and so they usually want to beat each other to do well.

Though Alice sees her classroom as a place of same standards for all, at times a degree of differentiation is used in what is demanded by the highest performing students in their writing. She will push some of the high performers more because she feels they can do more and she wants to see them grow commensurate with growth expected of the rest of the class. Likewise, she may be satisfied with a lower degree of detail or argumentation from a lower performing student that still meets the standard. While IB students tend to be a more homogenous group than are likely found in traditional classrooms, Alice feels that there is some diversity in IB, particularly in interest and motivation. She notes that not all of her students like history or are motivated to perform in the way that she would like:

I had some students who have given up the entire course. Not because of ability though.

They're in the program for a reason, they are capable, but some of them just truly have no interest in history or they have no interest in keeping up with the homework so they choose not to.

Even though some students may not particularly like history or feel motivated to succeed at a level she would like to see, she does feel that the less motivated students benefit from the IB environment, academic standards, and examples set by most students of the students in her classes. She sees her AP U.S. History class as beneficial to student growth even if the students don't pass the test. "They're going prepared with a greater ability to analyze, to think critically."

While she favors lecture as a preferred instructional method, she recognizes that students like a degree of variety in the classroom as far as methods and tries new methods to see how effective they are. She also includes student projects as they like them and are quite good at them; however, the time that it takes to share them in class is frequently a consideration and this keeps her from doing them more often:

I did a flipped classroom one day where I recorded my lecture and I had them listen to lecture for homework so that they could come in and do the activity in class. And the majority of the kids said they really liked it. They actually had a really good time creating it [project] and being creative with this ... and then we ran out of time to present it but I had to keep going and so it was all great in theory and they had a great time creating the posters but as far as presenting each posted individually, it would have taken a whole other class and I didn't have time to give that up.

Alice feels that the AP program is good for students as they receive intangible rewards when they achieve something that they have worked hard to accomplish. However, they also receive tangible rewards in the form of college credit which saves them money later:

So for their own sense of realizing that if you work hard it does pay off. I think that's a great reason for them to do well and why it's important for them to pass. Earning the college credit ... will save them money and contribute better to their economic standing in college because they don't have to take that class.

How parents affect my classroom. At her high school, parents are highly involved in their child's education and have stressed the importance of education to their children. Alice notes that the parents, as a whole, appear to have higher levels of educational backgrounds than

you would typically find in a traditional high school. They are very involved in school activities and the Parent Teacher Student Associate (PTSA) has a fund to support teachers with classroom resources if they need it. Parents are highly involved in her classroom and Alice welcomes that and feels that it improves the community and student performance:

Most of my students are typically from homes in which education has always been a priority ... I think probably 50, 70 percent of the parents of my students probably have stressed the importance of education for them and you can tell in interactions with the parents [that education is important]. So it think it's all a combination which ultimately turns into better pass rates because the parents encourage, the students are motivated and I'm here to support them.

Alice feels that AP pass rates are important to parents and that they will make judgments about her effectiveness based on how well her students perform on the exam. While they might not know the exact pass percentages, they will find out generally how well a teacher did and are likely to raise a concern if the teacher performance is not where they think it should be:

Parents look at your success rate and they will make judgments based on your efficiency in the classroom ... And parents will come up and talk to the principal about teachers and lack of efficiency if they feel the teacher is not doing their job right.

How other teachers affect my classroom. Alice is the only IB AP U.S. History teacher but there is another AP U.S. History teacher in her high school on the traditional side and they collaborate at times with regard to effective instructional methods. "We'll bounce ideas off each other here and there to try and see if there's a new way of teaching something that we hadn't thought about." While she indicates that she's not concerned about what other teachers think of

her pass rates, she understands pass rates are common knowledge as it's not difficult to find out:

They find out. Some of the teachers aren't shy about saying them and then they talk to each other. They're all in the same classes with all the same people and so if only one teacher teaches everybody they can talk to each other and say, "Hey I passed, you passed" and they do their own count.

How the administration affects my classroom. AP pass rates are of particular importance to administrators as they are used in overall school grade calculations and in an IB school they are used as a recruitment tool to attract students to the magnet IB programs:

I feel like for my position in this program it's important to make sure that they have a good standing program and that they can essentially use that [exam pass rate] as a recruitment tool for middle school students looking for their freshman options and if they can display highly effective teachers with good pass rates then that makes the program over all look better and makes students and parents want to be part of this program. So I think it's very important to them.

She further notes that her administration appears to have complete confidence in her and is supportive but largely hands off with regard to any suggestions about her instructional methods or course content. They encourage her to attend the AP Summer Institute professional development seminars and she does that every summer.

How the school district affects my classroom. Alice does feel that the school district teacher evaluation program doesn't like teacher-directed activities, particularly lecture, and that they want to see student-centered activities. Because of this she feels there's a disconnect

between what she feels works as a teacher and what the district mandates as far as preferred classroom instructional methods:

They get onto me of course if they come in, pop in informal, and I'm lecturing, saying some students aren't engaged ... You know we're danged if we do, danged if we don't because if I cover enough where they'll pass well, I'm going to be getting the ticks on my observation so it's such a cat and mouse game.

Policy

How College Board guidance affects my classroom. The AP exam is central to Alice's planning throughout the year. Student performance on the exam is paramount. Content and instructional methods are selected with student performance on the AP exam in mind. From content to instructional methods to test-taking strategies, the exam influences all activities. If it weren't for the AP exam Alice notes that she might select different methods and not rush through the content "like a college professor."

Ultimately like what I'm thinking about all year is just making connections and getting them to retain the content for ultimately the ability to pass the exam. So I guess the exam is always on my mind. I guess it's on the back burner because everything I do is geared towards the exam and towards student achievement on the exam.

The College Board does not mandate a specific, detailed curriculum. Instead, the College Board grants AP teachers flexibility in developing their curricula. Alice develops her curricula with the College Board guidance and the exam in mind. As she develops her curriculum she feels that her experience as an AP U.S. History teacher leads to confidence in selecting content

by narrowing down the level of detail she feels necessary for her students and helping them to see what the key themes, events, and people are:

Something that I've learned over the course of teaching this over a few years—the things that I see perpetually, the same names pop up or the same events pop up, then that's when I keep adding those things into my students' homework, their requirements to know. Because if I've been seeing it multiple times then there's a good likelihood that it would be something they need to know. I definitely focus on key elements as the big eras, state reform movement, cause and effects of war but not necessarily battle. I'm looking at the big picture, political, social, economic impact.

Because the AP U.S. History curriculum seems without boundaries at times, Alice demands her students learn considerable detail—for example, all the U.S. presidents, party affiliations, years in office, key events for each president. Alice hopes that “They are able to take that and transfer that on the exam so if they're a prompt about 1820 they know who the presidents are, they know what's going on.”

Alice admits that if there wasn't such a perceived demand for breadth of knowledge she would likely omit some content and spend more time on other content. She notes that if she wasn't required to teach to the test students would likely see more of her personal bias in content selection and emphasis. She provides an example:

If it wasn't a teaching to the test type of class, then I'd spend two weeks on the 1960s because that's the most entertaining and that's the most fun. I would totally skip over the Gilded Age and not worry about that at all. Perhaps for that reason it's good that I don't have that flexibility. On the other hand, I wish I could spend more time to give them a

better, more real experience of the history they are studying but with the time constraints we have they may not experience the history as fully as we could if we had more time to spend on it.

If there was more time in her classroom, she indicates that she would probably include more outside reading from more sources. Unlike an actual college classroom, she doesn't have the ability to concentrate on particular content and then adjust her assessment to content covered. She indicates that she would like to have the power to emphasize some content over others:

I would probably integrate more reading because I wouldn't feel that time crunch. If I was creating the exam at the end of the year like [college] professors do, I would feel more comfortable being able to take more time focused on certain areas because I know that I wouldn't hit them hard in an area that I didn't cover.

How I prepare my students for the exam. Knowing AP U.S. History content is critical but student performance on the exam can be affected by their degree of knowledge of the required test-taking skills and familiarity with the test-taking format and environment. Ensuring that students have these skills affects how and what AP teachers teach. Primarily because IB students have adequate writing skills and because the AP U.S. History essays don't have any overly specific format for responding to the free response questions (FRQs) and are graded on format, structure or grammar, Alice is able to concentrate primarily on content with minor instruction on how to express oneself in a thesis – support argument essay. When she does have the students practice FRQ response, she often has the students put together oral responses to the questions rather than taking the time to write out the essays—concentration is on familiarity with the content and generally formulating a response:

We do a lot of oral FRQ practice where I'll call on kids to work them out on the board and we do brainstorming outlining without writing full essays and just feeling more comfortable in how to answer the questions.

Alice makes use of released, previous AP exams to familiarize her students with both the multiple choice and essay portions of the exam. The released multiple choice questions and essays can be used to prepare students for the types of questions and degree of difficulty one can expect on the AP exam:

I do the released exams, the released DBQs [document-based questions]; I do a lot of that ... [I use] AP style, timed [multiple choice], I give them a timed test from the very first one at the beginning of the year. They get 40 seconds per question so from the very beginning they know. It's designed to prepare them for the exam.

Multiple choice test-taking strategies are formally taught and she feels confident that it has a positive effect on student performance as they can more effectively eliminate distracters:

I'm always working with them with test taking strategies like figuring out how to weed out distracters. I think that helps them to realize that the questions really aren't as difficult as they think they are as long as they stop to think about it and not just rush through them. I've had a lot of success with raising test scores for just multiple-choice.

Overall Alice is supportive of the College Board's efforts and feels the AP U.S. History course is fine as far as its demands for student performance. She feels the expectations are clearly communicated and the scoring is fair. The AP U.S. History end-of-course exam is currently being revised such that the multiple choice section will be reduced and short response

questions included. These changes are important as curricular-instructional decisions are affected by the exam:

I need to know more about what changes exactly will be implemented to figure out how to target [instructional methods.] I think it'll be more about applying the content. I think I won't change a lot as far as how I convey the content. I don't think there's anything specific about the demands that I think should be changed. I don't think the AP Board is necessarily unreasonable in their expectations for what students can do.

Susan

Susan has been teaching for 15 years, 10 of which have been in the current school district. She earned her Bachelor's degree in History from a private college in another state and she is certified to teach Social Studies, grades 6-12. Susan was teaching in the current school district for the first half of her teaching career but transferred to a school district in another state seven years ago. She taught AP U.S. History for five years out of state where her students were highly successful. She transferred back to the current district two years ago and she took over teaching AP U.S. History just over a year ago. Currently she teaches three AP U.S. History classes and three AP Psychology classes. She has 22 students per class and spends about 15 hours per week preparing for her classes, primarily using the College Board's AP Central web site and different book resources. She estimates her students spend about three hours a week on homework.

The suburban high school where she teaches received an A grade from the state of Florida for the 2011-2012 school year but in the prior two years the school received a D grade. The school's student population is quite diverse with 76% minority and 65% receiving free or

reduced lunch. The FCAT statistics for the student population, which contributes greatly to the school's grade each year, are as follows: 30% passed reading, 69% passed math, 81% passed writing and 35% passed science benchmarks.

On the day her classroom was observed, the students were all prepared for the lesson in their prearranged groups, listening attentively to Susan as she reviewed the lesson for the day, discussed previous content covered, and provided students instructions for the activity at hand. She had a question and answer session with the students on the content recently covered and the handout she provided them with that day. She discussed the upcoming AP exam and document-based question (DBQ) planning for future classes. Susan addressed her students in a caring, supportive way. She was organized and classroom procedures seemed well known by her students. The pace was slow and deliberate, allowing the students to follow along easily. Her students in this class were primarily females and quite racially diverse. They seemed comfortable and had a caring respectful attitude towards Susan. Her classroom was nicely decorated and well appointed with college posters on the wall and four computer stations for the students. The class ended with the students wishing Susan a happy birthday and thanking her for being a good teacher.

Personal

What I believe AP U.S. History should be like. While there is a lot of emphasis on student performance on the AP exam at many different levels, Susan feels that passing the AP exam is not the most important aspect of an AP class; she feels that developing and refining students' academic skills is more important. She notes that students who are assigned to her classes typically have deficits in their academic skills and she believes that developing these

skills is critical to their later success in college:

For me, it's not as much the passing of the AP exam. It's building a core of study skills. Some of them who make it to the 11th grade still don't have them. Having study skills that will take them successfully through college, that's my biggest driving thing, is to make sure they can write a decent paper, that they know how to research, that they know how to read a text and get stuff from it, and that they understand that they actually have to study. Because so many of these kids, they just think that they're going to get it by, osmosis.

She believes you have to challenge kids at all levels. She likes AP students because a lot of them are more dedicated to their studies than regular students. She sees AP as a real challenge for most students and likes the fact that they are challenged. She feels the content will be more difficult for AP students and she enjoys the challenge of getting the students to "rise to the occasion." Susan believes there are three main components in her AP classes: time-management, writing and reading:

Time management is one of the skills that I try to push because that's one of the things that I find that they don't have ... writing, we do work on their writing. Some cases are harder than others. And their reading comprehension, being able to read something and understand what it says.

She believes it's important that her students understand that in college they will be expected to complete assignments on time and that there are very few excuses for not doing so. Many of her students are not used to this type of rigid standard and she feels they need to experience it.

The learning experience I create in AP U.S. History. Susan believes in establishing routines for her students. She feels it's important to be organized and to create an environment of predictability for her students. She lets students know what is coming up as far as assignments and holds them accountable for doing them. She does not accept late work as she believes in creating ground rules similar to what the students will encounter in college. She feels strongly that students have to be held accountable for accomplishing their assignments. To stay on track, they need to be organized and to assist them in that she assigns work in advance and demands that students complete assignments on time. Time management and student responsibility are important attributes that she believes students need to learn and practice:

[I] just try to set it up so that they know what's coming, but if they didn't do what they were supposed to do, there's going to be a consequence to it. I don't accept any late work at all. [I] try to operate college-wise, as far as that's concerned. They've got to learn their deadlines.

Susan believes her class is predominantly college preparatory versus college level. She notes that it has been some time since she was in college and her most current feedback on what college courses are like now is from her own children's recent experiences with college. She'd like to believe that her class was college level but she sees it as primarily college preparation. The feedback she has received from some of her former students is that the knowledge and skills they learn in her class does prepare them for the demands of college. She feels that a true college-level class would probably be more difficult than what her students encounter in her class. She feels the primary benefit of her class is that it helps prepare her students to be successful when they get to college by experiencing similar levels of rigor and content, learning

and practicing academic skills necessary for college, and developing a sense of commitment and responsibility expected of college students:

I try really hard to make it more than college prep; but, it's been a while since I've really been in a college classroom and the only thing that I have to compare it to is what my kids are doing or what my children have recently done.

Given the volume of work that the students accomplish throughout the high school year, Susan does believe that they do a lot more work than one would typically have in a college level class. However, she acknowledges that tasks in her course are typically slower-paced than in a college course and generally more of a preparatory nature. Her students don't walk into her classes with the requisite AP skills; they have to be taught them. "[I focus on] skill building, so that when they walk in the college door, they don't get hit by the door."

Susan's AP U.S. History classroom activities are centered around teacher lecture. She finds that lecture is efficient in addressing a variety of content. Lecture affords her the opportunity to present content and include discussion with her class where she can help them make connections between other parts of the curriculum. Her teacher-directed lectures and discussions are supplemented by student homework readings and other classroom activities as warranted. She believes classroom discussion promotes a collegiate atmosphere. She finds it interesting and appreciates seeing the students develop their thoughts on a topic and share and argue their perspective in class. While she believes student discussion about tangential issues is good for their growth, she has to be concerned over how much time she spends on it because of the large volume of material in AP U.S. History. "I love having discussion. I love throwing out a topic and just letting them go with it and see where we end up." While Susan develops her

class around teacher-directed activities, she believes in discovery methods and uses some each year. While students typically like student-centered activities, especially games, they can be time-consuming and so have to be used sparingly in an AP class. “We’ve done game boards. We’ve done presidential trivia. I’ve had them create games. So we do different things. The game boards were a lot of fun because we actually had a game day one day.”

Susan has many students who are reading barely at or even below their grade level. This makes completing the assigned reading difficult and time-consuming for most of her students. She feels teaching them to do the assigned reading, at home, is a key skill and responsibility to be successful in college. Similarly, she notes that many of her students’ writing abilities are particularly in need of improvement; they are not college-level writers when they walk through her door. She sees the fundamental writing that her students often begin with as college preparatory. She believes that teachers can be intimidating to developing students and that they often learn some skills better from peers. To encourage student-to-student learning she uses groups and peer editing of essays at first to have the students gain some confidence before handing in the teacher:

We do a lot of peer editing with their writing. Sometimes it’s safer for them in a group to have other people in the group look at their writing than it is to give it to me quite yet. Because they don’t want to know what I might say, so we’ll do peer editing on some of their little writings, and have them give a chance to rewrite it, and here, try this again, then give it to me. I think when they do their writings and do their peer editing and do a lot of, well, do their own editing, and redo their work, they are building their writing skills because that’s something that they truly need when they get into college, because

they really don't write at a decent level. At least, I don't think they do.

Susan believes student-directed research is an important skill and she wishes there was more time to do it in AP U.S. History. She thinks it would be beneficial if it were possible to spend more time on topics that the students are interested in and have them delve into them more deeply but she laments that there's no time to do it:

I hate to have to tell a child the answer, when he asks me a question ... [I'd rather] say, you know, 'That's a really good question. Why don't you research that and find out.' Some of the kids don't write a research paper up until they're seniors and by then, you should have it down.

She points out that high school affords little time to do actual research and write a structured research paper. She believes that conducting research and writing a research paper needs to be taught to college-bound students. Furthermore, Susan believes her class would be more college level if there were more time for true research. She sees the mandated testing in high schools, along with a tight AP schedule, as making that impossible. She sees test preparation as a key component of the course and, given the time constraints and other demands on student classroom time, there is no time to do student-centered research:

With all the mandated testing and this and that, you lose so many days, that it's like, 'I can't give up that time to help them with their research skills because I have to get them ready for this test because I'm going to lose them for two weeks total by the time we're said and done with all the pull-outs that they're going to do.'

How my beliefs shape my AP U.S. History classroom. Susan has a passion for history she

wants to share. She wants the students to want to be in her class and to enjoy the class. Furthermore, she wants the students to gain a sense of achievement from being in the class and accomplishing something they may not have thought they could do before. Susan believes a teacher's personality makes a big difference in the classroom as far as keeping students engaged. She believes it is important for teachers to model their passion for learning and history for the students. She believes that if students see teachers being authentic in their zeal it is more likely they will view history content as important:

I want them to love history the way I love history, and to see it, not just as something in a book, but as part of their history and that they got where they are because of what has happened. I love bringing up history. I love when we do the Civil War. My great, great, great grandfather was the secretary of the South Carolina Secession Convention. I want them to enjoy the class. I want them to want to be in here. That's my biggest objective, is I want them to want to be here, and to feel like they gotten something out of it.

She feels it is important to establish rapport with students and develop a caring environment. She demonstrates a sincere interest in their personal lives and shares elements of her own personal life with her students. She feels that the sense of sharing and caring differs from a true college environment in that high school needs to be more supportive and foster a warmer relationship between student and instructor. Another way she demonstrates that she cares is by making herself available as often as possible after school to help the students. She participates in the school's tutoring program after school. Susan tries to bring humor into the classroom. She believes it can be challenging for students to stay on task and so she tries to be unpredictable and engaging with the students to keep them on task:

I think personality has so much to do with it because if you don't let your personality and your love for something come through, then the kids are going to realize that you're not real. I like to have fun when I'm learning, and I try to engage the kids. I'm part stand-up comedian. You never know where I'm going to land. You don't know what I'm going to say, much less what I'm going to do. And I think that has everything to do with how successful I can be with the kids, and how much they will engage in the class and pay attention.

How I feel about teaching AP U.S. History. Susan makes it clear that she likes the AP U.S. History program; she sees it as rigorous and challenging for the students and her alike. She likes the challenge of motivating and instructing students in AP U.S. History and sees getting students to pass the exam as a personal challenge. As far as what content she decides to teach, she believes it's necessary to anticipate what topics are important to the College Board and concentrate on those. Time constraints in the classroom make it important to focus on those areas that are likely to be tested:

I think the curriculum does kind of hog tie you as to what you're going to have time to discuss, and you have to make those educated guesses on what they're going to test them on, and you have to pray that you're right.

While she expresses support for the AP U.S. History course and believes in it, she also expresses concern that the AP exam format may not be the best way to evaluate progress. She wonders if there aren't better ways to measure growth and accomplishment in the course, perhaps a portfolio that demonstrates progress through the year would be better. Specifically, she questions using a single, three-hour exam to validate student learning and performance over the

32-week course as she feels too many things can go wrong with a student's performance on a single, three-hour assessment:

Sitting down for a three-hour exam, what if the child got into a fight with a parent on the way to school that morning? That's going to impact them. There are too many things that can go wrong right before the child takes the test.

Susan feels that the work the students do, the rigor of the content, and the academic skills learned, are equal to what students would encounter in a general education class in college. She sees eliminating general education requirements by passing AP classes as a good thing. Doing so provides students with more options and can help financially if they don't have to take some of the core classes in college. Susan comments that she has always enjoyed the challenges of teaching AP U.S. History because you can really see students grow despite whether they pass or not. She values seeing them develop the types of skills they will need in college; however, she also feels that the value of that has been diminished in recent years and that there is too much focus on the results of the AP exam:

I think we've become too centered on making sure that they all have to pass it instead of looking at these kids, looking at where their writing is now compared to where they were when they walked in the door. Look at what they're able to read now, look at the study skills they have now. They can do this and they couldn't do that when they walked in the door. I've always prided myself on prepping kids well for college and I tell them that. I promise you that some of the skills you've learned here will translate very well to college. But now we're so centered in on the [exam] grade.

Organizational

How my students affect my classroom. In Susan's classes she has significant diversity in academic skills and motivation. Greater diversity increases the challenges associated with teaching AP and students are diverse on so many levels. She has some of the top performers in her high school and she has students in her AP class that do not read on grade level. She has students who are motivated to do well but also has students that are not motivated and do not complete the required assignments:

I have students who haven't passed the FCAT reading yet, all the way up to the highest scores. It's extremely diverse as far ability ... kids that can't read at the level you need them reading at, they're that much further behind. You've moved on and their still back 50 pages because they can't keep up. So the more diverse we get, the more changes we have to be willing to make.

Many of her students are in the class because of the added GPA weight that accompanies AP classes, not because they want to work hard, improve their academic skills, or pass the AP test. However, she feels student selection for AP has improved from a couple of years ago when it was worse. Susan notes that many students enroll in AP classes and really don't understand the nature or challenges associated with an AP class:

I think a lot of them ... they want the challenge of it. They want to see if they can handle it, but they also don't realize what they're getting themselves into. They don't realize that when I say that you need to do this reading and you need to do this and that. I'm not going to walk them through every single step of it.

Susan believes that when teaching students with diverse academic needs, particularly those without the necessary skills, it means starting slowly in the beginning and giving them plenty of time to complete assignments. Essentially, the year begins with foundational work: basic reading, writing, and time management. Many of her students have reading skills below grade level and lack a good academic vocabulary. Given that, students have a hard time with the academic language in the textbook. Susan has to work on that just so that they can understand what they are trying to read:

I have them all from those that haven't passed the FCAT [reading] yet ... but when you have children whose vocabulary is abysmal ... that's been a major challenge because they don't have the vocabulary and they don't have the reading skills trying to get them at the level they need to be is exceedingly difficult sometimes.

Commensurate with reading skills below grade level, many students do not have requisite writing skills. This means that writing skills have to be taught. Susan notes that she feels student writing seems to be worse than it used to be years ago. Susan begins with fundamental skills with regard to essay writing. She provides extensive instruction on how to break down the AP U.S. History essay questions, how information can be found in the documents provided, and how students can include information external to the documents.

Since she believes many students don't understand note-taking, she can't put too much detail in her presentation slides because the students will want to copy it all down. On the other hand, if she provides PowerPoint slide access online, the reports that students will print the presentations and then not pay attention in class. She also notes that it is easy for students to find shortcuts to her homework assignments by finding completed assignments online. She has to do

a check to see what's online because she knows that some students will use the shortcut if they find something:

I always go on a web search first. To make sure there's not something out there that they could easily download ... I have a problem with that, that's why I try to research it beforehand to see what's out there.

Susan tries to be consistent in expectations for all her students. Students basically receive the same assignments and scores are scaled based on student performance. She tries to keep the same expectations for everyone. "As far as assignments go, they all get the same assignments, they have the same expectations. I won't lower my expectations for them, which is frustrating for them." However, at times she will give a break to students on an individual basis, as warranted. She comments that her kids have a lot going on in their lives and she needs to be receptive to that:

It just, it varies, there are some kids that I will give a break to, but it's on individual basis between me and the child. If the child comes to me and goes this is what's going on at home, this is what happened, this is what ... and then I can make the decision at that point because it's more important to have this overall concept than this nitpicky little thing.

Susan believes that one of the biggest factors in being successful in AP classes is whether the kids "buy into" the program developed for them. She feels the kids that earnestly complete the assignments as tasked and commit themselves to the class tend to do better. Those that don't do the work, or tacitly engage, usually don't. They have to want it:

I think those that did buy into it, that actually did what they were asked to do, are going to pass it. Those that I have that don't pass are usually the ones that, first off, shouldn't have been in here in the first place, or they got in here – they're used to just sitting and listening and not having to do any work and managing to pass tests, and this is the first time that they've hit a brick wall like that.

In other words, Susan believes that some of her students want to prepare for college, while others don't take it that seriously. While many come unprepared for AP U.S. History, she knows it is important for many of her students to do well as she sees them comparing their end-of-course exam scores and this often provides some students with a definite sense of success or failure. She feels that the single score is overemphasized and wishes it wasn't so important to everyone: "I wish we weren't so centered on that number, I really do, but it is what it is and that's where we are now." At times, there are students who fail to thrive based on a perceived inability to be successful. In these cases, she feels it can be detrimental for a student to be in an AP class as they essentially give up and shut down and refuse to even attempt the assignments:

Allowing kids that have not passed the FCAT reading portion that have trouble with comprehension to sit in a class that is over their heads sometimes just really crushes them. I've had some that have totally shut down.

In cases like this, students may have negative experiences with the class and all the aspects of embarrassment and humiliation of failure but also the students' GPAs can be hurt when the initial intent in enrolling a student in AP was to provide a challenging experience and help their GPAs and associated high school records:

If they're to the point where they're going to ruin their GPA and have to take a class over

again, then maybe there are times that we need to be a little more selective. But then again, for some of them, it may just be that you need to have somebody that's going to light the fire underneath them and get them with it. It's a mixed bag, some you can motivate, others you tolerate.

She feels that the high performers have difficulty with AP as well. Some students are trying to take too many AP classes at once and it is very difficult for them to be successful in many simultaneous AP classes despite the fact that they are some of the most achieving students in the school:

They try to take five and six AP classes as juniors, their heads explode, and they cannot do it. If we had tried to take 15, or 18 hours in college in the beginning, you know, before we knew what we were doing, our heads would have exploded.

How the administration affects my classroom. Susan asserts that school administrators communicate that they trust her and provide her significant autonomy. She is the only AP U.S. History teacher and as such is not required to plan with anyone at her school. As the only AP U.S. History teacher, she can set the pace of instruction based on student needs. On the other hand, she feels the administrators are more focused on student scores than anyone else because it plays a role in the school grade and because it is monitored closely at the district level:

They sit down with you and they give you the little chart and they go 'explain this.' Well here, would you like to see my reading levels, and you want to see what you put in my class. I really think the administration is [more focused on test results] because they catch heat from the district.

She feels the administration places too much emphasis on pass rates and perhaps doesn't pay enough attention to recognition that the students have grown, learned, and developed skills, some of which can be seen in a "2" score. Susan also feels that the expectations from the administration exceed what is likely in the classroom. She thinks they focus on a specific metric without any real understanding of where the students are with regard to passing the exam or realizing the strides they are making in the class because they're main goal is to see passing scores not simply gains:

They would love it if we had 100 percent pass rate. You know what's going on in your classroom. You know where your kids are and everything. Sometimes there's a disconnect between reality and what they want. But in a way it's helped because it did allow me to say" I looked at this child's scores, I looked at the PSAT, I looked at how they did on FCAT last year, and they are not ready for an AP-level class. And so in some instances, it helps knock some of them out. So the administration was willing to listen to that. But then others, that they said, "No, it will be good for them."

Even though she feels the administration is forced to focus on AP exam outcomes, she feels that her school administration is very supportive of her needs for the course. She indicates that her experience has been that if she needs a resource, funds are provided to purchase whatever she needs. Additionally, the administration permits a considerable degree of autonomy with regard to methods. They understand that the teacher needs to tailor her methods to meet the needs of the students and is largely hands off. She believes teaching an AP class provides a teacher with a higher degree of autonomy in that regard:

As an AP teacher, having that AP designation, gives you a little bit more freedom to do

what you have to do to meet those particular benchmarks because they're a lot more difficult. I really like it.

Susan believes it is important to limit a teacher's AP load because it is important to attend to student needs and give them adequate feedback on their assignments, however, this becomes more and more difficult as a teacher's AP student load increases. Florida law does not require districts to include AP classes in the 25-student class size restriction (Florida law) and she feels it makes little sense and detracts from a teacher's ability to work with these students:

The more sections you have of a class the harder it is to keep up with your grading. You know you want to give comments on every single FRQ ... but sometimes it's a matter of I have two minutes, zoom, zoom, zoom, okay. The challenges are managing to get things graded in a meaningful way and sometimes it's like herding cats because we don't have a cap on the number of kids being AP class because it doesn't fall under the 25 cap.

Due to the number of students, the volume of AP U.S. History content, and the fundamental skills that need to be taught, she sees the amount of time she has in the classroom as a challenge and that this is further exacerbated by a growing testing schedule that seems to interfere with classroom instruction, particularly in the Spring. "I could get it done if I didn't lose the kids for testing, testing, and more testing." Considerable student standardized testing takes away from classroom time, interferes with keeping all of her classes at the same point in the curriculum, and often establishes an environment of complacency with students when the standard bell schedule is altered. Oddly enough, there is leftover time at the end of the year after the AP exam is completed:

They come back after the AP exam, and they think they're done. Even though you point

to the chapters in the book that come after that, and you're like, 'No, we're not done.' 'What do you mean? We're doing the whole book?' 'Yes.' 'Oh. Why? We already took the ...' Yeah. It's a little confusing for them. Plus we're tired too.

How the school district affects my classroom. Susan also believes the new district teacher assessment program puts unnecessary emphasis on student success on passing the AP exam. She feels that it is very difficult to prepare many of her students for the AP test and for that reason it is unfair for her to bear responsibility for their lack of success. She feels that the metrics used are overly simplistic and don't really reflect what is happening in the classroom, particularly when a lot of the students start out with considerable deficits in areas needed to be successful on the AP exam. Given the new teacher assessment program, she feels students should be more stringently screened before allowing enrollment into AP classes otherwise it's not fair to assess poor teacher performance for their lack of success:

The new rubric, the new evaluation tool, I'm not real keen on just because it puts so much emphasis on kids passing a test, which puts emphasis on the administration pushing us to make sure we do ... I think the evaluation tool has created a monster as far as test scores. We can only do so much. If we're going to use the AP exam as the yardstick, I don't think that's quite fair, considering the level of the kids going in.

Susan does feel that the experience and preparation students receive in her class is more important than whether they pass or fail the AP exam, however, the reality of the situation is that their performance affects her rating as a teacher and she has to consider that:

To me the logical part of my brain says that it's not as important that they do well [on the exam] as I want them to come out a better reader, a better writer, have a better

understanding of how they study and have skills that they need for college. But then again with it being such a component of our evaluation system now, you have to take it into consideration.

While Susan earnestly believes that the exam grades shouldn't be the most important consideration in student achievement, she acknowledges that when they are released she will be paying close attention as they mean so much to her sense of accomplishment and because the administration pays such close attention to them:

The exam grade, I'd like to think that it doesn't bother me but I know that when they're posted the first part of July I'm going to be sitting there. And part of me is going to want to hit that key and have them upload and the other part is going to be going don't do that you're going to ruin the rest of your day, maybe your week.

Policy

How College Board guidance affects my classroom. The guidance, advice, and lessons that are provided by the College Board on their course web site are important to Susan as she develops her curriculum. Furthermore, she looks for supplementary College Board guidance and documents there and attends the AP Summer Institute workshops. She feels the College Board is generally helpful and important:

I start off with the outline of the topics that the College Board gives. That's the basis for my ... for everything. ... I don't know what they call it anymore. But I always start with that. And then from there, I look at my Sunshine State standards and add to it if I have to. ... I use a lot of things from the College Board.

As the College Board doesn't provide a detailed curriculum, Susan sees that anticipating the content of the AP exam is part of teaching the course and developing a tailored curriculum for her students:

A group of us actually would sit there and just try to figure it out. Some years we'd get it and other years we just failed miserably but you just try to anticipate based on what they've done the years before, what's possibly going to be on the [exam].

The importance of student performance combined with vague guidance and a potential curriculum that is immense in scope, she feels it necessary to attempt to anticipate content and test questions each year. Susan outlines how she uses her teaching experience, prior exams, themes that seem current, College Board guidance, anything that seems to inform or suggest what areas will be emphasized on the exam. She recognizes it as a gamble, but sees it as a necessary gamble because she feels there does seem to be a pattern when looking at previous exams, a sort of cycle of questions, especially in the essay topics:

You can see some of the trends with College Board, the stuff that they are leaning toward. Looking at the tests, the FRQs, just looking at some of the stuff – it's kind of hard to explain. ... Well, it's a lot of different things. I start with whatever tests are available that they've put out. And I look for the themes in there. I will take a couple of hours and totally dismantle a released exam. Is it social, economic? What are they going for? What was the main thing? Look at the DBQ and the FRQs. What were the topics in those? ... There is a cycle to things. So I try to figure out where they are in that cycle. ... But if I were a new teacher sitting down, to have to figure this out, I would look for the

patterns. I would look at old exams, and I would look at the past couple of years as much as I could get my hands on, and see what the patterns are.

Complicating the anticipation game, Susan believes that the College Board works to make it difficult for teachers to be able to figure out likely exam focus areas. She feels they are aware that teachers are trying to do figure it out and that a kind of a cat and mouse game ensues.

While she appreciates and uses College Board's guidance, there are areas of the stated curriculum that she gives only a little bit of attention to because she doesn't feel that it is very likely to be tested. She indicates that while you can never really be sure, there seems to be things that you can be quite confident about as far as their likelihood of inclusion in the exam. Some things are unlikely to be tested but are important enough or foundational enough that she feels she must cover them. Though she feels it necessary to stick to the stated and anticipated curriculum, she notes that there is material that she'd like to spend more time on because she has a passion for it but given that there's no time, she has to keep moving. She gives some examples:

I wish that we could go more indepth with things like women's history and Native American history. And not just do a fly-by on some things. I love talking about the Constitution. I think they need to know what it is, how it impacts them, and I would love to spend more time on that.

How I prepare my students for the exam. To prepare her students to be successful on the AP exam, Susan makes extensive use of College Board released AP exams. She uses the former exam questions and any questions that seem to emulate the types of questions that she has seen

on exams before. She also uses them as the focus of some lessons on test-taking strategies and techniques:

I use a lot of released AP exams, I have a number of question banks that I've put together with exam view. To try to get them use to those type; I will use exact questions, we'll put them in a PowerPoint presentation, I'll put it up there, and we'll work through.

Susan believes students need to be trained in the format that they will encounter on the exam. She assesses her students throughout the year in the same format that they will be assessed on the AP exam. Furthermore, she teaches test-taking techniques to improve performance and pacing:

My tests are always multiple-choice, five stem, always. I test them the same way they're going to be tested on the AP exam. I set the format up identical [to the exam]; they're so accustomed to seeing my test that when they look at the AP test, the formatting, the way the header, the columns the whole thing...the fear factor is gone.

Susan asserts that timed tasks are essential. She instills the same time constraints students see on the exam into her classroom tasks. She explains that she begins slowly, timed but not at the same level that they will have to perform at during the exam. She slowly increases the number of questions and reduces the amount of time until they are used to performing at the rate required to be successful on the AP exam:

[I] give them a little bit more as we go along, to try and increase the workload so they're getting used to it. And the quizzes, or the tests, I add two, three questions each time. So by the time the AP exam rolls around, they're used to, in 45 minutes, taking 60, 65, 70 question multiple-choice tests, and they can fly through them.

Students have to know AP U.S. History content and she feels repetition of content and terms through flash cards is a good way to help the students remember.

Susan also teaches students how to tackle the exam essay questions: how to deconstruct the prompt and then plan and write the essay. She feels that if students know how to perform the test-taking skills then they are much more likely to do better:

Teaching them the test taking techniques, we start from the beginning on that, how to deconstruct the prompt. How do you deconstruct the prompt on the FRQ; how do you write this, how do you do this that's all part of it from day one. So that hopefully they walk out of the AP exam and go that wasn't that bad, that's the same thing I've had to do all year.

She uses former, released essay questions and goes over the student samples provided by the College Board to demonstrate what a good essay looks like and to recognize essays that need improvement. Most classroom writing is in the form of FRQs or DBQs. She begins with the FRQs and then moves to the DBQ which requires the added dimension of document analysis and use. Group analysis to begin with and once proficient in document analysis she combines the document analysis with the FRQ to get DBQ proficiency:

What I'll do is start them off teaching them the FRQ to get them to write. And then I will take a DBQ, just type up the prompt itself without the document, type that up, have them outline that. Then I'll introduce the document one day, and as a group, they can go through the document. Then we put the two pieces together.

When she grades student essays, FRQs and DBQs, she provides grading feedback in the form of the College Board scale of performance as used on the AP exam. She notes that students are frequently surprised by their performance on that scale but it provides them a more accurate picture as far as the way that the College Board is going to grade their essays:

I actually have a rubric that I use. And I've had that rubric forever. And I convert it to a score so they know. They get very upset when they've gotten 6s, 7s, 8s from their peer-editing friends, but then they get it back from me and I give them a merciful 2. They get very, very upset. But they also look at it and go, 'Oh, okay.'

Even though she finds the College Board exams fair, she expresses concern about the changes that College Board is making to the AP U.S. History exam because she recognizes that changes to the exam format will mean changes to what she needs to do in her classrooms.

Thomas

Thomas has been teaching for six years in the current school district; he has taught at two high schools and he transferred to his current position four years ago. He received his Bachelor's degree in Social Science Education from an out of state public university and is certified to teach Social Studies 6-12. He has been teaching AP U.S. History for four years. This year he is teaching 6 sections with about 26 students per class. He reports that he spends 20 hours a week preparing and grading. He uses the textbook, primary sources, videos, released FRQs and political cartoons as references for his classes. He says that he tries not to give his students much homework, estimating maybe three hours per week.

The urban high school he teaches received an A grade for the 2011-2012 school year with previous two years' grades being As as well. The student population is moderately diverse with a 34% minority percentage and 18% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. The FCAT statistics for 2011-2012 were as follows: 74% reading, 88% passed math, 86% passed writing, and 70% passed science benchmarks.

On the day Thomas's classroom was observed, he began the class with an AP exam review lecture—the exam was within a few weeks' time. The notes were projected from an Elmo and students were diligently writing while he made a few comments explaining the information displayed. He set a deliberate pace with a simple step by step approach, ensuring that the students were able to obtain the necessary information. The entire class was on task and engaged, intently listening and asking questions. The last 10 minutes of the class was devoted to the students working on their review packets which Thomas had provided for them in January. At the end of class he returned graded DBQ essays. He had a relaxed, very friendly demeanor and good rapport with the students, injecting humor into the lesson and discussion. The students seemed mature and the class appeared to have great cohesion as they seemed to know each other well and enjoyed being in the class. The class was primarily female and was highly similar in ethnicity and similar in style and personalities as well. Thomas's classroom was decorated with banners from previous classes with student signatures, those who passed the AP exam, a "Wall of Fame" with student achievement recognition including photos of students who earned a 5 on the exam, and community and student support messages. There were a few AP U.S. History informational posters but no "how to" posters on the walls.

Personal

What I believe AP U.S. History should be like. Thomas sees both long term and short term goals for AP U.S. History and feels they are complimentary. He sees the long term goal as getting his students to pass the AP exam, and in the short term, improving their proficiency at the historical skills the College Board mandates for AP U.S. History:

The big objective is to get them to pass the AP exam, but that's long-term. Short-term it's to get them to analyze history, looking at primary sources, not only getting them to analyze it, but being able to write about it.

He places a high degree of importance on student independent reading. He believes that AP U.S. History students have to be able to read the text critically, analyzing it, and generally be active readers. The other area of critical importance to Thomas is writing. He demands that his students demonstrate their comprehension of history through writing. His short term objectives for his students are proficiency in analytical reading and writing of U.S. history. "Again, it is reading the text, analyzing it, and then really writing about it to show comprehension. So the objective is analysis and writing ... it's getting them to understand history."

Thomas believes AP is good for students. He hates to see students drop his class for any reason and specifically tries to keep the marginal achievers in the class, feeling that it's good for their academic development. He feels personally reward in their progress and is sure they will benefit from AP as he sees it as preparation for the demands of college:

My goal is to keep the lower-level students and to teach the students who came from Honors World History interested to where they feel like they can be successful. I don't

kick anybody out. I try to encourage them to stay. When a kid talks about dropping the class, I talked to their parents and say I really think they should stay because this is going to benefit them in college.

He feels that the AP experience is beneficial for all students:

Even a kid who I think is going to fail the AP exam and put their head down, I keep them in there because at the end of the day I feel like they are going to be a better student for it not just their senior year but even all through college.

Thomas sees his classroom as a place where there is the same standard for all. He feels that it is supposed to be a college-level class and he believes students will rise to that challenge.

Furthermore, if he lowers the bar too much he could lose the interest of the higher achievers:

It is kind of a standard for all. That's just because of what the class is. It's an AP class; it is supposed to be a college-level class. I'm not going to lower the bar because if I lower the bar too much, then I lose the students who are super intelligent.

In order to meet the demands of teaching AP courses, Thomas feels that AP teachers should and do have the autonomy to make curricular-instructional decisions about their classrooms and he states that he has support from his administration and feels he has a high degree of autonomy. "It's my understanding when you teach AP, you're free to set it up however you want. I feel like I've got the power to do what I want that I think is in the best interest of the students."

The learning experience I create in AP U.S. History. Thomas indicates that he has weekly goals that he's trying to achieve with his students, and given the large scope of content he

is asked to teach, he feels he doesn't have the opportunity to tailor his plan to student interests or desires and he sticks to the macro plan that he develops at the beginning of the year:

Unfortunately, the students don't influence how or what I teach. If they want to go off on some topic related to what we are talking about, that is fine. Just point me in the right direction and we will talk about it. But at the end of the day and at the end of the week, I have a weekly goal that I am trying to do and that is to me what the College Board is expecting of me and to meet their standards.

Thomas's preferred learning style is reading and discussion. He believes that this particular style is effective for teaching AP U.S. History and places independent reading as the centerpiece of his instructional design. He also places a significant degree of emphasis on student-centered discussion as he sees group discussion as beneficial to student learning. He notes that student-centered discussion can be difficult for teachers as one has to monitor students closely to ensure they stay on task:

I learn best by just leaving me alone, let me read the book, and I can learn on my own. You can't do that with these kids. Could I work in a group and talk about it with some other students? Absolutely. But there are some students who need to be placed in groups, they need more guidance, they need the teacher to make sure that they are staying on task.

Group work and cooperative learning play a significant role in his classes. He feels that when students come together in groups it affords them the opportunity to exchange information and understanding about the readings in ways that are beneficial for all:

They're taking six other classes, but they try to breeze through my chapter. If they miss something important, at least talking with their classmates can kind of help refresh their memory or even shed light on something they might have missed.

Thomas feels that group discussion is college level and benefits all levels but feels strongly that it is a support structure for the lower level performers. "We do a lot of group work where students can talk about the notes they have taken and that even reassures whether they are taking the right ones. I think that even motivates the lower-level students." While he tries to emulate college as much as possible, he is aware that they are high school students:

I do activities to try to prepare them for college, but I keep in mind that they are still high school students, and so I throw in some extra assignment just to help their grade, and at the same time, a lot of the stuff we do I feel is college level, like the discussions we do.

Thomas requires students to read the text and provides optional guided reading questions. Students don't turn the homework in – their comprehension is checked with quizzes on the content they were supposed to have read. Thomas likes independent reading but he includes guided reading questions to help out those students who have difficulty in comprehending the assigned text. While independent reading is a college-level expectation he recognizes that they are high school students in need of support structures:

With the guides I developed, it helps out those lower-level students. If I just threw a book at some of these kids, and said good luck, we'll talk about this throughout the year, they wouldn't know what to write when it came to them taking notes.

Thomas places low emphasis on lecture. He explains that it's not that he doesn't want to;

it's that he feels that it is not a very effective teaching method for high school students. He does lecture sometimes but often students think he doesn't lecture enough. "I don't cater to how I learn best because if I did that I would just give them all a book and tell them to figure it out." Rather than lecturing, Thomas feels he helps his students meet his course objectives by getting his students to be proficient at analyzing history through analysis and discussion of primary sources which he feels greatly improves their comprehension of the assigned reading:

Everything else we do in class will be primary sources that go with the chapter. I do gallery walks, which they work in small groups, they go station-to-station, and they add something to this piece of paper that they learned from that chapter. It's kind of like a chapter review for them. But that helps them on the quizzes and test because they're talking to other students.

Thomas makes his students demonstrate their proficiency at historical analysis through writing and he selects the AP U.S. History writing skills for that medium. Thomas spends considerable time teaching students to write essays and use scaffolding to help the students learn the structure and demands of the AP U.S. History essay. Students seem to respond to the continued practice and consistent, detailed feedback:

The very first essay any of them write, nobody gets lower than a "B" because they don't know what to expect. In AP U.S. History, that writing is a lot different than AP World writing. I tell them that I want it for is to see how well they write and what kind of feedback I can give them to write make them write better the next time.

Students progress in their writing throughout the year and their confidence builds. Thomas demonstrates to his students that he cares about their learning and is supportive throughout the

writing process:

After that second essay I give them more constructive feedback and then hopefully by the end of the year, the kids can at least write a level four, five, six, seven, eight, or nine on the AP exam. You do it in baby steps. And the process is, don't let the lower-level writers get jaded by the process or by their own writing. You don't want to coddle them but at the same time you have to be very supportive so that is how I work with the lower-level students. You reassure them that they are not going to fail, them to do their best and let me give them feedback.

How my beliefs shape my AP U.S. History classroom. While he feels his students learn a lot in his class and develop skills and habits of mind needed at the collegiate level, he generally believes that students will not like U.S. history, at least as far as his AP U.S. History class goes. He feels that students may like watching a history program on television or a historical movie, but he feels that few, if any, kids will earnestly be interested in examining history as required in AP U.S. History. He places independent student reading as a centerpiece of his AP U.S. History class and knows that most of the students will not want to do the required reading. He feels that teachers shouldn't over-stress the importance of the AP exam as students may come to believe it's the most important goal for teachers rather than an earnest desire to see them succeed. While it's important to Thomas, he is careful not to make it seem overly important to him:

I won't stress out because if they see me stressing out, they start to stress out, and so for me, I was very, very laid back during review week, kind of almost like, you know, you guys have got this, don't worry about it.

Thomas has good rapport with his students and tries to be attentive to their needs. He likes to inject humor in his classroom as a way of making the class more enjoyable for the students:

I've got an outgoing personality. I enjoy interacting with the students. I like – again, it goes back to the very dry subject. And it sounds so stupid, it sounds so childish, but if I can make light of a situation, like make something silly out of a picture or something that will make the kids laugh, at least it makes the class enjoyable.

He recognizes that students have to be willing participants in the learning process and is concerned about what they think about him as a teacher and how he conducts his class. He doesn't routinely use timed AP multiple choice tests:

If you rush them and they get Ds, then they start to resent you. If you give them as long as they need to make As and Bs, they are not going to say thank you, but you were kind of in their good graces.

While intrinsic motivation is typically recognized as preferable to extrinsic motivation, Thomas does what he can to provide opportunities to pique student's extrinsic motivation sensibilities, such as signing his personal flag, putting student's pictures on the "wall of fame," and agreeing to provide a letters of recommendation for high performers:

You try to find various ways to motivate them. For example, I have these flags hanging on the wall and if they pass the exam they get to sign the flag. So it's cheesy, but when students sit there and look at it all year long, they say I want to get my name on that flag also. If you get a 5, you get your picture on the wall.

How I feel about teaching AP U.S. History. Thomas accepts the “AP Challenge” as he sees getting AP students to pass the exam as a personal challenge and feels their success on the exam reflects on his reputation as a teacher. He feels a sense of achievement and personal reward at watching student growth and seeing students pass who have made significant learning gains in order to do so. Thomas finds student improvement personally rewarding. He sees how they improve in their ability to interact with each other, discuss history in class, and write well-crafted thesis-support essays. Thomas spends considerable time on teaching his students how to write AP U.S. History essays and appreciates the progress that he sees throughout the year:

I like the challenge. One of the biggest things that I pride myself on is getting this dude who comes from Honors World History and getting them to pass the test. I value that – a student who gets a 5 on the FCAT and got a 5 in AP World, they are going to pass the AP U.S. exam if I am there or not. Passing the AP exam is an added bonus for me, it is pride. You want the students to do well, you want them to pass because they give you more pride, like I got a 50% pass rate and it reflects well on you, and so it's important for me for the students to pass ... to see me as an effective teacher, the pass rate is significant.

Student performance on the exam is very important as it's what teachers and schools are graded on but in order to be successful there Thomas believes you have to teach the content and skills that lead to success on the exam. “The big objective is focusing on passing the AP exam, because that's what we're graded on, the schools are graded on.”

Thomas feels like he has the autonomy to determine content and instructional methods as he sees fit but he now believes that district-instituted semester exams are interfering with that to a degree as they mandate and assess that certain content be taught by specific dates. This can

affect the order and pace at which history is taught in all AP U.S. History classrooms in the district:

Before this year I thought I had a lot of independence, but with this county exam, they kind of handcuffed you a little bit. Because I'd like to teach it differently. I'd like to, instead of going chapter-by-chapter, I'd like to group it by political, social, and economical. But I don't feel like I can do that anymore.

Organizational

How my students affect my classroom. Thomas indicates that his high school has a variety of students with diverse abilities as far as reading and writing proficiency:

We get everyone from level 1 FCAT readers to level 5 FCAT readers. I like that because I feel like I can pull the level ones up a little bit. In AP U.S. History, it is a lot of reading and I think I can help some of those lower levels.

While diversity takes many forms, students who lack solid reading and writing skills are of concern because those skills are fundamental to success in AP U.S. History:

Some of them come in and they can't write very well at all and for me that is fun, because I enjoy that type of challenge. The downside is that they may not be up for that kind of challenge and they struggle all year long and get very disengaged because they can't do it.

Diversity of students' academic skills is a challenge, but Thomas sees student motivation is the biggest challenge. Thomas believes that students do take AP because, to some degree, they want a class that is challenging and they want to see what it's like to take a class that is supposed to provide a college-level experience. While experiencing a challenging, college-level class may be

motivation for some students to take AP, Thomas notes that while passing the exam may be important for some, most students who take his classes are probably motivated to do so because of the bump they get in their GPA. “Passing the AP exam does not mean much to the students. I think a lot of them take it for the GPA bump more than anything.” He feels there is a lot of discussion among his faculty about how competitive students are but his experience is that a lot of the students will help each other cheat if they can, and while they want to pass the AP exam, he doesn’t think they care that much about passing the exam:

For a lot of the students, I don't think it's as important. They want to pass, but if they don't, they are not going to lose any sleep over it ... It's funny because these kids are supposed to be so competitive with one another, but yet they cheat, they pass along the answer to their friend that is next period ... How can they be competitive when they are trying to aid the student coming in after them?

A contributing factor to students looking for shortcuts may be that many of them take heavy course loads. Thomas points out that many of his students have multiple AP classes and he has to be sensitive to the fact that they have a lot of homework so you have to consider that when you give them assignments.

How parents affect my classroom. At Thomas’s school the parents are very involved through the Parent Teacher Student Association and they offer to provide him with resources if needs anything. More importantly, he believes that a high degree of parental involvement helps students be successful in the classroom and has a positive effect on school community generally. Attentive parents monitor student motivation and achievement and want them to do well on the AP exams:

We've got students who are motivated, their parents are on them. At some schools, you don't have parents who are constantly hounding their kids. At my school, parents do that for their kids, and it reflects well on us, obviously.

Parents pay attention to student motivation and achievement but they also pay attention to AP pass rates and view them as indicators of how good a teacher is. "They do on open house night and even then I am embarrassed. My rates are like 47 percent, while the county average is 37 percent, but parents see 47 percent as failing."

How the administration affects my classroom. Thomas outlines how the school administration sets AP student participation guidelines. Students are selected for AP based on determination of academic ability by the administration and parental requests; there is very little if any involvement from the teachers with regard to selection. "There are no criteria. There is no prerequisite for AP U.S. So, if they have a pulse and they sign up for it, then they are going to take it." He believes that AP classes have become the norm for achieving students as the honors and regular classes have fallen behind where they were. "I think a lot of the honors in regular classes, it's so watered down that they're just not being challenged in those classes like they ought to be."

Thomas states that student success on the AP exam is highly important for students, teachers, and schools. He notes that AP scores probably matter most to the administrators because it contributes to the school grade:

The big objective is focusing on passing the AP exam, because that's what we're graded on, the schools are graded on, but then it's the smaller parts leading up to that. There is

no pressure, but I think it matters the most to the administrators because that's what our school grade is and one of the calculations [for grading] is AP scores.

He is confident that his school administration wants to see good AP pass rates from his classes and they have expressed their satisfaction with the job that he is doing. He recognizes that as long as he is successful in getting the students to pass the exam the administration will leave him alone:

They trust me enough, they've seen my pass rate. My pass rate's gone up every year that I've taught. So they don't hound me. The expectation from them is get the kids passing the exam. As long as I keep doing it, they'll take more of a hands-off approach with me.

How the school district affects my classroom. Thomas believes that college is student-centered instruction and this is what he tries to create. He also recognizes that the district teacher evaluation program values student-centered instruction and he sees the new Common Score State Standards as emphasizing the same. For that reason, he feels comfortable with both the teacher evaluation system and Common Core State Standards:

The teacher is not as involved in the district teacher evaluation system and Common Core. It's all student-driven. And to me, that's the college experience. There's no professor in college who's checking your homework, who's calling your parents if you haven't done something right or if you're late or don't show up to classes. That doesn't happen in college.

Thomas typically does very well with his teacher evaluation measures but he notes that he was downgraded on one observation this year because he was lecturing and the evaluator felt they

should have been in groups crafting their own notes and not copying his:

Here is what is awesome about the teacher evaluation system and I say that facetiously; all year long my scores were either “exemplary” or “accomplished.” I had an informal pop-in [visit] on the first day I reviewed and it was my last observation of the year and I’m reviewing ... I got my very first “progressing” this year because I was lecturing to them and her advice was they should've been in groups ... The students would rather have me lecture, but it doesn't work with the teacher evaluation system rubric that we are graded on.

He maintains that he does believe that student-centered education is best for the students but that it also works for him during teacher evaluations:

I do think that's what's best for them and that is why I don't mind the evaluation system, because what we are expected to do for it is what I was taught to do in college, give them study guides, let them discuss it, put them in groups.

Policy

How College Board guidance affects my classroom. Thomas makes use of College Board materials to expose students to actual questions from previous exams. This allows them to see the format and expectations on the AP exam. However he notes that he rarely, if ever, looks at the College Board web site or uses their materials and information that is posted there. “I use previously released DBQ's and FRQ's. The College Board has so many links on their website and I have never really looked at anything on there.” He feels strongly that he feels it would be helpful if the College Board informed teachers and students more completely about what the

curriculum should be, go beyond simply providing suggested themes, and provide more detail. He comments that unlike their college counterparts, high school AP teachers and students don't really know what the students have to know. He maintains that when you're in college you typically have a good idea about what you should know and the challenge is learning it with a high degree of understanding:

In my opinion, College Board can do a better job of telling us more. What I would like College Board to do is to say, okay, your DBQ is going to be anywhere from the 1850s to the 1900s, your FRQ is going to cover these ten years here or there because in college, I always had professors say, here are six questions you better know - I'm going to choose one of them and that's what you're going to write on.

Thomas also feels that at times the College Board makes the assessment a bit unreasonable by including exact time periods when constructing an essay prompt. He feels that students should have broad parameters when answering a question rather than expecting them to know precise dates. He indicates that it would be better to give the students a chance to show what they have learned rather than what they don't know.

Thomas feels the College Board is overly vague about the AP U.S. History curriculum and this leads to teachers and students feeling the need to cover an enormous volume of history. Because the amount of time during the school year is finite, teachers have to make decisions and those decisions often take into account what is likely to appear on the AP exam. College Board does provide general, thematic guidance, but teachers' experience from what they've seen in the past also affects what content is kept in and what is cut out. As a result, Thomas says "Political, social, and economical is what I teach the kids." He indicates that it's a real challenge to

eliminate material from the curriculum because it seems like everything is fair game for the test. Two years ago the College Board included a DBQ on President Richard Nixon. Thomas notes that a lot of teachers have trouble getting that far in the curriculum so he feels that the College Board doesn't take teacher's challenges of covering content into account:

In my opinion, everything is fair game for College Board ... Every year I stop at Kennedy. I don't really think any teacher covers the Nixon presidency. There's not enough time. You don't get that far, because to get that far, you're butting up right against the AP exam. I got really jaded with College Board after they asked that DBQ question.

Thomas indicates he has to make decisions about what content to cut out in order to best cover the material in the time given. He laments that he doesn't cover the Civil Rights movement in a way that he'd like to because of timing. He decides to eliminate other cultural material as well because he thinks it's covered in other classes:

I absolutely love the Civil Rights movement. To me, that's one of the most interesting periods of time. Could I find a way to squeeze it in? Yeah, but then it comes down to what do I cut from the curriculum? I've already cut the chapter about American culture, talking about Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau. I cut that because to me, that's boring, and in addition, they're already learning that in AP Language or in their English class as well.

How I prepare my students for the exam. To prepare his students for the exam, Thomas gives them review packets to study. Because of the volume of material he begins his review in

January for the May exam. He provides time in class to work on these packets. Throughout the year, he emphasizes the broad themes and has them work on the detail:

I give them a big review packet in January. I go over what I think might be the most commonly asked questions. I might lecture for 20 or 25 minutes and then I give them time to work on their packets. I just go over some of the broad topics in American history and hope some of it sticks. In my review, I think I have covered enough stuff to where even if you just took notes, they have enough tools there to help them pass the AP exam.

Thomas indicates that all the work they do all year long is either assessed through multiple choice, writing, or some historical analysis activity that support understanding that will help them with their writing and performance on the AP exam:

Everything I do is multiple choice, DBQ, FRQ's, and then starting maybe this coming school year or the year after, I might do away with some of the quizzes and do short answer, because in 2015 it's going to be 36 multiple-choice, for short answer, and one long essay.

Thomas prefers to continually prepare them throughout the year so he doesn't have to make exam preparation appear to be a "big deal." For example, only in preparation for the exam does Thomas put his students through timed quizzes and tests:

I tell them they have 40 questions and you have to answer them in 28 minutes just so you can see how you have to pace yourself. I am done with the practice tests in March and I never look at another one. You can either psych them up or psych them out.

He feels like the best thing that he does to prepare his students to be successful is having them write AP-style FRQs all year long. He says they learn the history better and are comfortable writing essays when they get to the test:

We do it so often they won't be able to forget how to do it. My trade secret is writing the entire year getting the practice test done early in the second semester, and then just not stressing them out about telling them about the AP exam and how important it is to pass.

Continued primary document analysis helps with historical analysis but it also reinforces their ability to perform on the DBQ. “We will look at primary sources. We might look at one and do a document analysis. I might have them do a compare and contrast up to two primary sources, because they might see that on an essay.”

Thomas is optimistic that the planned changes to the AP U.S. History exam, reducing the multiple-choice and including short answer, will make teacher instruction and student learning in AP U.S. History more reasonable:

I'm a big proponent of changing the AP exam, because again, it's easier for students to explain something than give them multiple choice and know every thousands of tidbits that College Board's going to ask of them.

Thomas makes it clear that he doesn't like multiple choice assessments on the AP exam and feels open-ended questions and writing are better ways to assess what students have learned in an AP class. One reason he doesn't like multiple choice questions is that he feels they often lend themselves to historical trivia so he is supportive of the planned changes:

The only thing that I like about the AP exam is the essays. I feel like that is the best way

to gauge whether or not the students learned. I am not a fan of the multiple-choice. In college, I didn't take a single multiple-choice test. I feel like students can explain history so much better if you just let them write about it.

One reason he doesn't like multiple choice questions is that he feels they often lend themselves to historical trivia so he is supportive of the planned changes. "I feel like I'm too busy making sure the factoids are covered, because the multiple choice is 50 percent of the overall score." Finally, Thomas feels strongly that the AP World and U.S. History classes should have their writing skills demands and essay formats aligned so that they support each other. At the moment, Thomas feels like he has to get the students to unlearn the writing style that they learned in AP World History so that they can progress with the AP U.S. History writing. "I will spend the first semester I am trying to undo what they learned in AP World because it is not college-level writing in my opinion. To me, AP U.S. History is college-level writing."

Gloria

Gloria has been a high school teacher for 13 years in the current school district; she transferred to her current position 3 years ago. She has been teaching AP U.S. History for the past seven years. She received her Bachelor's degree in History and Master's degree in Education from a public university in Florida. She is a certified to teach Social Science, 6-12. She has been an essay reader for the College Board's AP U.S. History exam for the past two years. She reports that she spends a minimum of 12 hours a week planning her lessons. She expects her students to spend five hours a week on homework at a minimum.

The suburban high school where Gloria teaches is relatively new; they received an A grade in the 2011-2012 and 2010-2011 school years. The student population is moderately diverse with a minority rate of 31% and a free or reduced lunch rate of 18%. The FCAT statistics are as follows: 63% have passed reading, 88% have passed math, 87% have passed writing, and 78% have passed science benchmarks.

On the day her classroom was observed, the students entered with high energy, which is also reflective of their teacher's demeanor. The students responded positively to her "coach-like" attitude, motivating and outgoing, yet very task oriented. Gloria began the class by reviewing a previous quiz and assigning a homework activity for the end of the week. She then put them in groups and gave them an assignment that required them to come up with a statement that explained the similarity in terms in a list that she had given them. The students were all engaged in the activity, with varying levels of understanding and knowledge. The groups then presented their statements with a Socratic-style question and answer session involving the entire class. The students were interactive and talking but remained on task. Gloria set a rapid pace for her students, keeping the groups moving in the same direction. She was very knowledgeable and not afraid to tell the students "No" and look for the right answer. The students seemed very comfortable with her and responded to her direction when the answer needed to be revised. The class ended with a quick lecture about the current reading assignment. Gloria was very organized with the material and with the way she ran her class. Her classroom is set up in rows with a board, projector and screen in the front of the room. The room was friendly and welcoming decorated with college memorabilia, items of personal interests, shirts appearing to have been made from previous classes and clubs, a calendar of events and few AP U.S. History references.

Personal

What I believe AP U.S. History should be like. Gloria believes that the essential difference between AP classes and traditional classes is that AP should be more rigorous. As she understands it, college level means rigor and she makes it clear to her students at the beginning of the year that they will have to do more work than the students in the traditional classes and they will have to put forth more effort. Students in her AP classes regularly have reading homework and they are required to demonstrate that they have accomplished their homework through frequent multiple choice tests, quizzes, and writing assessments:

You definitely cannot say that it's not rigorous... because you do so many multiple choice tests, so many quizzes, so many writing samples. It's weird how [much]-and unfortunately I think it scares some of the good ones away because they know- I have a kid who is probably going to be recruited for baseball, and he is really good, but he didn't want to take AP because he said there was too much work and he would not be able to do it with baseball towards the end of the school year.

Gloria maintains that AP classes mean that students must develop time management skills and assume a levels of responsibility that are new for many high school students. Students may or may not develop these personal responsibility skills, but she feels that the exposure to it is beneficial for them. Most students have never had to practice time management or had teachers that strictly enforce deadlines and she feels that if they show up at college without at least an understanding of the expectation then they will be at a disadvantage:

In college you're given assignments well ahead of time and I try to do the same and hope to teach them time management skills. [AP is] similar in that the schedule is put in front

of them and they have to manage their time.

For this reason she doesn't check student notebooks, however, she does keep a notebook for the class and uses it as a possible model for them. The pace of instruction and reading assignments in her AP U.S. History class that the students are confronted with is new and challenging for most of them. Given the amount of time that students spend in class and the length of the school year, she notes that the students are asked for many more assignments and are assessed much more frequently than you'd find in a similar college class. She feels like this continuum of instruction will help prepare them for the types of challenges they will encounter at the college level. "At least they have some sense leaving here that they're going to be required to read and the professors going to have certain expectations of them."

Gloria believes that a major difference between teaching AP U.S. History and teaching a college level class is that the professor has the autonomy to concentrate on the content he or she wants to and assess learning as he or she has directed. In AP, teachers are not involved in developing the assessment and do not know what it covers with any specificity. Furthermore, because the curriculum guidance from the College Board is suggestive rather than directive, most teachers feel the need to try to teach everything as virtually any U.S. history could show up on the end-of-course standardized exam:

I think as a college professor you can focus on particular aspects. For example, if you teach in college, you teach colonial America to 1850 or 1860 or whatever. You have 18 class grades to focus on particular things that you like, and then you can set the tests. Whereas we're measured on the national standard, so we have to teach everything.

Gloria indicates that she does not favor the use of multiple-choice questioning on the

exam because of the effect it has on the curriculum. She feels that virtually any content can be included in multiple-choice and student responses are either right or wrong, there can be no partial credit. Her experience from college was that multiple choice was rarely used in history classes, it was almost always writing, and if AP is supposed to be college level perhaps the learning assessments should more closely resemble what will be expected of them there. Because of the nature of AP, vague guidance from College Board, combined with not knowing what will be assessed on the exam, students are required to learn a large volume of content breadth. She knows that her class has a significant degree of work and in fact believes that her students do more than a typical college freshman would do in a survey history college class:

They [the students] have to have a broad base understanding of everything. I think for me that is part of the limitation. I remember having to do argumentative essays and having to pick a topic and be able to argue at it. Some of the kids say they take multiple choice tests in history, but I don't remember having to know that. I think they do a lot more work and are responsible for learning a lot more content than you would find in a similar college level class.

Gloria believes that teacher experience in teaching AP U.S. History matters a lot. She feels that when she first began teaching AP U.S. History she didn't know what she was doing. She originally did not provide as much organizational guidance for the students for testing, she primarily provided them with the information. She indicates that her AP teaching experience has led her to believe that you have to do a lot of multiple choice questioning and you must teach the students the AP essay formats and how to craft an argument supported with evidence. Gloria tries to emulate a college level experience, but she recognizes that her students are high school

students. She views the ultimate intent of her AP U.S. History class as mostly college preparation. While the material is rigorous and simulates a college level class, the experience is designed to allow the students to practice and develop their skills:

I'd say mine is more college prep. It's more about the skills that you learn in AP because I think our class is so much more rigorous than a college freshman takes as far as AP U.S. History is concerned. I think it's more of training for them as far as college prep is than an actual college class.

The learning experience I create in AP U.S. History. Gloria's classes are characterized by a significant degree of teacher-directed instruction and a lot of organizational charts and other aids to help the students organize the information and see cause-effect and other connections. She describes how her classes are very lecture based. While she feels at times that she should try other methods and group activities, she notes that when she lectures she feels that the students understand the material better as they can ask questions directly to her as they work through the material. She often feels that when she has the students engaged in group or student-centered activities there is a high degree of inefficiency in that she has to follow-up with teacher-directed instruction to ensure there is a high degree of comprehension. While she places herself at the center of instruction on most occasions, her demeanor and style is very engaging so she lectures but it is an active, participatory type of lecture and really more of a discussion—students find it hard to hide in her classes:

I'm definitely more lecture based. I've tried in more recent years to get away from it and try to put more on them, but what I find is I tend to have to follow-up. Kids ask a lot more questions and you can see they kind of get distracted [if I leave it just to them.] I

definitely do a lot of lecture, but I also do a lot that makes them accountable. There are certain things that are a standard for all. I am a visual learner, so I force them into my learning style a lot of times. I do charts. We will go over something and then I will say okay, now put it in a chart so you can visually see it and demonstrated and everything else. You got to know the basic and then the details and how to pair them together so that you can answer the information.

Gloria strongly believes that AP students should read and she assigns a significant amount of reading for homework and then holds them accountable with quizzes in class. She maintains that practicing reading and taking multiple choice quizzes helps prepare them for the AP exam but also for college where they will encounter similar tasks. She indicates that she feels that the extra work her students are tasked with is essentially what differentiates AP classes from traditional classes and that student need to be exposed to this level of demand because they will confront it in college and they need to practice the time management and academic skills now:

I make them read and I give them reading quizzes, because to me at least I'm making them accountable for not only practicing the multiple choices but also the reading. And you should have a lot of homework as far as I'm concerned, because, yes it's a college course, but it's different as this is college in high school.

She is highly organized and this is evident in the way she organizes her classroom but especially in the way she helps organize information for the students. She used to provide the students with guided reading questions to focus their reading but she explains that she stopped doing it as most students did not take them seriously and provided frivolous responses. Instead,

she has student complete content organizers and provides study charts that she either finds or develops that help students organize key information and supplement the assigned readings from the textbook. She sees benefits to having students read various accounts of history but is hesitant to assign additional readings because she knows that many students are highly tasked with the amount of reading she already assigns and that even her most academically gifted students are typically enrolled in multiple AP classes that also have heavy course workloads.

Gloria feels that, with regard to college preparation, one of the strongest elements of AP U.S. History is the writing required of her students. She sees a lot of merit in teaching and reinforcing students' ability to develop a thesis and support it with historical evidence. Students have to learn how to craft an argument that is supported by the facts. "They have to construct arguments about history, do the critical thinking, put things together and see connections. Not simply memorize facts." Learning how to construct an argument supported by factual historical evidence is new for most of students but she feels that there is tremendous merit to teaching students how to think logically and factually when crafting an argument. She notes that teaching writing in AP U.S. History is difficult because you have to teach them the historical content, the analytical skills necessary to understand the content, and how to write in the format that the course requires. They have to be able to do all of it well; a well-constructed essay is not worth much if there's no substance. Likewise, if a student just presents factual information without a well-crafted essay their score will be low. All of the writing she does in her classroom is of this type. First because it is the type of writing they have to demonstrate proficiency in on the AP exam but also because she feels that it is the type of writing they will be asked to do in college. Her own college experiences have led her to the conclusion that college undergraduates don't really need to have well-developed research skills to be successful and that is more of a graduate

student skill:

So I think being able to teach that kind of skill and have the time. I mean we do it, definitely with FRQs, but you know, think about the poor kid who gets to Part B (essays) and doesn't know anything, you know what I mean, or has forgotten everything, what do they do? And like you said, maybe some advantage is that they can write a well-constructed essay, but it has no substance, so they get a 1, you know what I mean?

Gloria feels that she has a high degree of autonomy with regard to curricular-instructional decision making in her AP U.S. History course. She concedes that if she wasn't concerned about the end-of-course exam she would likely spend more time on certain content and less time on other content than she currently does. She explains that she wouldn't feel the pressure to cover all of U.S. history and would probably wouldn't give weekly multiple choice reading quizzes as she feels those are mainly in place mainly for the students to practice the multiple choice test-taking, a skill they must demonstrate on the exam. While she would adjust the content she teaches somewhat, she feels that her instructional methods wouldn't be very different if there were no standardized exam in place. She would continue to use a textbook as the centerpiece of content exposure and writing assignments for her students would be similar. She feels that it would be comforting to be able to develop her own assessment for her students based on the content and skills she believes they should have mastered rather than anticipating the assessed content as is now the case:

I suppose the content might be different. I would feel more comfortable spending time on material that I or the students like and not so much pressure to cover all of U.S. history if I wasn't concerned about the exam. I also wouldn't give my weekly reading quizzes,

those are mainly to have them practice their multiple choice test taking skills.

How my beliefs shape my AP U.S. History classroom. Gloria has a lot of energy and her classroom reflects that. She demands that the students be engaged and develops activities that get them up and actively participating. Much of the activity is centered on instruction that is designed to reinforce the readings that the students have done at home, reviewing material previously read or taught in class, and making connections between U.S. history content. She is an energetic person who brings her energy to the classroom and demands the same from her students. She wants her classroom to be a place of activity, a place where students mix with each other and learn from each other. She hopes that her active classroom will not only result in increased learning about U.S. history but also help develop bonds between the students and with her. In this way, she increases the comfort level between the students through familiarity and increases the rapport between herself and the students:

For me, it just has to be exciting. If I was up there like Bueller, they'd be like yeah, okay, I'm done with it. I think one of the good things is that even the kids who are nerdy and the kids who are cool, everyone feels like they can engage with each other. I'm always up and out of my desk and I try to get them up and out of their desks and physically active. One of the games we play when we do review, I have buzzers but they literally cannot just sit in the teams, they have to sit in rows and then every third question we rotate, so they have to get up and move. I joke that it's like all the kids are always like – and even the administration, “how do you have so much energy?” Because if I didn't, they won't, so I have to no matter how tired I get.

Gloria is highly organized in her routines and in the way she presents information to her students. She has developed very detailed macro plans for course instruction throughout the year; she has highly detailed organizers for each of her units of instruction, and never passes up an opportunity to help her students organize content through a drawing on the board or a chart downloaded from an internet site. She makes virtually all of her organization materials available to her students constantly by placing the assignments, class materials, and unit organizers online where students can access them as they need them:

I'm the chart queen. If I can put it into a chart, I will, that kind of reemphasizes [the material.] That is why I like the website, because I can now make those assignments and make them do it and then they are forced to do a review on their own.

She establishes standards for all and enforces those standards firmly. She expects students to do their assigned reading, assesses them through class quizzes, has high demands for their writing, and doesn't take late work. She feels that her job is to establish the standards, ensure students understand the standards, and prepare them to meet the standards but ultimately they have to do what is expected of them. While she is firm about enforcing classroom standards, she explains that she is sympathetic when individual circumstances warrant it and shares a significant degree of caring about the students and their learning:

If there is an absence due to illness, I usually am a little bit more lenient and I tell them that they get more lenience from me if they e-mail me. If you are at home and you are lying in bed watching television, that means you can email me, and I will give those kids leeway all day because I like that they were assertive and they took responsibility.

She allows students to do quiz corrections; if they fail a quiz then they are permitted to re-take and achieve a grade that is minimally passing. “If they get a 50 or below, they get to re-do the quiz and it can be up to as high as a 65 then so at least it’s passing.” She also offers an extra-credit assignment and does after school tutoring throughout the year, increasing the level of tutoring as they approach the AP exam.

How I feel about teaching AP U.S. History. Gloria believes that U.S. history is essential for all students as the exposure to our past, an understanding of the different cultures from our past that created the U.S., and a familiarization with contemporary issues in the nation helps them become effective citizens. She loves history, in part because of her own positive experiences in high school, and believes it’s important for students’ growth. She fondly recalls how some of her best memories from school were in history class where they played games and had fun with history. She wants the same kind of experience for own students and hope they will reflect back on her class and have good memories about history in the way that she does. She wants her students to understand that history is not only about understanding the past but also a very relevant in understanding the present and that being knowledgeable about the world around you is something to be appreciated in and of itself.

Gloria finds student growth personally rewarding. She explains that she wants all of her students to do well and gets a lot of satisfaction out of seeing them succeed as a class. However, she notes that she finds it especially rewarding when students who are not the most gifted academically manage to pass the exam. She explains that some high-achieving students are going to pass the exam, even with a 5, without much help from her or perhaps even without much effort throughout the year. She finds it especially rewarding when a student who is not as

academically gifted, one who has to exert a tremendous amount of effort in her class, passes the exam:

The kids that I like the best are the middle of the road kids, the kids that like history and yet they have to figure out how to do AP U.S. Because at least I think they have the ability to do the work. They know: here's a set of expectations that someone has given me and I've done it. He got everything he needed to get done, he is going to finish. That to me is better than a kid getting a 5 who always gets the 5, because he learned something.

All of her students are probably not going to pass the exam but she feels there are academic and skill-building advantages to simply being in the class, working hard, and experiencing the rigor. She believes that U.S. history is essential for all students as the exposure to our past, an understanding of the different cultures from our past that created the U.S., and a familiarization with contemporary issues in the nation helps them become effective citizens.

Gloria likes teaching AP U.S. History and participates in the AP U.S. History Exam essay evaluation sessions held by the College Board each year to grade the year's essays. She likes the experience it provides her as an AP U.S. History teacher where she has the opportunity to meet and mingle with some of the people instrumental in creating the exam but also feels that she benefits as a teacher where she bring back the experience and share with her students as she instructs them about how to plan and write essays for the exam:

The first year I went, I read, like, 942 essays. Last year I got closer to 1,000. I like the people that you meet there and then the experience that you see ... all of the hard work ...

you spend a lot of time grading 1's and 2's, but when you get the 5, you're like this is awesome.

It is important to develop the skills necessary for college and Gloria feels that AP U.S. History is a big part of that. While she recognizes that all students may not put forth their best effort at times, she feels confident that they have the ability to be successful on the AP exam at the end of the year. She sees preparation for the AP exam and especially success on the exam as confidence-building for the students particularly in preparation for college as this event is viewed as a validation of work that is similar to what will be encountered there. She believes they feel "I may not have an A, but at least I've done the work. I've put forth the effort, I feel confident about the AP U.S. History exam and I feel ready to go." She believes that 90% of her students have the skills necessary to be successful in college now. She recognizes that there will be a certain percentage of students who, for whatever reason, will not put forth the effort required to be successful in her class. "I think the 10 percent who don't are the ones who don't do the work ever. Meaning that they're more than capable, they could have passed the AP exam, but they don't do the work." She acknowledges that this same kind of work ethic will produce the same types of results in college where there is typically much less monitoring and caring from the instructor. She believes effort and interest in one's studies are important and maintains that students who don't necessarily excel in her classroom now can develop the skills and ability to be successful in college if they decide to take their studies seriously and put forth the level of effort required to be successful in college:

Even I think the ones that struggle with AP U.S. History, may get Cs and Bs, but they do the work and they understand ... they know how to put themselves on a schedule. I think

they'll be successful because I think really college is more learning about you and how you learn

Gloria believes that the AP U.S. History experience is college level and worthy of college credit for those who demonstrate proficiency on the exam due to the volume of content the students are required to master in AP U.S. History, along with the reading, writing, and analytical skills they practice and demonstrate through assessment:

I am quite satisfied. These kids have been through a lot... more than a typical college general education class and they have had to demonstrate their knowledge on a standardized test which is another thing that college students don't have to do. I think that even the kids who don't pass the AP exam have had an experience that really challenges them in ways that they wouldn't be challenged in a typical Honors or Regular high school history class.

Organizational

How my students affect my classroom. Gloria feels that she encounters a wide variety of diversity with regard to her students' interests, motivations, and abilities. She explains that some students like history and some don't, some are taking the course as a challenge while others just hope to get a bump in their GPA from the AP designation, and some have developed strong academic skills and others have not:

You definitely get a wide variety. You get the kids who like history ...and they have never really read a textbook. Then you get the kids who were on the opposite end of the spectrum. They are really well read and they have a good idea how to analyze.

Most of her students are assessed as reading on grade level but she does get some who do not and some of those are in danger of not graduating. She also notes that students who do not possess developed reading skills also have deficits in writing skills—both of these skills are essentially skills in AP U.S. History. Her experience is that it can be quite difficult to get the lower achieving students to commit to seeking help. She feels that, over time, students begin to identify the “smart kids” and often lower achieving students seem to view themselves as less capable and accept it as reality instead of seeking help. “That is definitely my hardest challenge, trying to get those kids who are not normally going to engage and get involved and say ‘I need help.’ That is exactly it and they are already pre-labeled by the time they get to 11th grade.”

She explains that students differ individually but they also differ collectively by classes, so she feels she needs to be attentive to the needs and learning styles of entire classes and adjusts her instructional methods and student groupings to what she thinks is best for a particular class:

I think it varies depending on what we’re talking about, sometimes they are very interactive or they could care less. I also think it’s the group... eighth period is a very testosterone heavy class; seventh period is very female orientated. I mean there is discussion and a lot of times, the girls are the leaders, but there is very little debate, like they tend to agree with one another. I think that’s one of the interesting things about teaching, is you see that kind of diversity and stuff based on who is in class together.

Gloria feels strongly that students need to be self-motivated and driven to succeed in AP. She explains that she will do her part but ultimately students have to want it too. While there are many different reasons to take an AP class, she explains that often students are motivated to take AP because of the extra weight they get in their GPA from an AP-designated class. Furthermore,

she feels that the honors and regular classes have been depleted of a lot of the academic achievers so you often find that those classes have taken on an atmosphere of less rigor than was once found before the AP expansion. The lower academic reputation that is now attributed to the traditional classes is often a motivating factor to enroll in AP. So, while she hopes that her students are intrinsically motivated and are ready for the challenge of AP, she recognized that many of them are enrolled for other reasons:

Well, I would like them to be successful, but they have to want it, too. I honestly think they take it for GPA. In my opinion AP is the new honors, and honors is the new regular, and regular is the boom-boom, you know what I mean?

Students may struggle with the rigor of AP for many different reasons. For some of her higher achieving students, multiple AP classes can mean that these students are overloaded with work and despite the best of intentions may find it difficult to accomplish her work due to competing demands. She notes that this is particularly evident at the end of the year as these students try to prepare for multiple AP exams that all occur within a two week period in May:

I think it's a good experience for kids when they don't overload themselves. In Florida it seems like the students are all taking a ton of AP and it's not only that they have all that school work but then they have all their extracurricular on top of it. I had a girl who took six AP exams this year. I had kids who took nine as seniors because they took two classes. That's where I think it goes wrong. I don't think you should be allowed to take six or seven [AP classes] that's got to be information overload.

Understanding history and developing good analytical skills can be challenging for students so she tries to provide a degree of diversity with regard to instructional methods and

provides opportunities for group-work where they can help each other as they work in class. It is her hope that students will all find something that works for them and realize that they can succeed. She finds that generally students benefit from group work. She is a firm believer that heterogeneous groupings of students allows them to benefit by sharing ideas, facilitating understanding, and helping develop a sense of community. Understanding history and developing good analytical skills can be challenging for students so she tries to provide a degree of diversity with regard to instructional methods and provides opportunities for group-work where they can help each other as they work in class. It is her hope that students will all find something that works for them and realize that they can succeed:

I think in a lot of ways you have to go over stuff, do the whole lecture and discussion and everything but then I also think on an individual basis. What I try to do more often is get them to tackle cause and effect, because everything in history is cause-and-effect, with a partner. For the most part, it is standards for all because everybody has to take the same test at the end. I try to do a multiplicity of activities and eventually everybody will buy into at least one lesson and will go yeah, I liked that lesson- that would work for me.

She establishes standards and believes her students will rise to them. She wants to see small academic rewards throughout the year that keeps them going but feels that the end-of-course provides the validation for her students that they have achieved something special:

They have to figure out how to read, they have to figure out how to analyze and answer the questions, and when you see them finally getting it, it's very exciting for them. It's nice when they come out of the exam and they are like yes that was awesome.

However, she feels that the experience that she constructs for her students are beneficial

regardless of the outcome of the AP exam. She views it as a preparation for the rigors of college. The exposure of the content, methods, and skills means that, as a minimum, they better understand what will be expected of them in college and in some ways. She does feel that in some ways the AP program is more rigorous than what they will experience when they get there:

I think it's good for those kids to get experience, even the kids that may end up with a 2 or a 1 who only take one or two AP classes, because at least they get exposure to not necessarily the type of work you do in college because I think we're different, I think we're more rigorous than freshman in college take, but I think they at least figure out the reading.

How other teachers affect my classroom. Gloria is the only AP U.S. History teacher at her school and doesn't feel like her peers have that much influence over what occurs in her classroom. She knows that teachers' AP scores are well-known among teachers, sometimes they are shared directly among the staff and other times they are shared indirectly in aggregate data or teacher conversations. She explains that given the small number of AP teachers at any given school anyone can figure out how successful an AP individual teacher is. She has successful AP pass rates and acknowledges that plays a role in her reputation as a teacher but also feels like there are lots of other things that contribute to a teacher's reputation:

At the faculty meeting, they hand out the whole one [AP scores] where it's just the broad-spectrum county one. With my mentor, I kept it to myself the second time she came in here and I talked with it on my chest the whole time

How the administration affects my classroom. Gloria explains that her administration selects students for enrollment in AP U.S. History. As far as she knows, the administrators use

student performance on the PSAT as a qualifying factor with student and parent requests as a factor. She does feel that given the large size of the school, her administration is somewhat selective about who enrolls in AP classes so the overall numbers of students taking AP U.S. History is relatively small when compared to schools of similar size. She generally supports the levels of AP participation and notes that she has heard teachers at other schools that have higher enrollment numbers grumbling about low-achieving students taking AP classes:

I don't think we push it as much as other schools do. We don't open it up quite as much as they do, like make everybody take it if you are honors level. I was surprised that the numbers group for this year with up-and-coming sophomores, because I was the only one who taught at this year. I don't know why the numbers expanded like they did. From what I understand, participation is based on the PSAT scores they get from their freshman year and then every year thereafter, if they want to still sign up. You have to have a certain score, whatever that is as set by the office in order to take an AP class. They think that you can be successful in the course based on your PSAT score, which is your reading and your math level. As long as you meet the standards, they pretty much let you take the class.

While the school administration is not responsible for establishing the requirements for all of the standardized testing that occurs in her school, she does feel that the testing schedule that teachers have to accommodate has a very disruptive effect on her classes and further decreases the amount of classroom time she has with her students.

Gloria asserts that it is very difficult to fit all of the content required by AP U.S. History into the school year. Florida starts the school year relatively early compared to other states who

often don't start until after Labor Day and she can't imagine how those schools get through the curriculum. Essentially, there's a time crunch to cover all of the material. She acknowledges that teachers don't get the entire school year to teach the curriculum as the AP exams are held in May and not June when the actual school year ends; this means the loss of almost a month of instructional time:

As far as the curriculum goes, I mean you're pretty much stuck within the timeframe. It's hard with the tests in May and you finish in June, I can't imagine being people who start after Labor Day.

How the school district affects my classroom. Gloria believes there is inconsistency between the AP exam performance of her students and the way she is evaluated through the teacher evaluation program. She takes exception to some of the lower markings on her teacher observation evaluations because she feels that the instructional methods she selects work for her students as far as getting them to pass the exams, however, she feels the teacher evaluators are specifically looking for student-centered activities and if the students are not actively engaged on that day they give her lower marks on her evaluation. "She [evaluator] gave me five progressives, and I'm like, not every day is a happy land and not every day they're [students] not going to be happy to see me. I was doing a new lesson." She explains that sometimes she needs to lecture and that students can be quite different as far as their level of engagement. She feels that being quiet doesn't necessarily mean they don't understand or aren't following the lesson but the teacher evaluators will mark a teacher down in observations if all of the students aren't actively engaged in the lesson:

Where you get marked down from the teacher evaluators for not having all the kids

engaged. There are some kids who will engage and be involved in the class discussion, and then there are kids who never will, who will talk to you after class, afraid of what their classmates will think, or if they say something wrong and stuff like that, so I try to encourage conversation even if it is wrong.

Policy

How College Board guidance affects my classroom. Gloria explains that her general planning for her AP U.S. History curriculum begins with examination of the direction put out by College Board in the “Acorn Book.” She maintains that the direction there is limited but she makes sure that she incorporates what is there. The direction is mostly thematic and organizational so she ensures that her curriculum generally jibes with the College Board’s curriculum guide. “I try to do this, I took the Acorn book and look at the different topics. There aren't very many of them, but I try to make sure that I hit on every one of those key points.” When it comes to the detailed AP U.S. History content, Gloria acknowledges that she tries to anticipate the content that will be tested on the AP exam and this contributes to the construction of her curriculum. She looks at previous AP exams and relies on her experience and judgment to anticipate testable content. Furthermore, she not only anticipates testable content but also which section of the exam it is most likely to show up on because if it’s in the multiple choice section they need to recognize it but if it’s in the essay section they will have to recall the information. Her experience gives her a degree of confidence about anticipating exam content but she comments that in past years she has been wrong about some content predictions and she feels disappointed when she finds out that she was wrong as she has spent considerable time with students on an area that was not tested:

You look at the previous exams and, and you're driven by what has been there before. Part B is pre-colonial America, and potentially civil war. So your kid's got to know that content. But I think it's hard to say because I've been really disappointed in recent years that Jackson has not [been on exam]—he's been left off and I spend quite a bit of time on him just because he's transitional and interesting. We're getting to the point now where you should be able to cover Ronald Reagan in some length, but at what point do you cut out enough of the pre-colonial stuff and the development of the colonies and everything else to get to that.

As far as content, she feels that the scope of content tested in AP U.S. History and the demands of analysis and comprehension are about right. She feels that while the course is demanding it is attainable for most students if they put forth the necessary effort. Her experience with AP testing has led her to conclude that the College Board does a good job of constructing evaluations and she prefers their approach to other standardized tests she has experienced:

I think the advantage for the standardized testing of AP U.S. History is you're giving them a broad spectrum, and they have to kind of understand how it all ties in together. I like College Board testing to be honest with you versus like what I've seen with the Honors American History classes.

However, she does feel that the College Board could do better with aligning the writing skills in AP World and U.S. History classes. She points out that the rubrics and analytical skills measured on the two DBQs are very different and this confuses students and makes it difficult for teachers. "They [students] really are terrible at the beginning because they transition from AP World...it's a totally different DBQ." Finally, she is somewhat concerned about the planned

changes to the AP U.S. History exam as she believes it will eliminate student choice on the essay section as is now the case and this could affect the way she approaches her curricular-instructional decision making. There is some uncertainty about the new exam and what it will require from the students as far as new skills:

They are changing AP U.S. History [exam] and you know this whole transition that they're doing, where they're not giving the kids choice [of essay questions] anymore, you're limited to one kind of answer. I think choice is ideal, because there are parts of history that you like better so you're going to know more about them.

How I prepare my students for the exam. Gloria uses any materials she can find from College Board or other AP teachers, that will help simulate the experience that the students will encounter during the AP exam. She also believes that they need to be very familiar with the exact format and environment that they will encounter on testing day. To accomplish this she uses the College Board released exams to familiarize students with the format and level of difficulty of the questions:

I use released exams, the practice exams and all the FRQ's and the DBQ's that are online. I give them a practice exam the week before they go. All of my friends who have taught AP, I'm also borrowing stuff from them.

She wants her students to be comfortable when they report in test day and not surprised by what they experience there. To ensure they are comfortable, she creates testing environments similar to the AP exam and has them practice taking similar tests before test day. "For me it's about practice. They have to have practice and they have to do the necessary things so when they sit down and take a test so that they are not nervous." Throughout the year Gloria uses assessments

that are similar in difficulty and format as the one her students will encounter on the AP exam so that they are prepared for the exam by the end of the year. To facilitate this, she uses multiple choice questions from released exams and other test items of similar difficulty and makes sure her students are given the same amounts of time per question that they receive on test day. All of her assessments are multiple choice and she has them practice frequently. They get used to the rigor that is typically found in AP-style multiple choice questions through repetition but also through using released questions from previous tests. While consistent exposure helps student learn how to take multiple choice tests, she also instructs them in test-taking strategies that help them narrow choices in multiple choice and identify key words that help to eliminate multiple choice distracters:

I tell them, for my tests, you have to answer everything. Answer all the ones that you know first and then go back through and the answer the ones that you think you might be able to answer. I'm thinking you may as well try to narrow it to two and guess.

For the essay-writing sections, she feels it is critical that students be able to successfully write AP U.S. History essays on the exam. Gloria has her students practice them often throughout the year. She explains that it's a lot of work for her but she does it because she believes it's imperative that they know how to do it on test day. She has her students practice writing AP U.S. History format essays throughout the year. The writing is aligned with the writing skills that students have to demonstrate on test day. FRQs and DBQs are the *de facto* standard. She instructs, they practice, and they assist each other:

We do an FRQ and DBQ every unit. One of the best things that I do with FRQs – I haven't done it with the DBQ just because DBQs are so fickle – but I have them grade

each other's FRQs. I hand them out randomly. I will collect them and go okay, now we're going to grade them in class. They have to then sit with that person and explain why they gave them the grades that they gave them.

Student samples released by the College Board are also shared with the class so that they can better emulate the format and quality of response:

I really try to do that about October because we have written at least two so they have a sense of where they are. To me, that's one of the best activities. That was how I figured it out grading them, was looking at different samples of the kids and trying to figure out where I thought they were so I thought okay, that is a good way for them to do it.

At the end of the year, her objectives for exam review are to basically have her students go over key material once again and try to emphasize items that she feels are most likely to be tested. She would like to see more self-motivated review but feels the students are mostly "burned out" by this time. She provides some review and organizer sheets to help the students make connections that they might not otherwise make as she knows that simple recall of facts is typically not enough. They need to see connections, relationships, cause-effect, and big themes:

One of the worksheets that I have is Conflicts. I like for them to do it and then we go over it and we talk about why, like what was the conflict between Woodrow Wilson and Henry Cabot Lodge, like why did those guys not like each other, what's going on, what is the surrounding timeframe and stuff like that. I use a lot of review sheets just because it puts it in the perspective and everything else for them, beyond just world memorization.

During the review she doesn't give them any additional work, she just provides the review

guides and engages them in class activities designed to help recall and refresh their memories from what they have learned throughout the year. She relies on quality learning during the year and then review, summary, at the end:

I've kind of learned to piece meal when I do review. In class, mainly what I do is, I play games and I just reinforce their knowledge, because I'm like, you know you can do the review book; we've done all the content throughout the course of the year. I just got to get you to remember it.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEMES BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

The four participants in this study yielded a significant amount of data in the form of four background surveys, four hours of classroom observations, and twelve hours of interview transcripts. The researcher in this study conducted all of the classroom observations and participant interviews and took field observation notes and coding memos throughout the process. The 12 hours of interview transcripts were analyzed and coded using ATLAS.ti software. The coding process had three phases: an initial analysis of the interviews with general codes applied; a detailed analysis of the interviews with more specific, detailed codes applied. In the third phase, two doctoral candidates provided support to this study by reviewing all of the second-phase coding to validate the legitimacy of the coding and to verify consistency in application of the coding. Each of the graduate students reviewed two of the study participants and provided their feedback to the researcher. There were no major issues with legitimacy or consistency noted by the assistants.

Quotations from interview transcripts that were coded using ATLAS.ti have been used in this study to develop the case study narratives and to identify the major themes in this study. A table of codes used in this study is included for information at Appendix G. It should be noted that the coding table identifies most codes used and lists their frequency by participant but there is no way to reflect the saliency of a comment in the table and one should use caution when

attributing meaning to frequency of a code. The researcher spent four hours directly with each participant collecting the data and has spent countless hours reading, coding, and analyzing the data to interpret themes that appear to emerge from this data. To maintain symmetry with the overall purpose of this study, the researcher has identified the dominant theme that emerges from the data in the areas of personal, organizational, and policy influences on the teachers' decision-making process. The three themes identified are: AP teachers' personalities and experiences impact their decision making and course planning, students' academic abilities influence teacher curricular-decision making, and student performance on the AP exam is paramount. Each of these major themes is comprised of supporting themes; the major themes and supporting themes are listed here and then discussed below:

Personal Theme: AP teachers' personalities and experiences impact their decision making and course planning.

- Teachers organize instruction and hold students accountable
- Teachers develop caring, supportive classrooms
- Teachers establish strong teacher-student rapport and levels of mutual respect
- Teachers find student progress personally rewarding
- Teachers' own learning preferences influence their AP classrooms
- Teachers simulate a college level experience based on their own college experiences
- Teachers accept Advanced Placement as a personal challenge

Organizational Theme: Students' academic abilities influence teacher curricular-instructional decision making

- Diversity is greatest between schools
- Fundamental skills vary significantly
- Student academic skills affect teacher instructional methods

Policy Theme: Student performance on the AP exam is paramount

- Learning objectives are dictated by the exam
- Teachers anticipate exam content
- Academic skills taught align with increased student performance on exam

Personal Theme: AP Teachers' Personalities and Experiences Impact Their Decision Making and Course Planning

Teachers organize instruction and hold students accountable. All four teachers placed a value on organizing the AP U.S. History content to help their students learn. They all begin their planning with a considerable degree of macro-planning to help organize the large volume of content into meaningful units. College Board guidance was used by all to a degree but the assigned textbook played a more significant role in annual planning as all teachers reported that, for the most part, they used the textbook organization as the basis for their plans. Teachers liked the textbook organization because it was convenient but also because it helps the students see what is coming and it is the primary source of content for them. Teachers feel it is important to provide students with as much advance notice of their upcoming assignments as possible as this provides them a degree of control and provides them opportunities to practice time management skills. Susan explains: “[I] just try to set it up so that they know what’s coming, but if they don’t do what they were supposed to do, there’s going to be a consequence to it.” All

four teachers believe that it is important to groom organizational skills in their students and none of the teachers accepts late homework. Susan explains:

So that's one of the reasons we set it up in those three to four-chapter blocks. Here are your deadlines. This is what you're going to have to meet. This is what you're going to have to do before we move to the next unit.

While organizing content for students, providing them with advance notice, and holding them accountable was a characteristic of all four teachers, these teachers go further and feel it necessary to organize their daily instruction in ways that increases comprehension. Alice acknowledges that her IB students, while among some of the brightest students in the school district, are very busy and as such she feels it necessary to organize daily instruction to lessen the burden as much as possible for her students. Alice assigns readings from the district-mandated textbook but she also has the students purchase another textbook that is more abbreviated in the way that it describes U.S. history. As the abbreviated book does not cover most topics in sufficient detail, she augments the readings with instruction during class. She posts her lectures on her web site for students to review, print, and bring to class for note-taking. Both Thomas and Susan develop organizing questions for their students as they read. Thomas explains:

With the guides I developed, it helps out those lower-level students. If I just threw a book at some of these kids, and said good luck, we'll talk about this throughout the year, they wouldn't know what to write when it came to them taking notes."

Gloria uses unit organizers that she received from an AP U.S. History training session and shares those with the students online, though she laments that many don't use them as she'd like.

Gloria goes further in her daily instruction, looking for any opportunity she can find to help the students organize the large breadth of content:

They look at the unit organizer and they think big deal, but if they actually have an assignment, they have to turn in [the organizer] to me. I used to have them do the review questions at the end of the chapter for practice, but they make up such junk. I figure if they have a chart, I can go through and I can check it plus I think it will help me, too. I'm the chart queen. If I can put it into a chart, I will.

Teachers develop caring, supportive classroom. All four of the participants in this study demonstrated that developing caring, supportive classrooms is important to them. All teachers shared anecdotes about helping individual students and gaining satisfaction from that. They explained how they were trying to provide their students with a college-level experience but understood that they were not college students, they were high school students who were still trying to figure out a lot of things associated with adolescence. While all of the teachers felt it important to establish rigid standards for all and not accept late work without a good excuse, they ultimately were very sympathetic to their student circumstances.

These teachers feel the need to demonstrate caring and be there to support their academic pursuits. Alice holds after school tutoring sessions during the week and on weekends as the exam approaches, she attends their personal study sessions at various locations around town, and organizes a pizza study party the evening before the AP exam:

Oh I'm always available after school. I have kids come in frequently during lunch and I am currently holding after school AP reviews ... I had kids sitting on the floor today during lunch, the just brought their lunch and I probably had 50 kids in here doing review

... [I say] “hey if you need me on the weekends or if you need me at night. You know if you’re going to be at Starbucks let me know.”

Alice feels that demonstrating this level of caring and support is important in her classroom as her students rarely question assignments she gives them and their behavior in class is impeccable. She feels that the students know she cares and that she designs lessons to help them be successful. Similarly, Susan makes herself available after school for tutoring:

I do tutoring and I let them know the schedule of when I’m going to be here and if they have a special need [to] just ask me ... So you know I’m flexible and I tell the kids, this is what I do, I’m here for you.

Susan believes that demonstrating a significant degree of support is necessary as her students need it and she wants them to be ready for college where she asserts that the level of caring and support is not the same, “a lot of college professors – the classes are so big that the kids don’t get that one on one relationship ... I want them to enjoy the class. I want them to want to be in here.” Thomas expressed similar levels of support and frequently organizes group work in his classes as a support network for students, “we do a lot of group work where students can talk about the notes they have taken and that reassures them.” Gloria provides opportunities for students to recover from poor performances on quizzes so that, with effort, they can maintain an acceptable grade in the class:

I do let them do quiz corrections, because we do so many reading quizzes over the course of the unit. If they get a 50 or below, they get to re-do the quiz and it can be up to as high as a 65 then so at least its passing.

Teachers establish strong teacher-student rapport and levels of mutual respect. All teachers expressed a desire to have good rapport with their students and establish an environment of mutual respect and trust. They begin by establishing clear standards for academic behavior and informing the students that they must meet the standards or suffer the consequences. Alice's explanation is typical, "I'm very strict. I don't take late work at all. It's just cut and dry ... they rise to that and they know my class is one that they can't slack off on but then they respect me for my policies." Susan has the same idea:

As far as assignments go they all get the same assignments, they have the same expectations. I won't lower my expectations for them, which is frustrating for them. Some of them are used to getting away with not doing something or being able to turn something in late, I won't do that. I try to keep certain things a set way so that everybody knows that this is how it's going to be.

While each of the teachers works to establish an environment of high expectations, they are simultaneously friendly and supportive. Clearly all of the teachers have different personalities, but all of them bring aspects of their personalities into the classroom. During the classroom observation, Alice discussed television shows and upcoming music shows earnestly with the students before class. She explains that she tries to be humorous and "goofy" when she can as they respond when she shares something personal about herself. Susan also says she "likes to have fun when I'm learning, and I try to engage the kids. I'm part stand-up comedian." Thomas reflects that also:

I've got an outgoing personality. I enjoy interacting with the students ... if I can make light of a situation, if I can make something silly out of a picture or something that will

make the kids laugh [I will], at least it makes the class enjoyable.

Gloria uses humor as well but also she brings the energetic side of her personality to bear:

I don't like to sit around very long. I'm always up and out of my desk and everything else and I try to get them up and out of their desk and physically active. Like one of the games we play when we do review, I have buzzers but they literally cannot just sit in the teams, they have to sit in rows and then every third question we rotate, so they have to get up and move and stuff like that.

Teachers indicate that they feel increased teacher – student rapport leads to an environment of increased mutual respect. Teachers acknowledge that the students have a difficult task before them and students understand that the teachers have their best interests at heart when they create assignments and assess their learning. Alice notes:

When they start seeing their grades and they're passing tests and they see how doing the homework on time produces better results overall, I think they appreciate that what I'm doing is really for them and not just because I'm trying to make life difficult.

Teachers acknowledge that they personally want to have comfortable classrooms that are characterized by mutual respect, but as Thomas points out, establishing good communication with lower performers is particularly important:

You don't want to coddle them but at the same time you have to be very supportive so that is how I work with the lower-level students. You reassure them that they are not going to fail. You tell them to do their best and then let me give them feedback.

Teachers find student progress personally rewarding. All of the participants in this study

have had success with getting students to pass the AP exam. All reported that at the beginning of the year they become aware of those students that are likely to pass the exam with ease and those that seem to struggle. Reasons for struggling can vary widely from motivational factors to academic skills. All teachers shared anecdotes about students who, despite increased challenges, made significant progress throughout the year and they all appeared genuinely proud of the students' progress and their contribution to it. In some cases the students passed the AP exam but in others it was simply personal growth and learning gains. Alice's IB students have high pass rates but she shared that she often feels more personal satisfaction from seeing a student with challenges earn a score of 3 than others who earn a 5 because the student with the lower score actually demonstrated more growth. Gloria shared a similar sentiment:

[some students getting a 2] is better than a kid getting a 5 who always gets the 5 because he learned something ... they have to figure out how to read, they have to figure out how to analyze and answer the questions, and when you see them finally getting it, it's very exciting for them. It's nice when they come out of the exam and they are like 'yes,' that was awesome.

Both Thomas and Susan expressed how they felt personally connected to some of the lower performers. Susan's students have more academic challenges than any of the other schools in this study and she confronts these challenges and sees progress on a daily basis. She feels it's the academic gains that are most important as they are for the long term:

For me, it's not as much the passing of the AP exam. It's building a core of study skills. Some of them who make it to 11th grade still don't have them. Having study skills that take them successfully through college, that's my biggest driving thing, is to make sure

they can write a decent paper, that they know how to research, that they know how to read a text and get stuff from it, and that they understand that they actually have to study.

Thomas's situation at his school is quite different as, on average, the students at his school perform better. However he does encounter students who are low performers in his AP class and rather than attempt to reassign them to another class he relishes the challenge:

My goal is to keep the lower-level students and to teach the students ... I don't kick anybody out. I try to encourage them to stay. When a kid talks about dropping the class, I talk to their parents and say I really think they should stay because this is going to benefit them in college.

Teachers' own learning preferences influence their AP classroom. It appears that participants' personal learning preferences affect the way they make curricular-instructional decisions. Alice, Susan, and Gloria report similar learning preferences and very similar concepts about what a college experience is like. Thomas differed, quite radically, in preferred learning style and conceptually about what a college experience should be. While their preferences and conceptualization of college differ, they all bring their perspectives to bear on their classrooms. While Alice, Susan, and Gloria have history degrees of some type, Thomas has a social science education degree which may account for some of the differences in perspective.

Thomas reports that he prefers to learn from reading and doesn't like lecture as a learner. "When I was in college and had to listen to lectures, I would write poems and stuff in my notes, seriously. I've got notebooks at home that have random stuff written down. I cannot sit there listening to somebody talk to me." As a result, he doesn't put much emphasis on lecture in his classroom. Instead he believes in assigning reading, having the students share what they have

read with each other in groups, arranging activities in class that are student-centered discussion or analysis, and having them answer essay prompts to practice their writing skills and demonstrate understanding.

In this regard, Thomas differs considerably from the other three who favor lecture as a learning method, feel that it is effective, and use it frequently in their classrooms. Alice feels that lecture is necessary and effective:

I mean learning history is typically a lecture based type education, it has been traditionally just lecture based and when you want the details if you really like history you absorb those details through a lecture versus other subjects maybe. So I could definitely see that as a learner I'm an oral learner and a visual learner so I do assign a lot of readings and do lecture.

Gloria and Susan describe similar preferences and indicate that their classrooms include considerable teacher-directed learning with some form of lecture. Gloria says:

I'm definitely more lecture-based. I've tried in recent years to get away from it and try to put more on them, but what I find is, that I didn't have to follow-up like after group work and stuff like that I have to repeat it.

Likewise, Susan describes her classroom as "mostly lecture, well, talking, discussion lecture because I want them involved. And we try to make the connections. So it's mostly that."

Teachers simulate a college level experience based on their own college experiences.

Teachers were asked directly if they felt their classes were college level or college preparatory.

All of the teachers felt that they did their best to challenge their students with a rigorous course

of study. The level of rigor appeared to vary based on the academic skills and motivations of the students at the various schools. All teachers felt that ultimately their courses were college preparatory as they were essentially teaching high school students that have circumstances that often differ from college students. Moreover, they felt that the courses they taught were intended to provide students with a kind of college simulation that allowed them to experience the volume of content, pace, and standards for learning that were similar to college classes. In this way, they feel they are preparing the students for college.

Each participant felt that one of their responsibilities in AP is to simulate a college experience and to expose their students to similar conditions that they will encounter in college. Susan believes that honing her students' academic skills and grooming students' levels of personal responsibility and time management is important:

I think it's probably more of a college preparatory, in the true sense of being college prep: having them ready, having them so they have the skills that they need to be successful when they walk in the college door ... time management is one of the skills that I try to push because that's one of the things that I find that they don't have.

Gloria also feels a need to develop a better sense of organization and responsibility:

The schedule is put in front of them and they have to manage their time. In college you're given assignments well ahead of time and I try to do the same and hope to teach them time management skills.

Alice echoes this sentiment:

[In] college you don't get to just turn in stuff whenever you want, so I'm trying to prepare them for that as well, which is why I think my students are so successful in my course because I kind of force them to keep up so they know what's going on all the time.

All participants in the study feel that their students experience a college-preparatory environment but also maintain that the demands of their classrooms are equal to, or even exceed, requirements found in a college survey history class. Thomas's learning preferences differed from the other teachers and he reports college experiences that are somewhat different as well—he incorporates his experiences into his classroom:

A college-level classroom, to me, is about independent reading, students doing the reading on their own, taking some notes in the text and then being able to come into class the next day and having a discussion about it with, you know, the teacher or, at the college level, the professor, or even with one another. To me, that's the college-level experience because that's really what college is all about.

Alice feels that her students experience the same level of rigor found in college and actually do more work than would be found in a similar college class. She also feels that passing the AP exam validates this experience. "I think the AP exam is a high enough level that if they can pass it, then they should earn college credit because I think they probably do more work in our AP classes than what's required in college." Susan reports similar feelings about her students' experience and her own college experiences with entry-level classes:

I mean, the Gen Ed requirements in college ... I can remember sitting in auditoriums with all these kids, and I couldn't even see the professor ... In some ways, they do a lot more work than you would do in a college class.

Gloria concurs, “they have to do a lot more work than would be expected of a college student. I don’t recall ever having to do this much work for any general education class.”

Teachers accept Advanced Placement as a personal challenge. All participants report that teaching AP is a lot of work as it involves a level of planning and grading that exceeds traditional courses. Because of the standardized testing at the end of the course and the public nature of teachers’ students’ performance, they all report that testing is a major focus for them. However, all teachers also report that they like teaching AP U.S. History they believe that the course and its end-of-course assessment are attainable, and they all accept improvement of student exam performance as a personal challenge.

All teachers expressed that they feel the AP U.S. History course expectations are reasonable and that passing the AP exam is attainable for most students. While each of the teachers thought the College Board could be more forthcoming with curricular guidance and they felt immense pressures to cover the proscribed content in the amount of time they have in the classroom during a school year, ultimately they “buy in” to the AP U.S. History program. Susan, arguably, has the biggest challenges as many of her students’ academic skills are not as strong as are found in the other schools, still sees the program as fair:

I like it. I think it’s rigorous. It makes them think. That’s why I enjoy teaching it because it challenges me too to come up with new stuff ... I like the challenge and I think they enjoy it. I like the program.

Alice’s comments are typical of all of the teachers, “I don’t think there’s anything specific about the demands that I think should be changed. I don’t think the College Board is necessarily unreasonable in their expectations for what students can do.”

Alice's personal goals are tied to the increased student performance and are typical of all of the teachers, "I always think about how to make things better and tweaking my lessons and I guess I'm still effective. That's my ultimate goal is just to be effective for them." Susan expresses a similar sentiment:

I like it because I can challenge the kids, yeah I've taught all different levels, from the bottom all the way to AP and I like the challenge, I like the fact that a large portion of the kids want to be in the class and they want to do it.

Thomas acknowledges that some students walk in to his classroom with the skills to be successful on the exam and some do not, it is the latter that he finds most challenging:

I like the challenge. One of the biggest things that I pride myself on is getting someone who came from Honors World History to pass. I value that – a student who got a 5 on the AP World exam, they are going to pass the AP US exam if I am there or not.

He sums up how teachers' goals and students' goals are aligned for him, "You want the students to do well, you want them to pass because they give you more pride, I got a 50 percent pass rate and it reflects well on you, so it's important for me for the students to pass."

Organizational Theme: Students' Academic Abilities Influence Teacher Curricular-Instructional Decision Making.

The AP U.S. History teachers in this study had about 25 students in each of their classes. A group of 25 high school students will mean a degree of diversity or variation in academic skills, motivation, and interest no matter what the sample. AP programs have grown greatly in Florida over the past 10 years or so and, logically, as more students are enrolled in AP classes

one would expect greater diversity of academic skills, motivation, and interest. Success in an AP U.S. History class demands commitment from the students and can pose significant challenges depending on their academic abilities and motivation. The student bodies from the four schools in this study have histories of academic performance that differ from one another and they be organized, generally, into three levels of performance: Alice's IB program has demonstrated exceptional performance, Thomas and Gloria's schools have demonstrated very good performance, and Susan's school has demonstrated average performance as assessed by the Florida state evaluation system. All participants were asked about diversity on their classrooms and how it affected their curricular-instructional decision making. All teachers reported that they had diverse classroom but none reported any significant degree of differentiated instruction. All felt that the standards for AP had to be put in place and strictly enforced, though they all recognized that they were teaching high school students and were sympathetic to individual circumstances. All teachers reported that they had students throughout the year who needed assistance and they devised support mechanisms in their classrooms, in their grading schemes, or in after school tutoring activities to help these students. While diversity occurs in each of the classrooms, it did not seem particularly relevant when looking at each individual teacher.

Diversity is greatest between schools. While diversity in individual teachers' classrooms didn't seem to affect the consistency of instruction for all, for example no differentiated instruction was seen in any of the classrooms, one can see where student diversity among teachers' students affects their curricular-instructional decision making. Alice's IB students were selected to the program because of their demonstrated academic abilities, but she also notes that:

Most of them are pretty motivated so there's not a lot of diversity with motivation – there's a couple of students who are not go getters but for the most part positive peer pressure surrounds these IB students and so they usually want to beat each other to do well.

The students at the schools that Thomas and Gloria work at have a collective history of very good academic performance but student academic skills and motivations vary and while most students at these schools have academic abilities that are on grade level, they both reported that they have students who have been assessed with reading skills below grade level. Susan sees a diversity of academic skills at her school as well, however, her school, on average, differs in that there is a greater number of students at her school with academic skills below grade level and the experiences she shared appear to indicate that she may have more in her classes than the other teachers:

I have students who haven't passed the FCAT reading yet, all the way up to the highest scores ... It's extremely diverse as far as ability ... Kids that can't read at the level you need them reading at, they're that much further behind.

Fundamental skills vary significantly. When comparing teachers' curricular-instructional decision making between participants in the study, it is striking how much their instructional methods and course of instruction differ. All of these teachers are experienced teachers with a history of success in their classrooms and while they shape their classrooms with their own personalities and experiences it appears clear at an aggregate level that their students have a significant impact on how they teach. This can be seen clearly in the way they approach content reading in their classes. Gloria's IB students read an abbreviated textbook and receive

augmented instruction in class, Thomas's, Gloria's, and Susan's students are assigned chapters from the textbook where they demonstrate comprehension by taking reading quizzes. However, while Thomas's and Gloria's students most often engage in classroom activities that reinforce what they have read through discussion and analysis, Susan frequently finds that she has to go over the content assigned in the reading to help students comprehend their homework because they either didn't comprehend it or didn't do it. She often has to explain it to them:

You've got to read this outside of class because that's the way they do it in college. I've never once sat in a college class where they said, 'Okay, now get out your books and today, you're going to read pages such and such to such and such.' No."

When comparing time spent on reading content assigned for homework, it appears that the best readers spend the least time reading and least capable students spend the most time reading. While this may not be surprising, it has the effect of slowing the pace of instruction and time in class may have to be spent class time on remediating what students should have learned on their own instead of furthering their understanding of U.S. history through some other activity.

The effects that students have on their teachers can be seen across teachers in the study. While all three of the other teachers spend considerable time on teaching their students to write AP U.S. History essays, Alice's IB students have the highest pass rates and come to her ready to write so she doesn't really spend much time on essays. "I figure if I focus on the content, they can ramble on in an essay if they know the content because they're not graded on format and structure and grammar so that's not really as important to me." She recognizes that her students are busy with their IB classes so she works to simplify instruction for them and knows that they can "get it" in a relative short time. Her course of instruction is simple and effective for these

students:

So you know I lecture it and then they read about it for homework and then they complete a homework assignment and then we discuss the homework assignment and then they study for a quiz and then we discuss the quiz and then they study for a unit test and then they take the unit test and so we go over that.

Student academic skills affect teacher instructional methods. The other three schools in the study have greater diversity of academic skills and motivation among their students. All three have similar courses of instruction but the reading is more extensive, guided reading questions or content organizers are provided, and there are more students who either don't do the homework or don't comprehend the reading. Thomas outlines his reading cycle:

They get one week to complete a chapter. I give them a guide and I break the chapter down into three sections. I assign a new chapter on Tuesday. Thursday they've got a section one reading check. And then they've got to get the rest of the chapter read by Monday for another reading check, and then they take a quiz over the chapter that Tuesday, and then it all starts over again.

Gloria has a similar plan and emphasizes:

I make them read and I give them reading quizzes, because to me at least I'm making them accountable for not only practicing the multiple choices but also the reading. And you should have a lot of homework as far as I'm concerned, because, yes it's a college course.

While Susan's overall instructional plan is similar to Thomas and Gloria, she explains that she feels the need to provide more guidance to help her students accomplish the reading tasks:

They receive their assignments in three to four-chapter blocks ... in the very beginning, I will actually say, 'for this date, you need to have read this page to this page because this is what I'm talking about in class' ... they've got their vocabulary that they have to do ... we set up our quiz dates, three, four weeks at a time. So they know what's coming."

Decisions about daily activities are also affected by students in the classroom. Teacher preferences and experiences influence selection of instructional methods and activities but it appears that the students and their associated abilities are a major consideration. Alice feels that lecture is most effective for her students and they concur:

They like it [lecture], you know, they told me about teachers in the past that have never repeated anything but they feel that they retain it more through my homework/lecture method. I mean I offer sometimes to do something different and they're like no, just lecture. I'm like okay.

Gloria describes her own teaching style as teacher-directed but she appears to include more student-centered, discovery-type assignments than the rest of the teachers in the study. A contributing factor may be time as Gloria has the students do the discovery assignments out of class and come to class ready to present and share. Discussed a few historical simulation projects where students create videos to share in class. The students appear motivated, devote the necessary time to the task, and have the resources to complete the assignments. She explained one such project, "everybody was ready to present. It was all in correct format. They either had it on DVD or flash drive and it was ready to go ... there were a couple of projects that

weren't so great but they were super excited about it and got it all done and they were pretty good.”

Thomas believes group discussion is valuable for learning and he reports that it is effective for his students and they like it. To be effective, students have to have done their homework, which they do:

I do gallery walks, where they work in small groups, they go station-to-station, and they add something to this piece of paper that they learned from that chapter. It's kind of like a chapter review for them. But that helps them on the quizzes and test because they're talking to other students.

Susan course of instruction and the activities she plans for her students are similar to both Thomas and Gloria. However, she frequently indicated that the pace of instruction was slower because of her students reading, writing, and analytical skills—she has to spend more time on developing fundamental skills. She has a flexible approach where she has to frequently assess how her students are doing and react to their progress:

I may start off the day thinking, okay, today I'm going to lecture on this, and I might get ten minutes in and realize that they are not with me that day. And so I always have something in one of these file cabinets that I can say, 'Okay, let's switch gears and let's work on some primary source document.' So you've always got your backup plan.

Policy Theme: Student Performance on the AP exam is Paramount

The critical role that student performance on the AP exam plays in the lives of the teachers, students, parents, and administrators was inherently obvious throughout the 12 hours of

interviews and 4 classroom observations. The exam affects most curricular-instructional decisions made by teachers, students are constantly reminded of it, and administrators are always vigilant about it. Alice explains:

You always have the AP exams in the back of your mind ... to get them to that point where they need to pass the exam ... Because everything I do is geared towards the exam and towards student achievement on the exam.

Thomas goes on, “the big objective is focusing on passing the AP exam, because that’s what we’re graded on, the schools are graded on, but then it’s the smaller parts leading up to that.”

Susan, who differs somewhat in that she questions the weight that everyone puts on passing the exam, confesses that:

The exam grade [is important], I’d like to think that it doesn’t bother me but I know that when they’re posted the first part of July I’m going to be sitting there. And part of me is going to want to hit that key and have them upload and the other part is going to be going don’t do that you’re going to ruin the rest of your day, maybe your week.

Learning objectives are dictated by the exam. Increasing student performance on the AP exam is an objective for all teachers in this study. Administrators and parents expect it, it is an external validation of student success or failure in the class, and all of the teachers report that they view increasing student performance on the AP U.S. History exam as a personal challenge. In order for students to be successful during the AP exam they must be able to recognize, recall, and analyze a wide breadth of facts, people, events, and themes found throughout the content of U.S. history. To demonstrate proficiency, students, as a minimum, must be effective at

answering multiple choice questions, analyzing and using primary source documents, recalling content from U.S. history, and constructing thesis-argument, free response essays.

Even though teachers report that the AP exam is always on their minds, teachers in this study report that they feel they have a high degree of autonomy when making curricular-instructional decisions for their courses. They note that AP U.S. History does not have a detailed, directed curriculum but rather College Board provides general, thematic curriculum guidance and encourage teachers to tailor their classes to teacher and students' needs. All four of the participants report that their administrators are supportive of them and express confidence in their abilities to get their jobs done effectively. The teachers shared that they feel that they have a high degree of autonomy over their decision making, and they like that. Alice explains, "I feel like I have independence in how I teach it. I feel like I could totally, you know, I could shake up my entire curriculum and do it differently. I feel like I have independence to do that. Susan concurs, "as an AP teacher, having that AP designation, gives you a little bit more freedom to do what you have to do to meet those particular benchmarks because they're a lot more difficult."

Thomas echoes the same sentiment:

It's my understanding when you teach AP, you're kind of – you're free to set it up however you want. The use of primary sources, whether or not I want to show a video that I think is relevant to what we're learning about, absolutely. I feel like I've got the power to do what I want that I think is in the best interest of the students.

Teachers anticipate exam content. The College Board's stated position about not being directive about the U.S. history curriculum to be taught in AP U.S. History classrooms is that they want to provide teachers with a high degree of autonomy—this seems to be the case, in

theory. With only a general outline and suggested historical themes from the College Board, teachers are left to determine the detailed content to be taught in their classrooms. The single biggest factor influencing content is the textbook that the district selects and provides. All teachers report extensive use of textbooks and position them as the cornerstone of their content instruction, though Alice's approach does differ with her IB students as previously discussed. Apart from content in the textbook, teachers report that anticipating what the College Board believes to be significant and what the exam design officials are likely to include in the annual exam is a highly significant factor in content selection and emphasis. Susan explains how she and other teachers would anticipate tested content:

It was just a group of us, actually, we would sit there and just try to figure it out. Some years we'd get it and other years we just failed miserably but you just try to anticipate based on what they've done the years before, what's possibly going to be on there.

All teachers shared how they anticipate exam content and their approaches varied, from cyclical exam construction (they haven't included this topic for a while) to content that seems too important to not be tested to a perception that some topics have a particular relevance at the moment. Alice explains how she feels her experience as an AP U.S. History teacher has helped her determine content that is important:

The things that I see perpetually and that's actually something that I've learned over the course of teaching this over a few years ... where I'm looking at different resources and I'm seeing the same names pop up or the same events pop up ... if I've been seeing it multiple times then there's a good likelihood that it would be something they need to know.

Susan explains that teachers have to anticipate the tested material, not only with the hope of focusing on testable material, but because of the large scope of content and limited class time:

I think the curriculum does kind of hog tie you as to what you're going to have time to discuss, and you have to make those educated guesses on what they're going to test them on, and you have to pray that you're right."

The AP U.S. History exam has 80 multiple choice questions and students write 3 essays. Given that the scope of AP U.S. History content is quite vast, combined with the fact that a significant portion of that can be considered testable, the likelihood of guessing exactly what will be on the exam is quite low. Thomas expresses his frustration:

In my opinion, College Board can do a better job of telling us more specifically, you know – [they say] they're restructuring it, and we're going to like it so much better because instead of 12 themes, we've got seven umbrellas of topics but it's the same amount of information. They're not making it any easier for me to teach the course.

Likewise, Gloria an experienced AP U.S. History teacher and AP exam reader, expresses disappointment when exam content doesn't seem to jibe with her sense of importance, "I've been really disappointed in recent years that Jackson has not [been there], he's been left off and I spend quite a bit of time on him just because he's transitional and interesting."

Academic skills taught align with increased student performance on exam. Teachers in this study report that anticipating testable content is one of the things they consider when developing their curriculum, however, when it comes to instructional methods exam performance appears to have more weight. All of the participants in this study report that

familiarizing students with the testing environment and teaching and practicing the skills required to be successful on the AP exam are of primary importance. While it may be an oversimplification of the AP exam and the cognitive processes required for it, teachers report that they feel teaching students to be able to be proficient at timed multiple choice tests, primary source document analysis, historical analysis (for example seeing cause-effect and themes), and writing AP U.S. History-format free response questions are of primary importance. All teachers report that multiple choice questions are the primary means for assessment in their classes, most class work focuses on improving primary source document analysis or furthering analytic understanding of history, and writing is almost exclusively in the form of AP U.S. History format free response questions.

Susan's approach is typical, "my tests are always multiple-choice five stems, always, I test them the same way they're going to be tested on the AP exam" and Alice reiterates, "I give them a timed test from the very first one at the beginning of the year. They get 40 seconds per question so from the very beginning they know. It's designed to prepare them for the exam." While the format emulates the AP exam, so does the level of difficulty and possibly content as College Board released exams are used by all teachers. Gloria explains:

Exactly, I use released exams. I use the practice exams. That's like I give them an end of course practice before they go ... I give them that test and I'm like this is a mock one and you know here you go.

Thomas notes that to prepare his students "everything I do is multiple choice, DBQs, and FRQs." To be clear about how the exam format influences his methods, Thomas explains how the upcoming, revised format will change what he does, "maybe this coming school year or the year

after, I might do away with some of the quizzes and do short answer, because in 2015 it's going to be 36 multiple-choice, four short answer, and one long essay.”

All teachers acknowledge the importance of being able to write AP U.S. History style free response questions and the writing that is done in their classes is almost exclusively in the format required for the exam. Alice feels that her IB students are quite capable to begin with but “I do use the released exams, the released DBQs, I do a lot of that.” Gloria describes her class:

So we do an FRQ and DBQ every unit. I hate grading them ... but I spent a lot of time in the beginning of the year grading them, because I tell them by February, if you don't know how to write you're getting terrible grades.

Susan begins early and breaks down the prompts for her students:

Teaching them the test taking techniques, we start from beginning on that, how to deconstruct the prompt. How do you deconstruct the prompt on the FRQ; how do you write this, how do you do this that's all part of it from day one.”

Based on his self-reporting, Thomas appears to do more writing than any of the other teachers and makes AP U.S. History format essays a cornerstone of his approach:

It gets to the point that like, man, we are so tired of looking at DBQ's that they can't forget how to do this. We do it so often they won't be able to forget how to do it. My trade secret is writing the entire year, getting the practice and we're done early in the second semester.

All of these teachers know that the students must be highly proficient at answering multiple choice questions and effective in writing essays in AP U.S. History format to be successful, so they make it an integral part of their curriculum. Gloria sums it up:

All my tests are the old exam questions, because they may struggle with the test, but I want them to come back in May and go, that was so easy Miss. If they come back in May and they tell me that the AP U.S. History test was easy, then I've done my job.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to further understanding about how teachers with highly successful AP exam pass rates address the competing demands placed upon them and make curricular-instructional decisions in light of increased academic diversity, high-stakes testing, and the expectation of a college-level experience. Florida's AP student participation has grown dramatically over the past 10 years and student performance on the end-of-course exam is being used in many different ways: students earn college credit, they are frequently a factor in teacher evaluations, it helps establish and maintain teacher reputation, and it is a factor in calculating school grades under the Florida A+ Program (FLDOE, 2012). It is likely that a contributing factor in Florida's AP program expansion is the perceived rigor embodied in the program (standards) and its built-in measurement system to assess learning (accountability), which fits nicely within our climate of NCLB, standards, and accountability.

While there should be many learning objectives in any classroom, AP pass rates have become the *de facto* standard for validating AP learning (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Lichten, 2000; Lurie, 2000). Given the pressure that teachers are under to do everything they can to prepare their students for the AP exam, teachers are likely to target their courses' content and instructional methods in ways that will support improved performance on the exam (Hammond, 2009; Lurie, 2000; Madaus, 1991). As teachers are driven to focus instruction toward content on

the exam a narrowing of the curriculum and selection of instructional methods is likely to occur (Madaus & Russell, 2010; Tai, 2008; Vinson et al., 2001).

Teachers in this study all felt they had a significant degree of autonomy over decision making in their classrooms. Thornton (1991) and Shavelson and Stern (1981) have noted that teachers are the linchpin in any policy and organizational initiatives as it is the teachers who are the ultimate decision makers in the classroom. This study examined how teachers' personal beliefs, organizational factors, and policy factors influence the curricular-instructional decisions that teachers undertake. At its core, this is intended to be a study about teacher planning. Teacher planning includes all actions that a teacher takes prior to instruction, adjustments made during instruction, and reflection after instruction (McCutcheon, 1980; Young, Reiser, & Dick, 1998). Planning occurs at the macro level such as yearly planning, course planning, and unit planning and also occurs at the micro level with regard to daily and weekly lesson planning (Brown, 1988; Clark & Yinger, 1979; Yinger, 1980). Grant's (1996) qualitative study had findings similar to Thornton (1991) and Shavelson and Stern (1981) in that he found that the individual beliefs and characteristics of the teachers themselves greatly impacted decision making. However, Grant also asserted that external structures do matter and when examining teacher decision making one must account for the various external structures as well as teachers' personal characteristics. Grant's study (1996) recommended that future studies be as holistic as possible, and merge a structuralist perspective with an interpretivist one to arrive at an interactional view. It was this approach that was implemented in this study. Participants were interviewed with the intention of collected data to inform about the personal, organizational, and policy factors that impact the teacher decision making process.

Research Question 1

Research question one in this study is: what personal beliefs and structural factors impact teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions in AP classes?

The teachers participating in this study are all experienced, successful teachers who indicated that they like teaching and especially like teaching AP U.S. History. Their sources of college education, types of degrees, teaching experience, and personal experiences all differed.

However, given that they are successful it was not surprising that they all demonstrated characteristics typically found in any list of “best practices.” For example, all of the teachers exhibited a high degree of personal organization and also organized instruction for their students.

AP classes can be difficult; these teachers recognize this and work hard to develop caring, supportive environments for their students. It was clear that these teachers like what they do.

Working hard to establish strong teacher-student rapport and creating environments of mutual respect is not necessarily required of educators, but it is preferred, and only comes about through sincere, dedicated efforts to understand and relate to students. While student performance on the AP exam is a key objective in these classrooms, all four of these teachers demonstrated that, at the most basic level, they find student progress personally rewarding.

While teachers’ personal beliefs and personality traits should be considered as they affect the decision making process, their beliefs about what methods are most effective, their own college-level experiences, and the way they perceive the challenge in improving student performance on the AP exam are probably more significant. There is a body of literature that, while not questioning teacher motivation, does question whether many AP teachers have the background, experience, and skills necessary to provide a quality AP experience for their

students (Klopfenstein, 2003; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005; Lurie, 2000). The teachers in this study are successful at getting students to pass the exam, but in the researcher's estimation, all four of the teachers in this study are highly knowledgeable about U.S. history content, well-versed in a variety of instructional methods, and highly dedicated to the teaching profession.

Paek et al. (2010) note that there are many competing demands in the AP classroom: content breadth versus depth, teacher-led versus discovery instructional strategies, a one-size-fits-all approach versus differentiated learning, as well as a constant demand to attend to exam preparation. Teachers in this study clearly had preferences for their classrooms. All teachers, for the most part, use a one-size-fits-all approach as they believe passing the AP exam is the course benchmark and that is the same for all. Three out of four of the teachers highly favor teacher-led instruction, predominantly some form of lecture, while one of the teachers highly favored student-centered instruction. All of the teachers indicated that their own personal learning preferences were contributing factors. It is unknown whether it is a contributing factor, but the three teachers who favor teacher-led instruction all have degrees in history while the teacher who favors student-centered instruction has a degree in social science education.

Teachers in this study are focused on their student pass rates and readily admit that they seek to improve them each year. As has been addressed in the research and others (Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Lichten, 2000; Lurie, 2000), the teachers indicate that student performance on the AP exam serves as public validation of the AP classroom learning experience and of their effectiveness as teachers. The teachers feel that the College Board exam is fair and attainable for most of their students and they are motivated to have their students do well. They feel that they can increase their students' performance by focusing on the right material and teaching them the

proper test-taking techniques. In summary, these teachers accept improving student performance on the AP U.S. History exam as a challenge, a challenge worthy of their effort.

Research Question 2

The second research question in this study is: how does increased student academic diversity in AP classes affect teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions? Florida's AP program has grown dramatically over the past 10 years. There are many reasons for this but it is likely that perceived rigor embodied in the program (standards) and its built-in measurement system to assess learning (accountability) are factors as this fits nicely with the current climate of NCLB, standards, and accountability. The AP program was originally designed to provide an avenue for highly advanced high students to stay ahead by earning college credit while still in high school. This privileged opportunity has been seen by some as exclusionary since only the brightest students at each high school were afforded this opportunity. As AP expansion has occurred, more and more students of average abilities have been encouraged to enroll in AP to challenge themselves with the rigor of these classes and possibly earn college credit. College Board praises the expansion of AP programs as a success story that embraces the democratization of education (Lurie, 2000). In essence, there is a belief among education reformers that expanding access to AP courses among disadvantaged student groups will help close existing academic achievement gaps (Dougherty & Mellor, 2010). This study did not seek to investigate whether expansion of AP programs is closing the achievement gap but did investigate the effects that increased student academic diversity is having on teacher decision making and planning.

All of the teachers in this study reported significant academic diversity in their classrooms. Alice, the IB teacher, explained how she had students of different abilities, interests, and motivation levels. However, she also acknowledged that her students are predominantly motivated, highly competitive, and possess well-developed academic skills. Likewise, Gloria and Thomas explained that they have highly academically diverse classrooms. In their cases, they explained how they have students in their classes that haven't met the Florida benchmarks for reading, meaning that their reading skills are below what would be expected of their grade level. They also described students of very diverse backgrounds with equally diverse levels of motivation, interest, and academic abilities. In similar fashion, Susan explained how her students represent a full range of academic diversity, motivation, and interests and that she has students who score everywhere on the Florida reading benchmark tests. All of the teachers in this study are considered highly successful and they get to know their students well. Given this, it appears to some degree, that seeing individual diversity in classrooms is relative to the environment. Students are individuals and differ from one another. When teachers spend time with students and get to know them, they see the differences and report diversity. While there were anecdotal stories of individual students' failing to succeed, the teachers in this study generally indicated that they welcome the challenges that students with a wide range of academic abilities bring. The investigation of student academic diversity within each teacher was largely inconsequential. However, examination of student academic diversity between teachers was quite profound.

When comparing teachers' curricular-instructional decision making between participants in the study, it was evident that much of their instructional methods, course pacing, and overall course rigor differed. All of these teachers are experienced teachers with a history of success in

their classrooms and while they do not report significant obstacles at the individual level, it appears that their students have a significant impact on how they teach when comparing teachers with each other across schools. Using the past few years of academic performance as assessed under Florida's A+ program, one can loosely group these four schools into three levels: highest academic achievement (Alice's IB program), high academic achievement (Thomas's and Gloria's schools), and average academic achievement (Susan's school). Examination of participant interview data concerning the types of instructional methods used, course pacing, and approaches to independent reading, appear to show that teacher planning and decision making differ across the levels of student achievement. While some of these differences can be attributed to personal differences across teachers, it appears that the significant range of average student academic ability found across the schools in this study affects teacher classroom planning. Researchers have suggested that increased enrollment of students with moderate academic abilities may result in these students not receiving the attention they need (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Klopfenstein, 2003), being labeled as poor performers (Nichols & Berliner, 2008), or being victims of educational triage as teachers seek to maximize their test scores (Booher-Jennings, 2005). Others have asserted that if large numbers of students with moderate academic skills are enrolled in AP and do not receive the support they need, rigor may suffer, the course may become diluted, and that students may get the wrong impression about the level of effort required to be successful in college (Klopfenstein, 2003; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009). The data collected during this study do not indicate that any of these actions or effects are occurring in these teachers' classrooms. There should be no question that the teachers in this study work hard to create caring, supportive classrooms and they provide academic support as much as possible; however, it was evident that there were considerable variations in the demands

placed on students, instructional methods, and course pacing as the average levels of student academic proficiency varied between teachers.

Research Question 3

The third research question in this study is: how does the end-of-course AP exam affect teacher curricular-instructional planning decisions? During all teacher interviews and classroom observations, it was clear that improving student performance on their AP exams was a major objective of participants in this study. All of the teachers felt they had considerable autonomy regarding curricular-instructional planning but also attributed much of their decision making to the demands and expectations of student exam performance. Grant et al. (2002) suggests that policymakers intentionally influence classrooms with high-stakes testing as they want to reduce teacher control of the curriculum by providing incentives to align curricula to maximize test performance. It is difficult to know whether such motives exist with the expansion of the AP programs in Florida, but data collected in this study support the notion that high-stakes testing does provide incentives for teachers to align their curricula to maximize test performance.

AP U.S. History teachers are faced with teaching substantial breadth of content and enriching student conceptual understanding but are given limited time to do so (Parker et al., 2011). The College Board does not mandate a detailed curriculum so AP U.S. History teachers have to make decisions about what content to teach and what to leave out. Teachers in this study used their adopted textbooks more than any other resource to determine curriculum content but they all indicated they also try to anticipate exam content and, where possible, maximize their efforts there. Tai (2008) found that as teachers are largely judged on how many of their students pass the exam, the anticipated content of the exam may become the *de facto* standard curriculum

(Tai, 2008). While anticipated content does not appear to be the *de facto* curriculum, all teachers reported that it played a significant role and they adjust their curricula based on it. There are concerns with overly aligning curricula to maximize test results, as Abrahms and Madaus (2003) note, students and teachers can become excessively motivated to maximize test performance and so test preparation and test performance can become major learning objectives in and of themselves. All participants in this study reported that they embed test preparation objectives into their courses of instruction throughout the year. Increasing test performance is clearly an educational objective that is endorsed by all involved in the process, and this includes teachers, students, parents, and administrators.

In Paek et al. (2005), a College Board funded study, they explain that teachers are typically forced to use instructional methods that lend themselves to coverage of large amounts of information; also, teachers design student activities to encourage recitation of this material so that adequate retention occurs such that it leads to successful performance on an objective three-hour test. Three out of four teachers in this study reported a preference for teacher-directed versus student-centered classroom activities. These three teachers indicated a clear preference for lecture as they could cover large amounts of information. The other teacher, Thomas, said that he doesn't like lecture and avoids it. However, he is a firm believer in independent reading followed by classroom discussion. Assigning independent reading, while not teacher-directed, is another way to cover large amounts of information.

All teachers indicated that they emphasize critical thinking activities in their classrooms. Interview data from this study indicated findings that are similar to those reported by Lurie (2000) and Paek et al. (2005) in that these assignments were usually aligned with expectations on

the essay portions of the exam. As such, historical thinking, use of primary source documents, and writing were focused toward what was seen as beneficial to enhancing exam performance. Madaus and Russell (2010) maintain that when teachers align their instruction and skill-building activities with what they anticipate to be on a high-stakes test, it will have the effect of narrowing the content and skills taught. While there was variation among the teachers' objectives in this study, all of the participants indicated that they aligned content and skills instruction, to a significant degree, to maximize their students' performance on the AP exam.

There are many objectives for high school AP programs. Klopfenstein (2003) notes that they can provide an opportunity for students to learn and practice college-level skills and habits in a safe environment with individualized support and attention that is not available in most colleges and universities. Similarly, Johnstone and Del Genio (2001) feel that college-level learning in high school should challenge students with a rigorous curriculum and instill study skills and habits of mind that are necessary for college success. The National Research Council (2002) and Parker et al. (2011) suggest that deep, conceptual understanding of a discipline's content and the development of inquiry, analytical, and problem-solving skills are critical to college-level learning. Our AP programs are used to teach a large portion of our most academically promising students. Recognizing the importance of the high-stakes test in this program and the subsequent effect of content and instructional methods aligning to maximize test performance, we need to ensure these advanced courses continue to challenge these academically promising students and provide places for them to grow and prepare for college.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question in this study is: how do teachers construct a college-level experience for their students given the competing demands of teaching AP courses? AP teachers are charged with creating a rigorous, college-level experience for their students. While all teachers reported that they feel they provide college-level rigor, they all characterized their classrooms as mostly college preparatory. Klopfenstein and Thomas (2009) differentiate between the two by indicating that college preparatory is designed to teach the skills needed to be successful in college while college level assumes students have the necessary skills. Teachers' in this study reported that as their high school students are not actually college students, and because there are certain academic safeguards put in place in high school that may not exist in college, they felt they were providing a college-level experience for their students to better prepare them for success when they actually enrolled in college. All teachers felt they had students that were capable of performing at the college level but they reported percentages that differed dramatically, the IB school had the highest, the two high-performing schools had the next highest, and the school with the most academic challenges reported the lowest.

Teachers often tried to create college-level experiences in their classrooms that were similar to their own college experiences. Many of these experiences were of large classrooms dominated by lecture where the students read history and then were evaluated on their comprehension. Klopfenstein (2003) points out that the AP exams emulate this kind of college learning, which is typically found at large universities, but is not necessarily reflective of what is the best. Klopfenstein and Thomas (2005) note that AP students should be challenged by advanced material but should also learn the study skills and habits of mind essential to success in

college. No doubt the teachers in this study believe this. In fact, Thomas argues that the AP U.S. History essays, where students learn to argue logically with a thesis and evidence as support, are necessary for success in college. He may be correct, however, there are likely many other methods that would also serve students well that are not included in the curriculum because they are not tested.

While many believe that high scores on the AP exam validate college-level learning, Klopfenstein (2003) notes that objectives for college-level learning are not perfectly correlated with performance on end-of-course standardized exams. College-level learning varies considerably depending on the circumstances of a course and there was variation among the participants as to what they believed a college-level experience should be like. Recognizing that the students in AP U.S. History are in the 11th grade and not in college, teachers include instructional support and grade adjustments that one would not likely find in college. Teachers in this study felt that their primary purpose relative to providing a college experience was to provide an environment where the students could experience college-level rigor, develop college-level study habits, and grow academically to help prepare them for college.

Teacher Planning in this Study

Educational objectives and purposes

Generally, the teachers in this study indicated a desire to teach students about U.S. history to develop an appreciation for our nation's past and further understanding about our complex nation today. While these concepts were mentioned at times, the common objective that was mentioned throughout the interviews was the over-arching objective of preparing students to perform well on the AP exam. Teachers indicated that they had other objectives,

such as teaching students time-management skills, improving their reading and writing skills, and exposing them to college-level rigor, but these objectives also support preparation for and performance on the AP exam. Improving student performance on the AP exam is a widely agreed upon objective shared by teachers, students, parents, administrators, and policy-makers. At times it may be a stated objective of a lesson, for example improving student DBQ skills assessed during the exam, but more often it is an assumed, unstated objective that runs through most classroom lessons.

Content and methods

The teachers in this study indicated that they established the curriculum for their students by beginning with the textbook and then using their own personal experience to adjust content instruction. The way the content was adjusted varied considerably from Alice paring down her students' reading responsibilities and filling in the blanks with her lecture and discussion to Thomas's augmentation of student independent reading with significant primary source document reading and analysis in class. Teachers indicated that the textbook was an important source of history content for the students and they indicated that the chief reason they either pared down or augmented the textbook content was a belief that the material was likely to (or not) appear in some way on the AP exam. Teachers anticipate testable content using their experience attained from repeatedly teaching the course, guidance from the College Board, reviewing released AP exams, and "hunches" about relevance of certain historical content.

When selecting methods of instruction, all teachers indicated they have a preference for methods that can efficiently cover large amounts of information, typically lecture and student independent reading. To support lecture and guided reading, teachers most often used methods

that directly reinforced comprehension of the material they have already covered and which served the purpose of retention, making connections, developing analytical understanding, or reinforcing skills needed for the AP exam. Examples of methods that serve these purposes are: games that reinforce content, organizers that promote content connections, primary source document analysis and identification of historical themes, and writing AP U.S. History DBQs and FRQs. All teachers indicated that they like student-centered and discovery assignments but they feel they do not have the time to do them in class as they have so much U.S. history to cover and a limited time to do it. To differing degrees, all of the teachers manage to work in some type of student-centered or discovery activities throughout the year. The teachers reported that the students like these activities and but the teachers are constantly concerned about the time it takes away from their central instructional plan. While not specifically stated, it appears that the teachers believe these activities are less effective in preparing the students for the AP exam, their over-arching instructional purpose.

Effectively organizing content and methods

All of the teachers in this study indicated that they establish a cycle of events for their students that address content and reinforce skills. The cycle repeats itself throughout chunks of content that are established mostly by the textbook but with some influence of the College Board curriculum. The cycles included: student independent reading of a chapter, students take notes or respond to guided questions, student knowledge is reinforced through classroom lecture, discussion, or a historical analysis exercise, and then students are assessed on their comprehension.

Assessment

Virtually all formal assessment in the participants' classes occurs in the form of multiple choice questions and AP U.S. History essays, DBQs and FRQs. Assessment was reported to serve both formative and summative purposes. Formative assessment was often used when teaching students to write the DBQs and FRQs. The writing process is a continual process where most students never truly master it so it can be seen as a continuous improvement process that lends itself to formative assessment. Formative assessment of the DBQs and FRQs serves two purposes, assessment of their essay writing skills but also of their knowledge of history and analytical abilities. Multiple choice assessment can have a formative purpose, for example, how well the students understood their independent reading assignments. For summative assessment, all of the teachers indicated they almost exclusively used multiple choice questioning and most strictly used the same format and timing standards that College Board uses for the AP U.S. History Exam. Students in this district must also take district semester and final exams—all items on these tests are multiple choice. Assessment in participants classrooms has three general purposes: as a formative process to identify student progress in mastering content and skills; as a summative process to evaluate student mastery of content and skills; and as an opportunity to teach and familiarize students with AP testing environment and exam format as well as the degree of rigor, content, and skills needed for success on the exam.

Rational Choice Theory

The classic notion of Rational Choice Theory (RCT) is that people are motivated by self interests and will calculate the costs and benefits of courses of action during the decision making process (De Jonge, 2012). Essentially, RCT asserts that individuals make rational decisions that

serve their self interests. RCT assumes that individuals are motivated by their personal wants and goals and seek to maximize personal benefit when making decisions much like in the business world. Critics of RCT note that RCT is an over simplification of the decision making process. They maintain that selfless behavior in the form of altruistic and norm-conforming interests do occur and cannot be adequately explained by RCT. Despite its possible limitations, RCT continues to be a widely used decision making model and given its economic roots, it fits nicely within the context of neoliberal theory which is a factor driving our current standards and accountability movement (discussed in Chapter 1).

Given that policymakers and administrators use tenets of neoliberal theory to evaluate the success of AP programs by emphasizing the measureable output of student performance on the standardized end-of-course exam, it is logical and consistent to examine individual teacher decision making process within the same conceptual framework of neoliberal reform and rational choice theory. RCT suggests that in a high-stakes environment, teachers will make decisions to serve their personal interests, beliefs, and objectives. While the AP program was not conceived to establish standards and create accountability in our education system, it can be used to achieve these ends and provides an excellent context to examine teacher decision making in a high-stakes environment. The degree to which teachers in this study appear to make decisions that are “rational” in the context of RCT is a considered here.

RCT suggests that teachers will make decisions that are in their own best interests. Policymakers implement high-stakes testing because it ensures that teachers, students, and administrators will focus on the assessment because the consequences of not doing so are significant (Madaus & Russell, 2010). Even if one assumes that policymakers intend to

influence the classroom by making stakeholders focus on curricula and instructional methods that should improve outcomes on the standardized assessment, research has shown that a single high-stakes output measurement can be detrimental to learning as the measurement can evolve from an assessment of output to the focus of output itself and thereby encouraging teaching to the test (Madaus, 1991). RCT assumes that teachers in this study will make curricular-instructional decisions that lead to increased student performance on the end-of-course AP exam. It is clear that, in large part, this is the case with the teachers in this study. Most of the planning decisions made by these teachers are made with student performance on the exam in mind. There is tremendous pressure to focus on the exam because all of the stakeholders' objectives are aligned toward improved student exam performance. Furthermore, all of the teachers in this study indicated they thought the AP exam was reasonable, fair, and an adequate measure of student learning. One of the sub-themes worth noting here is "teachers accept Advanced Placement as a personal challenge." The teachers in this study believe the AP exam is fair, they accept improving student performance as a personal challenge, and the objective is aligned with, and reinforced by, all of the objectives of the other stakeholders in and around the classroom. Given this, teacher decision making does appear to be reasonably explained by the RCT model.

The small amount of teacher decision making that could possibly be seen as departing from pure self-interest was in the form of improving the teacher-student relationships. For example, teachers in this study indicated they try to be themselves in the classroom, they encourage poor-performing students to remain in the class, and at times they include student-centered activities even though they felt they were time-consuming and not necessarily the most efficient instructional method. These behaviors could be viewed as not in the teachers' self-interests (and not explained by RCT) because they do not maximize performance on the exam.

However, it is clear that the teachers in this study have other, strong self-interests that may help explain how these behaviors do fit the RCT model. There were three teacher personality sub-themes that indicate a secondary self-motivation: “teachers develop caring, supportive classrooms,” “teachers establish strong teacher-student rapport and levels of mutual respect,” and “teachers find student progress personally rewarding.” The teachers indicated that their students’ welfare, their personal relationships with students, and their students’ personal learning progress is important to them and, as such, is a personal interest. Virtually all of the small amount of teacher decision making that is not aligned with student performance on the AP exam can be explained by this other teacher self-interest and, given that, the RCT model for explaining teacher decision making seems to be an even better fit.

Implications for Practice

Teachers matter: administrators should select AP teachers carefully. There is concern in the research that the increased demand for AP teachers may mean that some teachers are assigned to teach AP courses without the requisite content or teaching experience (Klopfenstein, 2003). All of the teachers in this study are experienced teachers who are knowledgeable of U.S. history content and instructional methods. These teachers regularly attend training seminars designed to enhance their teaching skills and content knowledge and consistently expressed an interest in being better at their jobs. There can be considerable pressure when teaching AP classes; the teachers in this study acknowledged that but all of them accepted AP as a challenge. Furthermore, they felt that the AP system was fair, that the AP exam was a legitimate assessment of their students’ learning, and they see merit in trying to improve the pass rates of their students’ AP exam scores.

Data collected in this study indicate that teachers' personal experiences and beliefs about what content to teach and which instructional methods work best affect what they do in the classroom. All of the teachers indicated that they were personally quite organized and felt that it was important to organize class materials and content for their students. Three out of four expressed a preference for teacher-directed learning, e.g. lecture, as a personal learning style and this was the dominant form of learning in their classrooms. Likewise, the other teacher indicated that he didn't like lecture as a personal learning style but would rather read; student-centered reading, followed by discussion, is the dominant form of learning in his classrooms. In similar fashion, the participants created college-level learning environments based on their own college experiences. It appears that when given considerable autonomy to determine content and instructional methods, teachers may rely on their own preferences and experiences to determine what works best for their students.

A consistent theme across teachers in this study is that they sincerely care about their students' progress and are willing to support them as needed. While there is a general expectation that teachers care about their students' learning, low performers in AP classes present a particular challenge as poor performance on the AP exam is sometimes attributed to the teacher's performance. If improving student pass rates becomes the sole objective, it is possible that teachers and administrators may try to improve pass rates by eliminating low performers from the classroom or using a type of educational triage where they focus on the "bubble" and ignore the low (and high) performers to improve pass rates (Booher-Jennings, 2005). The teachers in this study indicated that student learning and growth was personally rewarding for them and all shared that they worked to keep lower performers in their classes rather than have them withdraw. All of the participants in this study felt that creating good teacher-student

rapport was important in establishing a quality AP learning environment. Establishing clear learning and behavioral guidelines was evident in all cases; once this was clear, the teachers felt they could share a personal side of themselves that seems to enhance rapport with their students. While the AP pass rate metric is frequently used to assess AP teachers' effectiveness, the personal teacher characteristics addressed in this study appear important as well and are likely more difficult to assess.

Students matter: administrators need to be cognizant that the academic characteristics of students influence the classroom. This study found substantial differences in the content taught and instructional methods used between classrooms of high achieving students and classrooms of moderately achieving students. While each teacher reported variation in academic skills within their own classrooms, the variation was most pronounced when examining variation between teachers. The fundamental skills are considerably different between the IB students and the moderately achieving students, and consequently, the content, instructional methods, and overall course of instruction differed greatly between these classrooms. Researchers have expressed concern that if AP classes are forced to accommodate too many students with low or moderate academic skills, a narrowing of the curriculum may occur and selected instructional methods may encourage more superficial learning rather than the deep, conceptual content understanding expected of a college-level course (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2005; Von Blum, 2008). Given that the students of the teachers in this study are successful at passing their AP exams, this investigation did not find large numbers of students struggling in their AP classes. However, this situation does exist in some schools and administrators should be sensitive to the fact that, as noted in this study, teacher decision making may be affected in ways that lead to a degradation of the quality of the AP class.

Implications for Curriculum

Arguably, the students who show the most academic promise in schools are usually the ones who are enrolled in AP classes. There has been considerable debate within the social studies discipline about what content should be taught in social studies classes and what methods should be employed when teaching that content. As states and districts choose to make significant use of AP courses, they are establishing a position relative to this debate. This study and a plethora of other research suggest that when a single, high-stakes exam is used to validate learning in a course, there tends to be significant narrowing of the curriculum, teaching to the test, and use of instructional methods that are viewed as efficient and support increased student exam performance.

States have a responsibility to establish effective education systems for their youth. As AP programs become a major element of our school systems, we begin to see less of the traditional state-directed top-down approach to curriculum development. Instead, districts, schools, and teachers find themselves in a bottom-up planning situation as they try to develop AP courses that will lead to student success on the AP exams with limited curriculum guidance from the College Board or direction with regard to specific textbooks and supporting instructional materials. The disagreement about the merits versus concerns of increased use of Advanced Placement classes will continue. In any case, when it comes to teaching the most academically promising students, states and districts should acknowledge that as they pursue increased rigor and accountability by expanding use of AP courses, they are also relinquishing control of what happens in these classrooms and are likely endorsing instructional methods that emphasize

increased student performance on a standardized test rather than pursuing the kind of deep, conceptual learning that the National Research Council advocates (NRC, 2002).

Implications for Policy

The AP exam is not enough: the College Board should provide more curriculum guidance. With regard to AP U.S. History, the College Board provides very little detailed curriculum guidance. In reaction to growing concern from colleges and universities, the College Board does audit AP teachers' syllabi for compliance with its general course guidance and to assess whether the course plan is college level; however, little actual follow-up occurs as far as verifying how and what is actually taught. States and districts have embraced AP because they like the perceived rigor, the standardized nature of the assessments, and the ability of students to earn college credit. Data collected in this study indicate that teachers feel they would be more effective if they had more guidance from College Board concerning learning expectations. Though the teachers in this study are effective in facilitating students' exam pass rates, they all expressed frustration with the limited guidance from the College Board and shared how they adjusted their curricula based on what content they anticipated to be on the exam.

Both the size of the AP program and the way it is used has changed dramatically in the past 50 years; however, the program itself has changed very little. For the most part, AP courses are little more than standardized exams with general course guidance. One of the findings in this study is that, frequently, learning objectives are dictated by the exam. Given the degree to which states and school districts have embraced AP and made it a significant part of our education systems, stakeholders should consider requesting more detailed curricula guidance from College Board that might include clear, detailed content and academic skills standards with assessments

that measure student attainment of those standards. Shifting the focus in AP U.S. History from an exam to clearly established history content and skills standards would help teachers and students alike and would shift classroom emphasis from teaching to the test to teaching to the standards.

Future Research

This study focused on the curricular-instructional decision making of successful AP U.S. History teachers. It is hoped that sharing the lived experiences of these successful teachers will shed light on how successful AP teachers make planning decisions in light of competing personal, organizational, and policy factors. While it is expected that the characteristics and circumstances of successful AP teachers are quite different, it is likely that the characteristics and circumstances of teachers who are not successful are considerably more varied. The intent of studying successful AP teachers is to further understanding of how AP teachers make curricular-instructional decisions and plan AP courses that lead to student success on the AP exam. However, this study did not directly investigate why many teachers and students are not as successful on the AP exam or what the impacts of this lack of success are.

Furthering understanding about why many teachers and students are not successful on the AP exam is highly desirable. Investigation into the curricular-instructional planning decisions of these AP teachers could assist in identifying how certain personal, organizational, or policy factors affect these outcomes. It would be highly informative for practice and policy to further understand the nature of these classrooms, to identify the impacts on the stakeholders in these high-stakes environments, and to address what can be done to improve these classrooms if needed.

We are operating in an education reform environment characterized by a desire for increased rigor, standardized assessments, and external validation of achievement. The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State Schools Officers (CCSSO) have led an effort to develop Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for language arts and mathematics which 45 states and the District of Columbia have agreed to implement. While gaining agreement from states to implement went quite smoothly, implementation is appearing more of a challenge (Mathis, 2010). One important area that has proven a challenge is what the common assessments will look like and what stakes will accompany them. Plans for the assessing learning are quite comprehensive employing multiple assessments and advanced measurement techniques designed to assess multiple levels of comprehension (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Research supports the notion that the CCSS assessments will impact how the CCSS are implemented and the quality of learning that occurs in classrooms. Given the short implementation timeline for CCSS, little research has occurred. No doubt, considerable research will occur once this large-scale program is fully implemented and this research should address how assessments impact learning as well as the successes and challenges associated with the assessments. Lessons learned would be valuable in ensuring better learning for our students as we implement CCSS and could possibly offer alternatives to a single, high-stakes exam like that found in the AP program.

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APPENDIX A: IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX(813) 974-7091

3/18/2013

Kerry Poole, M.A.
Secondary Education
4202 East Fowler Ave.
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00010634

Title: **Assessing Competing Demands and Charting a Course: A Phenomenological Study of
Advanced Placement US History Teachers' Decision-Making and Course Planning**

Study Approval Period: 3/17/2013 to 3/17/2014

Dear Mr. Poole:

On 3/17/2013, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

[K Poole_Dissertation Proposal_Committee Approved](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

[Informed Consent_IRB10634.pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review categories:

- (5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).
- (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,



John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B: TEACHER PRE-INTERVIEW SURVEY

1. Counting this school year, how many years have you been teaching?
2. Counting this school year, how many years have you been teaching AP U.S. History?
3. How many sections/classes of AP U.S. History do you teach?
4. Are you teaching other classes this year (other than AP U.S. HISTORY)? If so, please list.
5. What is the highest level of education you have attained (let me know if working on a degree)?
6. What was/were your college major(s) and type(s) of degrees?
7. What type of teaching certificate do you have (e.g., Social Studies 6-12)?
8. Please provide the following identifying data (if you are uncomfortable providing this, omit)
 - a. What is your age?
 - b. Male or Female?
 - c. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
 - d. What is your Race?
9. On average, how many hours per week do you spend preparing and grading for your AP class(es)?
10. What kinds of resources do you typically use to prepare your lessons?
11. About how many hours each week do you expect a student to spend doing AP U.S. History homework (including assigned reading)?
12. How were you assigned to teach AP U.S. History? (e.g., assigned vs volunteered)
13. What is the average class size (number of students) in your AP U.S. History class(es) this year?
14. What, if any, AP professional development activities have you participated in within the last five years (please include year participated)?

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCRIPT

The semi-structured interviews will be guided by the questions below. Questions below each research question (RQ) are designed to elicit data in support of that research question. The first interview will focus on research question one (RQ1), the second interview will focus on research questions two and three (RQ2 & RQ3), and the third interview will focus on research question four (RQ4).

What personal beliefs and structural factors impact teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions in AP classes?

1. At the beginning of the year, what kinds of general objectives do you have for your students?
2. What do you think an AP U.S. History experience should be like for students?
3. Tell me how you design your AP U.S. History class, what is the general structure and expectations? Established reading/writing assignments, quizzes, tests, etc.
 - a. What sorts of resources does your school provide for your AP U.S. History class?
 - b. What are the course expectations as far as reading? Textbook(s)? Supplementary books or articles?
 - c. What role does the course textbook play in your class?
 - d. What kinds of resources are available to the students? Textbook, online information, etc.?
 - e. What sorts of writing activities do your students engage in?
 - f. Do you ask your students to do any projects or research-type papers?
 - g. What, if any, College Board documents do you use to determine the content of your course and the instructional methods used in your class?
 - h. Do you use the Florida state standards for U.S. history for preparation at any point?

4. How much independence do you feel you have to make curricular and instructional methods decisions in your course?
5. When planning your course, how do you decide what content to teach? (how do you decide what's important)
6. What kinds of teaching methods do you typically use in your classroom? Why those?
7. Tell me what a typical day in your AP U.S. History class is like, in other words, what are some of the recurring activities they are engaged in?
 - a. As a student in your AP U.S. History class, what kinds of work can I expect to have?
8. Can you explain the process you go through when planning for an individual lesson?
9. In what ways do your personality traits and interests influence what and the way you teach?
10. There is a substantial amount of material to cover in any AP class. As far as content coverage, are the demands of depth and breadth a concern for you? How do you manage to get adequate depth and breadth of material into your lessons?
 - a. Do you feel you have adequate time to cover the course content?
 - b. Are there any particular instructional methods that you use to help your students learn large amounts of depth and breadth?
11. Are there any activities you wish you had time to include but don't?
12. Is there any content you wish you had time to include but don't?
13. Do you plan with other teachers? How?
14. Does your administration provide any guidance as far as expectations or planning for your course?

How does increased student participation in AP classes affect teacher decision making when making curricular-instructional planning decisions?

1. Tell me about the types of students you encounter in your AP U.S. History classes.
2. What procedures or criteria does your school use to select students for AP courses?

3. Describe some of the challenges you have encountered relating to the variety of students and their abilities in your AP U.S. History classes.
4. One of the College Board's stated objectives is to increase access to AP courses. Have you experienced increased student participation in your AP classrooms?
 - a. If so, what kinds of diverse student needs have you experienced? What challenges, if any, does this increased student needs present? What modifications do you make to your instruction or methods to accommodate the increased diversity? (availability outside of class period?)
 - b. If not, all classrooms are places of student diversity (all kinds). What challenges, if any, does diverse student needs in your classroom present? Do you make any modifications to your instruction or methods to accommodate diverse student needs? (availability outside of class period?)
5. In what ways do you feel increasing access to AP classes has positive effects for students?
6. Have you encountered circumstances where you think increasing access to AP classes has a negative effect on students?
7. Are there strategies you use that you believe help your students to be successful irrespective of diversity or varying ability.
8. What are your biggest challenges in teaching AP U.S. History?
9. What do you see as the effect that your AP pass rates has on the way other teachers, administrators, and parents view you as a teacher?
10. AP participation has grown rapidly in Florida. Has that been the case at your school? If so, does this present any challenges?
11. Do the experiences you've had as a learner affect the way you teach?
12. How, if any, do your students influence what and how you teach?
13. Do you think the Exam is an adequate measure of your students success. Can you think of any other way to assess your students success that might be better?
14. Classrooms are can be places of "standards for all" or places of "individual tailoring" What is your classroom like in this regard as far as assignments and performance?

How does the end-of-course AP exam affect teacher curricular-instructional planning decisions?

1. As a course objective, how important is it that students do well on the AP exam?
2. As AP teacher we want our students to be successful on the AP exam, how does this affect your lesson planning and teaching strategies?
 - a. How do you design your course for student success on the exam?
 - b. How do you select content that leads to success on the exam?
 - c. What teaching methods do you use that leads to success on the exam?
3. Do you have techniques for preparing your students for the AP exam throughout the year?
4. What specific review techniques do you use to prepare your students for the AP exam at the end of the year?
5. How important are student pass rates on the exam ... to students and parents? Administrators? Teachers? Of the interested parties (above), who do you think is most concerned about passing the exam?
6. Throughout the year, how often do you think about your students' performance on the exam?
 - a. In what ways does concern about student performance affect your lesson planning or the assignments you give to your students?
7. What are your biggest challenges in preparing all of your students to meet the challenge of the AP exam?

How do teachers construct a college-level experience for their students given the competing demands of teaching AP courses?

1. With respect to your students' AP learning experience, what do you feel is most valuable for them?
2. What are some of the activities that your students engage in that you feel contribute the most to their college preparation?
3. Are there content or teaching activities that you feel would enhance their learning experience but are difficult to include? What and why?

4. What are some of the biggest challenges that you face as teacher in creating the opportunity for a college-level learning experience?
5. Given the competing demands of teaching AP U.S. History, how satisfied are you at the end of the year that students have had a college-level experience?
6. If you were teaching a dual-enrollment course, how would your college-level U.S. history course be different than your AP course?
7. What, if any, concerns do you have about the AP Program?
8. There is research that suggests that high-stakes testing has a “narrowing effect” on the curriculum in that teachers tailor their curriculum to what is anticipated on the test ... do you think this applies to the way you teach AP U.S. History?
9. What skills do your students learn or practice that you think will increase the likelihood of their success in college?
10. Is there anything about the demands of the AP program that you feel should be changed?
11. Do you feel your students have the skills needed for college already or do you feel you are developing those skills in your classroom?
12. Do you view your course as college level or college preparatory?
13. In what ways do you think your class is similar to a college class and in what ways is it different?
14. Why do you think your students take AP classes?

APPENDIX D: EMAIL SCRIPT FOR RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in Social Science Education at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. I am pursuing my doctorate by conducting research on the curricular-instructional course planning of AP U.S. History teachers that have achieved high student pass rates on the College Board AP exam. Your participation is requested in this research, IRB Study # 10634, involving investigation into the planning practices of successful AP U.S. History teachers. This research has been approved by the school district (#RR1213-427) and I am working with the Supervisor, High School Social Studies.

As compensation for your time and participation in the study you will receive a \$20.00 gift certificate to Publix at the completion of each interview and a \$15.00 gift certificate to Publix for verification of the final three interview transcript (a total of \$75 in gift certificates). During the interviews, any food or beverage will be paid for by me.

Participation in the study will require completion of a pre-interview survey (approximately 15 minutes), participation in three one-hour interviews and 30 minutes of verification of interview transcripts, one classroom observation (preferred timing is during the three-week interview period), and voluntary sharing of relevant course planning documents such as a course syllabus or routine assignments. With your permission, the interviews will be taped and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym in all transcriptions and you will not be identified by name on the tape. A professional transcriptionist will be used to transcribe the audio files. The audio files will be locked at my house. Each participant will be offered a copy of their audio files and a copy of their transcription. The participants, transcription service, and I will be the only ones with access to the audio files. The master audio file will remain in my possession and will be destroyed five years after the publication of the dissertation.

The three interviews will be arranged at a location of your convenience, during non-working hours, either at a non-school or school (with principal's approval) facility. All three interviews will be scheduled to occur in a period of approximately 3 weeks. Transcripts will be made available for your review within 30 days of the final interview. The classroom observation can be arranged based on your schedule but it is preferable if it can occur during the three-week interview period.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request. Please contact me at the email or phone number listed below if you would like to participate in this voluntary research.

Sincerely,

Kerry D. Poole, M.A.T.
Doctoral Candidate
Social Science Education
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, EDU 162
Tampa, FL 33620

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # 10634

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called: Assessing Competing Demands and Charting a Course: A Phenomenological Study of AP History Teachers' Decision making and Course Planning

The person who is in charge of this research study is Kerry Poole. This person is called the Principal Investigator. He is being guided in this research by Howard Johnston, a professor at USF in the College of Education.

You have been selected to participate in this study because of your success in teaching AP U.S. History. Data collected for this study will occur during a pre-interview survey, interviews, classroom observation, and course planning documents as appropriate. Interviews will be conducted at a location of your convenience during non-school hours either at your high school (with your school principal's permission) or at an off-school site of your convenience. Classroom observations will be conducted in your high school classroom (with your school principal's permission).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

Describe the decision making and course planning of successful AP U.S. History teachers in an environment of increased student academic diversity and high-stakes testing.

This study is being conducted by a graduate student for completion of a doctoral dissertation.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to: 1) complete a pre-interview study (approximate time is 15 minutes) concerning your teacher education, teaching assignments, and teaching experience; 2) participate in three one-hour semi-structured interviews and approximately 30 minutes of verification of your transcripts (interviews will focus on: your personal beliefs about teaching Advanced Placement (AP) and factors that influence your course planning; students' diverse needs in an AP classroom; how the end-of-course exam influences course planning; and course planning decisions undertaken to ensure rigor and a college-level experience); and 3) permit the researcher to visit your classroom and observe one classroom lesson. The three interviews will be scheduled approximately one week apart so that all three are conducted in approximately three weeks' time. The classroom observation timing is subject to your schedule but it is desired that it occur during the three weeks period of the interviews. Sharing course planning documents is voluntary but it would be helpful for the researcher to have a copy of your course syllabus and any other documents that would provide insight into your course planning, such as examples of weekly reading or writing assignments. With your permission the interviews will be audio taped and transcribed.

The three interviews will be arranged at a location of the participants' convenience. The three interviews will be scheduled to occur within a three week period.

Transcripts for three interviews will be made available for participant review within 30 days of the third interview.

Total Number of Participants

Approximately 5 individuals will take part in this study at USF.

Alternatives

You do not have to participate in this research study.

Benefits

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will be compensated \$75.00 in the form of Publix gift certificates if you complete the three scheduled interviews and verify your transcript. If you withdraw for any reason from the study before completion you will be paid \$20.00 in the form of a Publix gift certificate for each complete study visit and \$15.00 for verification of the interview transcripts. You will receive each gift certificate upon completion of each interview / transcript verification. During the study visits, any food or beverage will be paid for by Kerry Poole.

Cost

There will be no additional costs to you as a result of being in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The Principal Investigator and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, staff in the USF Office of Research and Innovation, USF Division of Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are. To maintain confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym in all transcriptions and you will not be identified by name on the tape. Transcription software and/or a professional transcriptionist may be used to transcribe the audio files.

The audio files will be locked in Mr. Poole's house. Each participant will be offered a copy of their own audio files and a copy of their own transcription. The participants and principle

investigator will be the only ones with access to the audio files. The master audio file will remain in Mr. Poole's possession and will be destroyed five years after the publication of the dissertation.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

New information about the study

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

APPENDIX F: CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he/ she understands:

- What the study is about;
- What procedures will be used;
- What the potential benefits might be; and
- What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language. Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent. This subject is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their

judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIPT CODING AND FREQUENCY TABLE

CODE	PARTICIPANT			
	Alice	Susan	Thomas	Gloria
AP Exam Revision Impact	2	2	3	1
CL AP benefit	1	1	1	0
CL AP Class replaced Honors	0	0	2	2
CL AP Class should be rigorous	2	1	1	1
CL AP limitation HS student workload	1	0	2	1
CL AP limitation need to teach to the test	4	0	0	3
CL AP limitation no time to include further assgts	3	2	1	1
CL AP more high school than college level	0	3	0	0
CL ENV collegiate cooperation	2	0	4	0
CL ENV creating college-level environment	6	3	8	3
CL LEVEL critical thinking and analysis	4	2	3	2
CL LEVEL discussion	1	2	5	1
CL LEVEL exam validates	3	0	1	3
CL LEVEL high school/college hybrid	1	3	4	1
CL LEVEL independent reading	0	0	6	0
CL LEVEL pace	4	1	0	1
CL LEVEL workload	4	4	1	8
CL PREP college pace	1	0	0	1
CL PREP college reading emphasis	0	4	1	2
CL PREP college responsibility	5	9	9	9
CL PREP college skills	4	11	9	6
CL PREP college skills argument & support	4	1	2	3
CL PREP college writing emphasis	0	5	6	2
CL Research Paper End of course	0	0	5	0
CL Research paper would benefit	0	5	0	0
CL STUDENT have college skills Not	0	4	0	0
CL STUDENTS have college level skills	3	0	3	3
CL TEACHER college credit warranted	4	5	1	1
CL TEACHER sees progress throughout	0	2	3	3
DEC accountability through class questioning	1	0	1	3
DEC accountability through reading quiz	0	1	4	6

DEC content causation	5	0	1	2
DEC content connections	17	3	1	4
DEC content repetition	12	4	2	0
DEC content themes	13	0	1	2
DEC daily reading assignments	0	1	0	0
DEC groups in class	0	12	6	3
DEC homework assignments advance notice	1	2	0	2
DEC homework assignments one at a time	2	1	1	0
DEC homework assignments unit chunks	0	2	0	3
DEC late work accepted	0	0	1	0
DEC late work not accepted	2	2	0	1
DEC less emphasis reading	9	0	1	0
DEC less emphasis writing	4	0	0	2
DEC less lecture	0	0	3	0
DEC less projects	5	1	0	0
DEC less writing teacher workload	0	0	0	1
DEC low textbook emphasis	2	0	0	0
DEC macro course planning	4	2	1	7
DEC methods include a some discovery activities	7	8	5	10
DEC more emphasis textbook reading	0	6	13	7
DEC more emphasis writing	0	14	15	3
DEC more lecture	8	4	0	2
DEC multiple choice assessment	2	1	1	2
DEC Oral reading quizzes	2	0	0	0
DEC primary source use	0	0	3	0
DEC provide online access to assignments	2	1	0	2
DEC provide online practice quizzes	0	0	0	1
DEC Reading questions	1	1	6	0
DEC skill-building assignments	0	14	0	0
DEC structured note taking	0	3	0	0
DEC student-centered activities	0	0	2	0
DEC summer assignment	0	4	0	1
DEC teach analytical skills	3	1	5	3
DEC teach critical thinking	2	0	1	1
DEC teacher-directed scope of content	15	6	6	11
DEC teacher-led analysis	2	1	0	2
DEC textbook plays central role	1	1	8	2
DEC timed MC questioning	1	3	1	2
DEC timed MC questioning Not	0	0	1	0
DEC tries different methods	2	7	4	2
DEC unannounced reading quizzes	0	1	0	0
DEC use Suppl Rdg materials	2	8	2	5

DEC use CB materials	2	8	1	10
DEC use of organizers for students	0	2	7	12
DIVERS access is liberal	0	2	1	1
DIVERS access is moderate	0	0	1	1
DIVERS access is tight	0	0	0	0
DIVERS access students want challenge	0	3	2	0
DIVERS access students want CL experience	0	0	1	0
DIVERS access students want GPA boost	0	3	2	2
DIVERS access students want to be with peers	0	0	1	2
DIVERS classroom perf expect seem too high	0	4	0	0
DIVERS classroom students dislike history	2	1	1	0
DIVERS classroom students high motivation	4	2	1	0
DIVERS classroom students like history	1	1	0	1
DIVERS classroom students low motivation	2	2	5	0
DIVERS classroom students not aware of rigor	0	2	0	0
DIVERS classroom students not on grade level	0	2	0	2
DIVERS classroom students poor analytical skills	0	2	0	0
DIVERS classroom students poor performers intimidated	0	0	1	2
DIVERS classroom students read poorly	0	5	3	3
DIVERS classroom students read well	3	1	3	0
DIVERS classroom students wo prior knowledge	0	2	1	0
DIVERS classroom students write well	2	1	2	0
DIVERS classroom students write well Not	0	7	3	0
DIVERS classrooms diverse	3	6	1	3
DIVERS classrooms diverse Not	0	0	0	0
DIVERS classrooms increased in diversity Not	2	0	0	0
DIVERS negative influence on high performers	0	0	2	0
DIVERS negative influence on low performers	0	3	0	0
DIVERS positive influence on high performers	0	0	1	1
DIVERS positive influence on low performers	2	1	6	4
DIVERS selection factor Admin	0	1	2	2
DIVERS selection factor Parent	0	4	1	2
DIVERS selection factor Student	0	0	0	0
DIVERS selection factor Teacher	0	3	0	1
DIVERS teacher comment about m-s	0	2	0	1
DIVERS teacher comment about m-SS	2	3	0	2
DIVERS teacher comment about MM-s	4	6	4	4
DIVERS teacher comment about MM-SS	2	3	1	1
DIVERS teacher differentiates minimally	3	1	3	2
DIVERS teacher differentiates moderately	3	4	0	2
DIVERS teacher flexible	0	5	6	8

DIVERS teacher less flexible	1	0	2	2
DIVERS teacher provides after school assistance	1	2	0	2
DIVERS teacher see diversity as a challenge	1	2	1	0
EXAM Admin focus	1	4	1	0
EXAM Admin impact	3	3	2	0
EXAM PIng course-long CB writing	1	1	7	6
EXAM PIng overall design leads to good performance	3	2	1	5
EXAM measure is adequate	2	1	1	1
EXAM measure is flawed	0	3	1	1
EXAM measure is good	0	1	0	2
EXAM minimally important	0	0	2	0
EXAM moderately important	2	3	2	4
EXAM very important	1	2	5	0
EXAM parent focus	4	1	1	0
EXAM Review	0	2	0	2
EXAM Review analyze prior exam content	1	4	1	1
EXAM Review technique for exam prep	4	1	0	4
EXAM student focus	0	0	3	3
EXAM student impact	4	0	3	2
EXAM Student progress is important	0	3	0	0
EXAM students study	1	0	0	0
EXAM students study Not	0	0	0	0
EXAM Teacher believes too much exam focus	0	3	0	0
EXAM teacher focus	2	2	2	1
EXAM Teacher Impact	8	2	4	2
EXAM Teacher positive about success	1	1	0	2
EXAM Teacher satisfaction student progress	3	2	2	2
ORG Admin expects good rates	1	6	3	0
ORG Admin largely hands off	1	3	3	0
ORG AP students have heavy course loads	2	1	0	6
ORG attends CB trainings	1	1	1	3
ORG district sched and AP sched not aligned	0	6	3	4
ORG District Eval doesn't endorse lecture	2	0	4	1
ORG District Eval process seem unfair	1	8	0	3
ORG exam pass rates are important	2	3	4	0
ORG parents are involved	6	1	2	1
ORG school provides resources	2	2	3	2
ORG school supports training	1	1	1	1
ORG shares ideas with other teachers	3	1	1	6
ORG students have access to resources	3	1	1	1
ORG students lack academic skills	0	2	0	0
ORG students lack necessary reading skills	0	4	0	0

ORG students lack necessary writing skills	0	12	0	0
ORG students like varied methods	6	6	5	7
ORG students often take many AP classes	0	0	1	6
ORG students show extrinsic motivation	0	1	1	0
ORG students show intrinsic motivation	7	0	2	0
ORG students use technology inappropriately	0	10	1	2
ORG students want lecture	3	2	3	0
ORG students who lack resources are helped	2	1	0	0
ORG test scores emphasized too much	0	2	0	0
PERS AP should challenge	2	3	0	1
PERS AP should promote growth	2	1	0	0
PERS develops personal solutions	1	2	1	1
PERS establish clear expectations	6	5	1	1
PERS establish firm rules	2	3	0	1
PERS feels autonomous	2	7	3	2
PERS lecture facilitates quick coverage of content	2	0	0	1
PERS need to establish caring env	8	9	9	3
PERS student rapport important	12	6	8	3
PERS students need organization	5	2	5	5
PERS students need routine	2	4	0	0
PERS students need to see effort pays off	2	2	0	0
PERS students should appreciate history	0	1	1	2
PERS students should enjoy class	4	2	2	2
PERS teacher believes improving academic skills key	0	1	0	0
PERS teacher experience dictates content	10	4	2	6
PERS teacher experience leads to confidence	3	3	2	8
PERS teacher learning preferences influence methods	2	1	2	1
PERS Teacher Recommendation	0	2	5	0
PERS Teacher uses humor	4	2	2	2
PERS textbook has excessive information	1	0	0	0
PERS time mgt skills important	0	7	0	1
PERS audience is considered	0	1	0	5
POL AP Exam persistence	21	16	21	9
POL CB guidance used to develop curriculum	3	9	6	7
POL curriculum has extensive content	9	12	16	3
POL state standards used for curriculum	0	2	1	0
POL teach AP MC test-taking skills	5	8	3	11
POL teach AP writing skills	7	14	15	10
Teacher anticipating what's on the exam	3	13	16	2
Teacher Feels Constrained	11	5	3	6
Teacher feels heavy workload	1	3	0	1
Teacher Feels Need to Cover Everything	7	4	9	3

Teacher Feels not enough time	11	14	11	4
Teacher feels personally comfortably with students	8	0	0	0
Teacher feels there should be more varied methods	5	2	2	1
Teacher motivated by student interest	2	1	0	0
Teacher feels OBJ to build academic skills	0	1	0	1
Teacher feels OBJ to pass the exam	5	6	17	3
TOTALS:	478	574	483	410