

## Abstract

The elementary teacher education program at the University of Michigan focuses on U-M students' learning of core instructional practices that have proven effective in supporting children's learning. U-M students must learn to communicate, collaborate and demonstrate self-agency in order to enact these instructional practices and work effectively with young children. Yet, we have much to learn about how our elementary teacher education students enact these practices once they begin student teaching in local K-5 classrooms. With this in mind, two research questions guided our study:

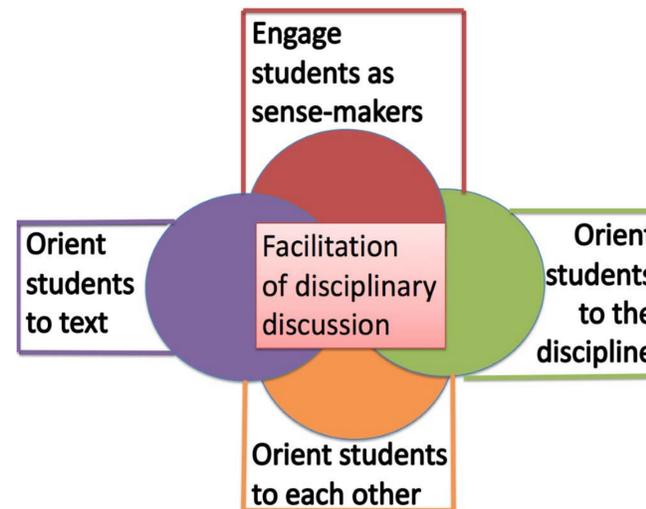
- How does elementary teacher education students' engaged learning transfer outside of the structured university course to live K-5 classrooms?
- What teacher education practices appear to help students use the core practice of discussion effectively in their K-5 classrooms?

## Methods

- We conducted research in the context of a masters-level elementary social studies course taught by Dr. Monte-Sano in Fall 2014 and Fall 2015. Dr. Monte-Sano's course focused on how to teach history as a process of inquiry.
- 29 students took the course in Fall 2014, while 22 students took the course in Fall 2015. The majority of the students were white females in their mid-20s. Our final sample included 32 masters-level teacher education students from U-M and one additional university.
- We collected videos of teaching and reflections on these lessons from each of the 32 participants. We also conducted a follow up video observation and interview with 4 focal teacher candidates from each institution.
- We analyzed data using grounded theory methodology and Studiocode qualitative research software, which is often used for analysis of live action athletics.

## Findings

### A Framework for Facilitating Historical Discussions



We developed this framework to describe the work of facilitating a discussion based on observations of elementary teacher education students who were most successful in their K-5 classrooms. The framework has four prongs:

**Engage students as sense-makers:** Engaging students in an open-ended discussion where the answer is not clear. Asking open-ended questions might help. Example: "What do you think, Sam?" or "What do you notice?"

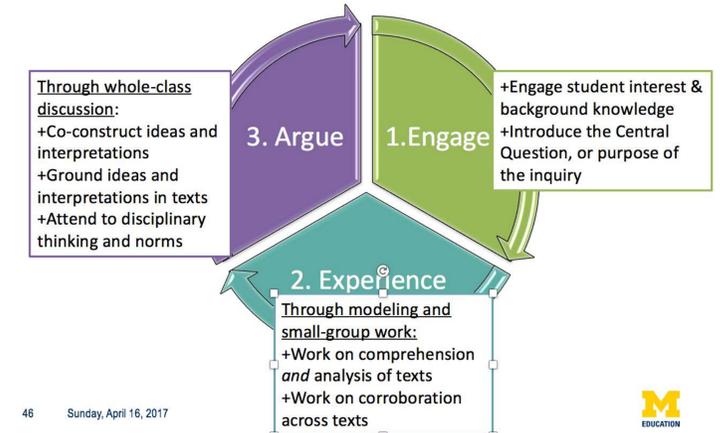
**Orient students to the text:** Encouraging students to use the text as evidence. Ex: "What evidence from the text supports that idea?" or "What in the text leads you to say that?"

**Orient students to each other:** Prompt students to talk to each other. Ex: "Who disagrees with Cassandra's idea?" or "Can someone restate what Jasmine said?"

**Orient students to the discipline:** Get students to consider important social studies concepts. Ex: "Who wrote this document? What might that tell you about the perspective in this document?"

We found that elementary teacher education students could often engage students as sense-makers, but needed more support to orient students to each other or to the discipline.

## The Role of Discussion in Inquiry Lessons



## Implications for Teaching

- We used this framework to teach our students to lead discussions during the 2016-2017 school year. Preliminary findings suggest that more students were able to orient students to each other, the text, and the discipline more successfully than in previous years. In facilitating discussions, U-M students communicate and collaborate effectively with K-5 students and demonstrate self-agency.
- This study led us to re-design our course, so that the work of teaching (and the role of engaged learning in it) is more explicit. The assignments and lessons leading up to them now prepare UM students to work more successfully with their K-5 students. Our new framework—"Engage, Experience, and Argue" (adapted from science)—more clearly conveys key aspects of any inquiry lesson in history and the different kinds of discussions that may occur. While some discussions can be used to *experience* (or, explore) the materials, other discussions are more focused on *argument* (or, deliberating about interpretations of materials). Different kinds of discussions highlight different purposes and emphasize different sets of moves.

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