Sustaining Changes in History Teachers' Core Instructional Practices: Impact of *Teaching American History* Ten Years Later

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AS A RESULT of the U.S. Department of Education's near one-billion-dollar investment in the *Teaching American History* (*TAH*) grant program since 2001, almost 1,200 projects have taken place in school districts around the country with the important aim of improving the teaching of American history in K-12 classrooms. The lessons learned from working with an estimated 85,000 teachers should be carefully reviewed and then disseminated throughout classrooms, college history departments, teacher education programs, and school district professional development efforts. It is important to look at the impact of such a massive program. While it will ultimately be important to assess students' historical understandings and skills, the first step is to a look at changes in teachers' behavior and attitudes, as this impacts student achievement.

The study reported here concerns the sustained impact of one such project. The principle partners in the three-year Model Collaboration: Rethinking American History (McRAH) program were a high-needs school district, a small liberal arts college, and a nationally recognized urban historical society. The first cohort of

participant teachers came from the high-needs partner district while the second cohort added in year two came from neighboring high-resourced districts as well as additional teachers from the original partner district. Over the three-year grant period (2001-2004), the project activities included summer institutes, a series of Saturday workshop sessions, ongoing classroom observation visits, in-person and online mentoring by program faculty in the fields of history and education, and collaboration with teacher colleagues on curriculum development and peer observation teams. These professional development activities were designed not only to introduce new content knowledge to the teachers, but also to introduce new core instructional strategies specifically designed to directly engage students with the study of American history.

The study described here was designed to measure the impact of the project in terms of the *adoption* of the strategies in teachers' classrooms and the *beliefs, attitudes, concerns, or comfort level* of the teachers with these strategies. Finally, conclusions on the *sustainability* of the use of the strategies will be presented. Data collection on teachers' instructional practices and beliefs for this fourteen-year investigation took place in three phases: before the three-year *TAH* project began; at the conclusion of the project; and approximately ten years after the project ended.

A key finding that emerged from the analysis of changes that took place in the teachers' classrooms was that before the teaching practices could undergo change, the teachers' attitudes and views towards teaching history had to be changed first. The curriculum of the professional development project included two key factors that contributed to this attitude change: 1) the teachers worked directly with historians to gain greater understanding of what historians do and what historical thinking and "doing history" is; and 2) the teachers were provided with a specific series of instructional strategies with which to implement these new understandings about history into their classrooms. This report is a follow-up to a preliminary study by this author[1] that reported on results one year after the project concluded. An analysis of the implementation of teachers' practices, ideas, and attitudes about teaching history and how the practices and attitudes have been sustained over a decade will be presented. Finally, recommendations for the design of professional development to enable sustained practice will be shared.

Literature Review

Reviewing prior research in the areas of history pedagogy, the impact of professional development on changing teaching—with a focus on the impact of *TAH* projects—and the sustainability of educational change is critical to framing this study and interpreting its results. In addition, looking at reflective practice and the connections between teachers' beliefs and practices and how these elements are best measured will also prove valuable in exploring the conclusions of this study.

Best Practices in History Pedagogy

Associated with the works of Robert Bain,[2] Keith Barton and Linda Levstik,[3] Peter Lee,[4] Bruce VanSledright,[5] and Sam Wineburg,[6] a scholarly "canon" of sorts has developed that addresses the means by which students learn and understand history.[7] This research advocates inquiry-based instructional practices that shift student "habits of mind" to authentic and discipline-based forms of historical thinking and understanding. Recent scholarship on teaching and learning in history emphasizes three key conclusions: the constructed and discipline-based nature of history knowledge; the importance of substantive and procedural concepts in a discipline-based approach to teaching history; and the need for cognitive supports to enable students to understand a disciplinary approach to learning.[8] As Peter Stearns indicates, best practices in history begin with an emphasis on "meaning over memory."[9] This focus on discipline-based practice and historical thinking has generally been situated upon primary source analysis and asks K-12 students to actively create as opposed to passively receive historical knowledge in the form of "doing history." These are the core instructional practices for history pedagogy.

In this context, "doing history" is defined as students implementing the methods and heuristics used by historians at an appropriate level for their cognitive and educational development. According to Sam Wineburg, recognition of *documents as evidence*, rather than collections of facts, distinguishes experts from novices in history.[10] Two key dimensions identified as *Interpretation* and *Sources* are fundamental to this process. *Interpretation* refers to teaching in

ways that recognize history as the product of the work of historians who, looking to represent the past, construct historical accounts by interpreting records and relics from the past. *Sources* refer to assessing the selection, accessibility, purpose, and level of analysis of historical sources used in the classroom. Putting together these processes of the historian, students learn to "read and analyze sources, then support their arguments with evidence and reasoning."[11]

Researchers have looked to these core disciplinary practices of history itself to discover what methods, concepts, and processes constitute what Lee Shulman calls Pedagogical Content Knowledge. This is the intersection between content knowledge and pedagogy. It is key that content knowledge (knowledge of American history in this case) be coupled not only with pedagogical knowledge (about teaching in general), but also with pedagogical content knowledge (specifically how to teach history) in order to be meaningful.[12] As a result, collaboration between professional historians and social studies educators has increased. The inclusion of historians in the professional development of in-service teachers, such as McRAH, in which historians and teachers exchange ideas on how to best teach history is a positive development.

The twelve core instructional strategies introduced to the teachers during the McRAH project were developed as a result of close collaboration between historians and pedagogy specialists (see **Appendix A** for a list of the McRAH strategies). The McRAH project made conscious use of the knowledge of historians with regard to what strategies historians use in their work and in their teaching. This information was then combined with the education professors' knowledge of research-based pedagogy to determine what would work best to engage students with historical knowledge and skills in the secondary classroom. Historians can lend their expertise in regard to domain-specific concepts and disciplinary ways of knowing; teachers and teacher educators can contribute their experience in working with various learners, their skills in teaching, and their familiarity with assessment.

Discipline-Specific Professional Development

High-quality professional development programs that "include intellectual growth as well as the upgrading of teachers' knowledge

and skills" must be "expected and [are] essential features in the careers of all teachers."[13] Most notably, long-term and high-quality professional development is a critical factor in eliciting teacher change according to experts such as Fullan[14] and Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, Mundry, Love and Hewson.[15] For professional development of teachers to be successful, Corcoran[16] advocates several precepts. Among these are: 1) providing opportunities for teachers to increase their content knowledge; 2) creating opportunities for teachers to be active learners; and 3) treating teachers as professionals and adult learners. The opportunity for all participants to focus individually on selected topics and professional contexts while interacting with other members of their profession, as well as providing the occasion to reflect on the related readings and recommended practices, is clearly beneficial. These benefits are consolidated through additional opportunities to apply and adapt their knowledge in their own authentic contexts.[17] All of these elements were included in the project studied here.

Teachers need to find collaborative communities to support discipline-based changes to history curriculum. An ongoing professional development experience provides the best opportunity for teachers to learn about some of the relevant scholarship and to have adequate time to consider appropriate classroom applications. Modeling provides the crucial component of any successful professional development training in inquiry.[18] Participants in professional development opportunities have been shown to be most successful when they interact with historians who present specific historical moments and engage in pedagogical training that emphasizes inquiry-based classroom strategies.[19] Sustained, discipline-specific professional development provides the key to transferring this research knowledge base to the classroom, where it can lead to significant improvements in the quality of history instruction. To be successful, such professional development must— like good classroom instruction—begin with effective modeling of activities and, more importantly, with the thinking embedded in these activities.[20]

Research on discipline-specific professional development in history reveals that the mental models teachers use when they construct teaching experiences for their students change as an outcome of the collaboration with historians in professional development institutes.

A study by Medina et al. reports that "subject matter professional development plays an important role in teacher preparation—one that isn't replicated anywhere else."[21] Teachers in the University of California, Davis History and Cultures Project transferred their experiences from the institutes into their classrooms, where, subsequently, their students demonstrated improved use of primary sources and the ability to identify multiple perspectives in these sources. Researchers found that "what teachers understood from [these] programs, they transmitted and taught—even emphasized."[22]

Responses to open-ended questions by participants in professional development programs identified the major weaknesses of many programs as being too broad and not subject specific and trying to cram too much information into short trainings.[23] Participants suggested that they allow time for hands-on practice and be subject specific.[24] The McRAH project implemented subject-specific extended training in response to these potential barriers to development.

Impact of Teaching American History *Projects*

Many *TAH* initiatives have stressed these principles of good discipline-specific professional development. Historians and history teachers have come together to emphasize historical thinking in every teaching act and to communicate to students from the outset that while facts matter, history is about bringing meaning to facts through the interpretation of evidence. Indeed, collaboration among a wide array of teachers, history and education faculty, and public historians has been arguably the crowning achievement of the *TAH* program.[25] An effective approach that the professional development designers have taken in *TAH* projects is to include more comprehensive activities, meaning that teachers were immersed in historical inquiry under the guidance of professional historians.[26] Findings from this project also suggest that teachers can develop the skills associated with making claims about the historical significance of a given primary source (part of "doing history" discussed above). It was noted by Lee and Coughlin that teachers demonstrated improvement in this task following intensive professional development which was intended to increase their content knowledge and historical thinking skills in general.[27]

According to Sam Wineburg, until *TAH* came along, the overwhelming majority of history teachers had no opportunity to pick up skills in the teaching of history through professional development programs. What teachers need to be taught is not facts, he added, but how to put facts into "productive classroom use."[28] An example comes from Carpenter, Dublin, and Harper, who thought it was essential that the participants have the opportunity to construct meaningful ways to implement the content to which they were being exposed.[29]

Kevin Sheets identified lessons from his experience with a *TAH* project and what worked best in terms of history specific professional development. First, historians working with teacher professional development programs must emphasize a definition of the past as something to be discovered, not memorized. By framing the past as a series of questions, teachers and, ultimately, their students come to a more exciting appreciation of history.[30] Second, historians and even teachers should be more transparent in their practices. Students cannot help but think of the past as fixed and immutable if historians and teachers merely profess truths from the lectern. If, however, they use the classroom as an opportunity to show how they work out a particular historical problem (why they chose to ask *that* question, why they chose to use *that* source, why they chose to pick *that* date and *that* person, etc.), then students will come to appreciate history as a process and not as a package.[31] Third, historians' work with teachers must be ongoing, intensive, and intentional. One or two workshops unconnected to each other cannot provide the sort of training that will make a difference in teacher practices.[32] Fourth, assignments should employ active-learning strategies through purposeful projects that emphasize history as an argument based on evidence.[33] Fifth, effective professional development for history teachers must be based on projects that have immediate utility for teachers and that come from their own curricular needs and interests. Finally, effective professional development must become part of a culture of self-improvement and institutional capacity building.[34] All of these recommended elements are present in the *TAH* project studied here.

Sustainability of Educational Change

Sustaining educational change requires more than maintaining the *status quo* or merely continuing the level of implementation

achieved when special project resources and attention end. Sustaining theory-based change means deepening those changes in practice and understanding in ways that keep educators responsive to students and aware of subject area content and classroom contexts.[35] Findings indicate that teachers' ability and willingness to continue a reform, to reflect on it, and to keep it a vital part of their classroom practices turns on a number of factors and conditions. Implementation is both assimilation and construction and must be anchored in general reform principles and concrete teaching contexts.[36] The ongoing interaction of reform, learning, and context means that implementation is a process requiring ongoing invention.[37] Without knowledge informing teachers of *why* they are doing what they're doing, implementation will be superficial only. Teachers will lack the understanding they will need to deepen their current practice and, therefore, lead to sustaining these new practices in the face of changing contexts.[38] The McRAH management team took all of these things into consideration in designing and implementing the project. Particular attention was paid to respecting the context of teaching by doing a comprehensive needs assessment before designing the program. Even the most dedicated teachers and principals will have a hard time sustaining reform practices and philosophy if their district context is hostile or pushing in incompatible directions.[39] Differences among teachers' sustained practice in different school districts will be discussed. A reform can be said to be an accepted practice when it is no longer seen as an interruption or exception to organizational life.[40] This is something that emerged from the interview comments of teachers.

Reflective Practice: Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes

Recognizing the important of reflective practice in developing and sustaining changes in teachers' instruction is a foundational principle used in this *TAH* project to change teachers' behavior effectively. Presented as a deliberate way of thinking that leads to changes in action, reflective practice is common in teacher preparation programs according to sources including Aubusson, Griffin, and Steele;[41] Carrington and Selva;[42] and Schoffner.[43] Professional development cannot be forced. According to Carpenter, "it is the teacher who develops (active), not the teacher who is developed (passive); the

need for change must be internalized if effective change is to occur; *the client must have ownership of his own learning experience*; and the in-service educator's role is consultative and collaborative."[44] Reflecting in collaboration with others is another practical way to enhance reflection that was involved in this project.

Reflective activities also offer a means to explore the affective domain since emotions and emotional states play an important role in learning to teach.[45] Responses to instructional reforms are influenced by beliefs.[46] Substantive changes in practice thus require a reorganization of knowledge structures. This occurs through sustained engagement with ideas that conflict with, or cannot be resolved by one's present conceptions.[47] Professional development helps teachers bridge this gap. Explorations of the affective domain sometimes lead to a "phase of unsettling," according to Loughran.[48] In order to achieve success, in-service professional development needs to provide spaces to engage in the uncomfortable but necessary stage of *discomforting dialogues*.[49]

Due to the fact that what people do and believe may not always be consistent, people's behaviors are usually guided by their perceptions of self-efficacy instead of their actual capabilities.[50] Watson indicates that teachers' self-efficacy was significantly improved and sustained over time after a training program.[51] Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to have a positive impact on students, is an important reason why the project reported here included deliberate attention to teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the strategies they learned and subsequently implemented. Barriers to the success of professional development are intrinsic to teachers and include such obstacles as attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills.[52] These attitudes need to be addressed directly and developmentally.

Developmental Nature of Teacher Change

Another key principle that framed this study was an awareness of the developmental nature of the process teachers experience in adopting and sustaining changes in educational practice. In this case, the goal was to assess how McRAH strategies were being put into practice and sustained in the teachers' classrooms. The stages of teacher development according to Alexander progress from acclimation to competence to proficiency/expertise across a multitude of variables.[53]

A modification of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) of Hall, Wallace, and Dossett[54] was used to measure how the McRAH strategies were being used in the teachers' instructional practice and their attitudes toward their use. The premise of the CBAM model is that innovation adoption is a developmental process rather than a single decision-point. It is also an individual process that each innovation user experiences differently. Each person decides the extent and manner of innovative use. This progression of concerns on the part of the teachers is based on the work of Fuller, who identified such a continuum with pre-service and in-service teachers.[55] With continued use, implementation becomes routine, and the teacher is able to be directed more toward increasing the effectiveness of the strategy in order to increase engagement of students. Hall and Hord posit that feelings and perceptions about a change process can be sorted out as "concerns."[56] CBAM was used to measure both the teachers' use of and concerns about the innovation (McRAH strategies) periodically during and after the three-year project.

Study Design

This study used quantitative and qualitative data collected over a fourteen-year period (2000-2013) with in-service teacher participants in the McRAH grant project. Three phases of instructional practices were investigated: 1) before the McRAH project (2000-2001); 2) at the conclusion of the McRAH project (2003-2004); and 3) ten years after the McRAH project (2013-2014). The total sample consisted of twenty teachers in phase one, thirty-two teachers in phase two, and fourteen teachers in phase three. Approval from the College's Human Subjects Research Committee was obtained before each period of data collection, and each teacher gave informed consent in order to participate in the project.

Research Questions

1. Which core instructional strategies (McRAH) do the teachers continue to use most often ten years after the project concluded?

2. How do teachers' core instructional strategies now compare to those used immediately following the project?

3. How did the teachers' attitudes and concerns about the instructional strategies affect their adoption and sustained use?

4. What specific elements of the McRAH project most impacted the adoption and sustained use of the instructional strategies?

Data Collection and Analysis

Two methods were used for data collection: 1) surveys were administered at the three phases of the research design as described above. A variation of the CBAM was used. The data included 1) surveys of the teachers' Levels of Use (see **Appendix B**) and Stages of Concern (see **Appendix C**) of the McRAH strategies (see **Appendix A**); and 2) interviews that were conducted with the teachers at the three phases of the project on their overall philosophy of history teaching and their comfort with and use of the McRAH strategies (see **Appendix D**).

The CBAM instrument consists of a series of surveys designed to measure changes in attitudes and practices as teachers adopt a new instructional system—in this case, the McRAH strategies. Six Levels of Use (LoU) measure behaviors actually demonstrated in relation to the innovation (i.e., actual use in the classroom) (see **Appendix B**). A developmental progression occurs with Levels of Use as implementation becomes routine, and the teacher is able to be directed more toward increasing the effectiveness of the strategy in order to increase engagement of students. The seven Stages of Concern (SoC) measure the affective dimension of the teachers' views on using the innovation, including thoughts, feelings, and information needs (see **Appendix C**). Teachers progress along a continuum of Stages of Concern from concerns about self, to concerns about the teaching task, to concerns about impact on students. Studies of the relationship between SoC and LoU have found a predictive relationship exists between the innovation adopter's concerns about the innovation and use of it.

Quantitative analysis of the LoU and SoC survey responses consisted of tallying response frequencies by rating for each listed item and rank ordering the items based on the tallies, as well as calculating percentages for each data field. Relevant data are reported in the Figures below.

The purpose of the culminating, in-depth interviews was to understand the meaning teacher participants made of their McRAH experiences and what had caused the instructional practices learned to be sustained after the project ended. Analysis of open-ended interview responses involved open and axial coding. This consisted of organizing responses into categories that matched the data collection areas. Selecting, refining, and positioning each category generated in open coding then created linkages between the categories. These were then amalgamated to fit a broader categorical structure in order to answer the research questions addressed in the study. Relevant data are reported in the Figures below.

Results

A brief description of the core instructional practices and ideas about history pedagogy used by the teachers before the McRAH project (2000) and immediately after (2004) is an important framework for analyzing the changes in pedagogy that were adopted and sustained over the subsequent ten years. Extensive needs assessment surveys, interviews, and classroom observations before the project found that only seven of the twenty teachers had majored in history. Most of the teachers in our project had learned history from lecture-based undergraduate courses and their own reading of history textbooks. They had not conducted historical analysis themselves. Because of this lack of training in history, most teachers were not familiar with the work of historians and what it means to "do history." Teachers surveyed also made no mention of the importance of using or teaching historical thinking skills.

In terms of core instructional practices, the needs assessment revealed that the practices in which teachers were engaged were not research-supported practices for increasing student engagement in history. More specifically, 100% of the participants indicated on the written survey that they used class discussion most often. However, from the subsequent stages of the needs assessment—the interviews and classroom observations—it was determined that this technique could be better described as teacher-centered recitation or lecture on factual details, rather than discussion. Other practices used by the majority of teachers were lecture, small-group "projects"—which often consisted of completing textbook-driven worksheets—and

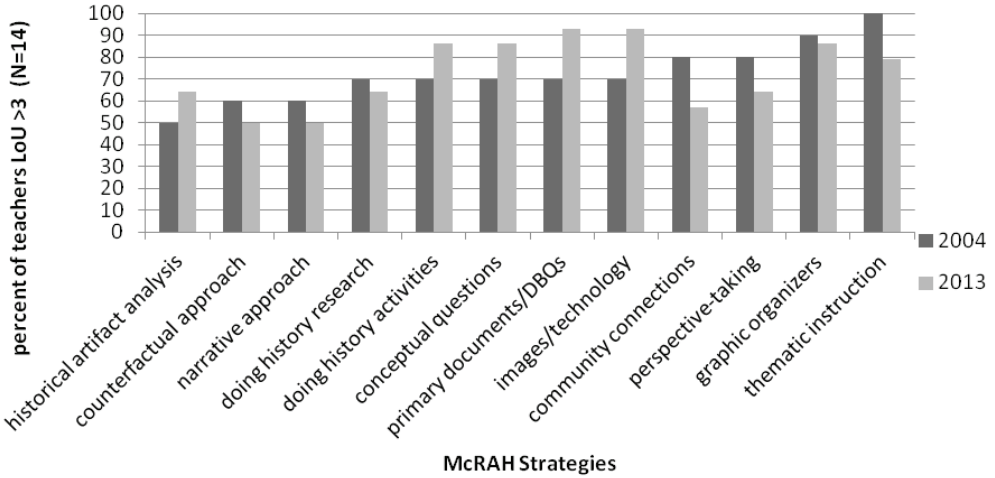## Levels of Use of McRAH Strategies (2004 & 2013)

Figure 1: Levels of Use of McRAH strategies (2004 and 2013).

the use of commercial or popular films, videos, or music. For a more detailed description of the pre-McRAH core practices, see Ragland's "Changing Secondary Teachers' Views of Teaching American History."[57]

Data collected in spring 2004, at the conclusion of the project, indicated a significant increase in levels of use of all strategies in the classrooms. All strategies were now being used by all of the teachers at some level (see **Figure 1**). Overall, all strategies were reported to be in routine use or higher (levels 4-7) by at least 50% of the teachers. Thematic instruction was 100% for these levels, while use of graphic organizers was at 90%, and perspective-taking exercises and community connections were both at 80%. During interviews, most teachers reported using primary documents many times during a unit, most often consisting of newspapers, magazines, and other primary documents from the historical period being studied. Teachers were using Document-Based Questions (DBQs) to challenge students and help them understand the material. The use of "doing history" activities was also being maintained, including student investigations, analysis of primary sources, projects, taking

snapshots of a historical time period, and there was less use of memorization. For a more detailed description of practices used one year after the project, see Ragland's "Adopting and Sustaining Use of New Teaching Strategies for American History in Secondary Classrooms."[58]

Which core instructional strategies (McRAH) do the teachers continue to use most often ten years after the project concluded?

Based on the CBAM surveys and interviews in fall 2013, 50% or more of teachers rated their use as routine or more (levels 4-7) for all twelve McRAH core instructional practices. The highest percentage of use was for primary documents and DBQs as well as images and technology, both at 93%. Graphic organizers, "doing history" activities, and conceptual questions were in routine or higher use by 86% of the teachers (see **Figure 1**). The least used strategies were counterfactual and narrative approaches, both still at 50% use at the routine or higher level.

Interview responses indicated a multi-faceted use of primary documents that involved having students use a graphic organizer or specific question prompts provided by the teacher for group and individual analysis usually modeled by the teacher first. Methods included using guiding questions to decode and dissect vocabulary, language, and apply literacy skills. Teachers reported using primary documents most often one to three times a week. In general, McRAH alumni said they did more "doing history" assignments, primary document analysis, and less textbook work than their colleagues who did not participate in the McRAH project. These colleagues can thus be seen to serve as a control group of sorts.

These conclusions of sustainability of the instructional practices were corroborated and documented by participants sharing teacher-created instructional materials with the author both during the interviews and at other times during the intervening years when the author visited participants' classrooms. In addition, the author directly observed the use of the McRAH strategies in some participants' classrooms after the conclusion of the project. This occurred as McRAH participants subsequently became mentor and cooperating teachers for the author's pre-service interns and student teachers. These pre-service candidates were placed in the

How Primary Sources are Used	N
Used with a graphic organizer for group and individual analysis, modeled first—including decoding and dissecting vocabulary / language / literacy skills / using guiding questions	10
Used with a document analysis form or with specific questions prompts provided by teacher (specific or general) / Students analysis with teacher expectations ["Choices" program from Brown U]	9
Excerpts from historical documents	9
Used to spark discussion and gain information on content / context	7
Students do research with a series of documents ("Close Document Analysis")	3
On tests and quizzes as assessments	1

Figure 2: How primary sources are used by McRAH participants.

How Often Primary Sources are Used	N
3 times per week	4
1-2 times per week	4
2-3 times per week	2
Daily	1
< 1 times per week	1
None	0

Figure 3: How often primary sources are used by McRAH participants.

participants' classrooms for their clinical experiences in order to be exposed directly to the McRAH strategies in action (see **Figure 2**, **Figure 3**, and **Figure 4**).

How do teachers' core instructional strategies now compare to those used immediately following the project?

Comparison of the levels of use from 2004 to 2013 (see **Figure 1**) revealed that teachers were using primary documents, DBQs, images,

Definition of "Doing History"	N
Engaging in the process of the historian Actively engaged in examining documents and drawing conclusions as a historian would do—asking questions; putting multiple evidence in context; coming up with a result/answer/ conclusion to the question; becoming your own historian / Way of thinking when working with documents/text and interpreting / constructing an understanding of history / Ask students to look at images/documents and make connections between time periods/ common patterns/connection to self which leads to motivation and clarity / Asking an informed questions and investigating theories by compiling a variety of sources—secondary and primary (critically analyzing first) / Allowing students to use primary and secondary sources, ask questions, analyze the documents, building arguments supported by evidence / Posing a historical questions; analyzing materials; coming to your own conclusions / Taking uninterpreted historical materials and interpreting them and coming to larger conclusions / historical detective / actively engaged in examining documents and drawing conclusions as a historian would do	10
Making history student led Discover ideas to make it more meaningful/motivating / Being actively involved with history content / Role playing/ simulations / perspective-taking / putting self in the past / history as more like science lab than an English class—documents are what we examine	9
Investigating to come to your own conclusions Answer the mysteries of history, as history is not final / Looking for your own interpretations / Being open to other perspectives / won research / oral history family interviews	6
Don't really use that framework	2
Having an emotional reaction to history / **Being connected/being immersed in history**	1

Figure 4: Definition of "Doing History" used by McRAH participants.

technology resources, doing history activities, and conceptual questions to a greater extent in 2013 than in 2004. Graphic organizers were often used in both cases. Least used were still the counterfactual and narrative approaches. Overall, use of five strategies increased, while use of seven strategies decreased. Of those seven practices, only two decreased by 20% or more, while five decreased by between four and sixteen percent.

How did the teachers' attitudes and concerns about the instructional strategies affect their adoption and sustained use?

The data from 2004 indicated that the majority of teachers felt confident or excited about the use of the following "McRAH Strategies": use of primary documents and DBQs; historical artifact analysis; "doing history" in the classroom; thematic instruction; use of conceptual questions to organize lecture material; use of graphic organizers; and use of images, media, multimedia, and technology. Participants were not as confident about use of counterfactual approaches and narrative approaches including guided imagery for response, although they were giving them a try (see **Figure 5**). In 2004, no strategies were of concern (stage 2) for more than 20% of teachers. Teachers indicated an increase in confidence and excitement about use of the strategies (stages 5 and 6) compared to before the McRAH project. In 2004, nine strategies were rated over stage 4 by 50% of the teachers.

Survey results from 2013 indicated that 50% or more of the teachers now rated their comfort level as confident or excited for all twelve strategies. They were most comfortable with primary documents and DBQs (100% at level 5 or 6), images and technology (93%), and graphic organizers (86%) (see **Figure 5**). Teachers were least comfortable with counterfactual approach, perspective-taking, and community connections, even though they were still rated at least at 57% confident or excited. Overall, the comfort level for eleven of the twelve strategies went up from 2004 to 2013 (see **Figure 5**). The comfort level went down slightly (from 80% to 71%) for only one strategy: use of conceptual questions.

Examining the relationship of the levels of use to the stages of concern reveals that those McRAH strategies most used (LoU) were also those with which teachers felt most comfortable (SoC) (see
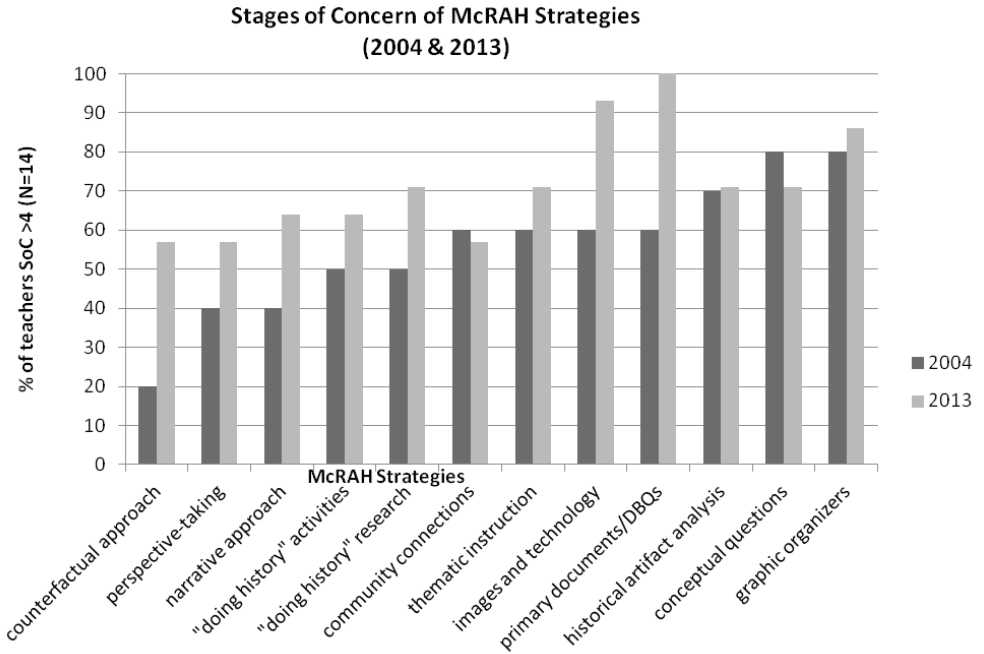
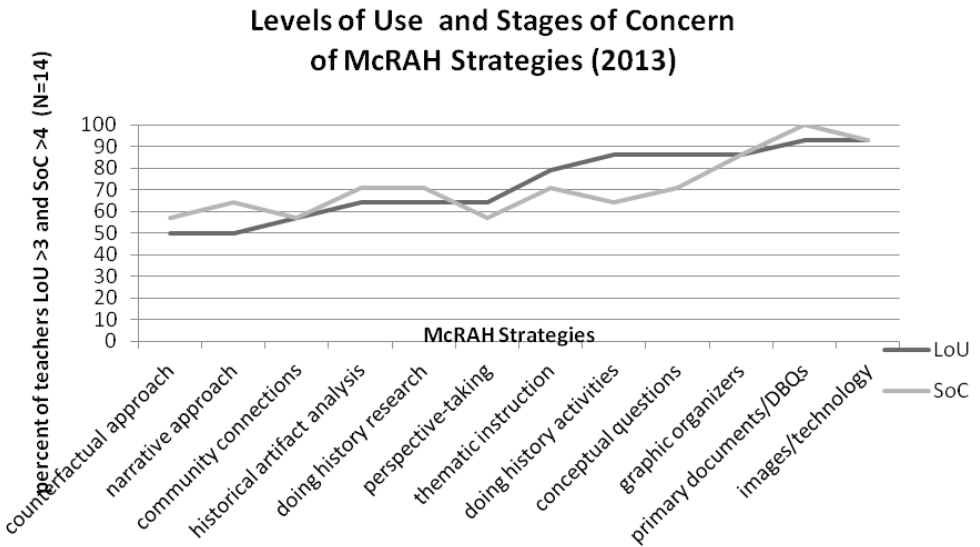**Figure 5**: Stages of Concern of McRAH strategies (2004 and 2013).

Figure 6: Levels of Use and Stages of Concern of McRAH strategies (2013).

Figure 6). For example, primary documents and DBQs, images and technology, and graphic organizers were both most used and had the highest comfort level. The same pattern is evidenced for those strategies least used and with which the teachers were least comfortable: the counterfactual approach. The narrative approach ranked second in LoU and third on SoC, while community connections ranked third on LoU and second on SoC.

What specific elements of the McRAH project most impacted the adoption and sustained use of the instructional strategies?

Based on data from interviews with the teachers in 2013, the biggest change sustained over the ten years was that they were teaching at a higher critical thinking level and more often having their students actively "doing history." This was what was emphasized most in the McRAH project. Teachers indicated that the basic concepts explored during McRAH continued to influence their day-to-day instruction on a positive level. Moreover, these philosophies had become central to the ways in which teachers framed their approaches to curriculum development. Teachers shared comments such as "I love the McRAH strategies. Overall, they make up the core of my teaching practice, and inform the foundation of what I consider to be responsible and authentic history instruction" and "Since participating in the McRAH workshop (was it really 10 years ago?) I have made a conscious effort to incorporate the many hands-on, 'doing history' activities we learned. I routinely use artifacts and analysis sheets to guide students' examination of documents, photos, and objects" (see **Figure 7**).

The most impactful element of the McRAH project on these changes was collaboration with colleagues and like-minded individuals, as reported in interviews. Support, clarification, and validation that teachers were doing the right thing by challenging students and having them "do history" with constructivist practices was another important element cited by teachers as impacting their teaching. Finally, learning from professors who are experts in the field, both history and education, was often cited as a key feature of the McRAH experience (see **Figure 8**).

Overall use of McRAH strategies	N
I do more "doing history" assignments, primary document analysis, and less textbook work than my colleagues who did not participate in McRAH	6
Used as a jumping off point for own interpretation / tweaked / made better	5
Used a variety of strategies for good history teaching—story telling	4
I am ready for the CCSS / not concerned about it	3
Students doing history in embedded in my philosophy of teaching history	2
Becoming more invested in Waukegan	1

Figure 7: Overall use of McRAH strategies.

What part of McRAH caused biggest change in teaching?	N
Collaboration with colleagues/like-minded individuals	7
Support/clarification/validation that I was doing the right thing by challenging students and having them "do history" with constructivist practices	6
How students reacted to the use of the strategies and how they improved and loved becoming more engaged by using the strategies/ the student outcomes improved / the students now like history/ making history "cool" for kids	5
Learning from history professors/experts in the field—both history and education	5
Intensive nature of institute: being able to work in the summer, not during the school year, gave us time to focus, allowed us to immerse ourselves in the process / it taught us a process and philosophy, not just a one-time lesson plan to implement / rethinking the whole process of history teaching	5
CHM workshops/visits	3
Reinvigorating my love of history/history teaching	2

Figure 8: McRAH experience that caused biggest change in teaching.

Conclusions

Sustained Use of Core Instructional Strategies

McRAH strategies use was sustained as demonstrated by an overall large number of teachers routinely using all the strategies ten years after the McRAH project compared to both before and immediately following the project. The most often used strategies were those that are aligned most directly with the core instructional practices of "doing history" that research indicates is the most effective type of history pedagogy. These include analysis of primary documents and images (often video clips and primary documents found online), DBQs and "doing history" activities (such as contextual analysis to question historical interpretations or presenting more than one possible cause for historical events and having students evaluate and present interpretations by using historical fact as evidence for arguments). The students themselves were doing the analysis of the primary documents, usually employing a specific prompt or graphic organizer provided by the teacher, often after the modeling of its use by the teacher. DBQs were used by all the teachers, most often once or twice a semester.

The teachers' definition of "doing history" now included making history student-led by having students directly engage in the process of the historian by investigating sources to come to their own conclusions. This belief had been maintained and strengthened after the project. The increased knowledge of best practices in history pedagogy that had been gained during the project had become even stronger ten years later. The teachers used more "doing history" assignments than their colleagues.

One conclusion about the reported decrease in level of use for seven of the twelve strategies may be an artifact of the wording of the Levels of Use survey. Continued use of a strategy may mean that the teachers had adopted the strategy more routinely, and now saw modifications they were making in it as refinement (Level 5—varying the use of the strategy to increase the impact on students), rather than renewal (Level 7—seeking major modifications of strategies to achieve increased impact on students and explore new goals for self). The numbers show a decrease, but this could actually represent a more sophisticated level of use of the strategies after the ten years of implementation.

One additional interesting conclusion was that teachers in the high-needs school district that was the original partner and formed the first cohort of teachers in the project continued to use the most community and personal connections in their classrooms. This was an important concept stressed during the project as a way to connect students more personally with the history they were studying. The teachers in this district had definitely maintained this approach to their teaching and saw it as a more important connection for their particular students, who are often first-generation Americans.

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Comfort Level with Core Instructional Strategies

The increased comfort level of teachers with the strategies ten years after the McRAH project may have been due to increased practice with the McRAH strategies. Teachers had actually seen how the strategies worked with more groups of students and considered more subtleties in their approaches. A larger number of variables impacting the success of the strategy and a more sophisticated understanding of what success for students with the strategy meant had been developed. This led to increased comfort with the strategies.

Discipline-Specific Professional Development Elements that Contributed to Changes

Conclusions can be drawn about why use of certain strategies was sustained more than others. The strategies most used and maintained were those that were most emphasized from the beginning of the project as core practices in history pedagogy. Often used practices were also those that were easiest to use in the classroom, including those that did not require materials that were harder to obtain, such as historical artifacts. Those strategies with which teachers were most comfortable were also sustained at a higher level of use. Teachers could only make so many changes in practice, and they focused first on those that were emphasized most by historians and teacher educators. They also focused on those that were demonstrated most during the institutes and workshops, such as primary document analysis and conceptual questions. They also focused on changes they could make individually, without interferences from other teachers or administrators in their schools.

Implications and Recommendations

Three basic elements of the McRAH professional development project resulted in the strongest changes in teachers' behaviors (see **Figure 8**). The first key practice was the direct collaboration with historians during the project. The historians modeled the use of the core practices directly with the teachers. One teacher said, "I still refer to my notes and handouts from McRAH. Working with such top-notch professors was certainly one of the highlights of my career."

Secondly, participating directly in hands-on examples of the strategies during pedagogical sessions with teacher educators resulted in a comfort level and deep understanding of the working of these core practices that subsequently led to their sustained use in the teachers' classrooms. Teachers had internalized the McRAH strategies and thought of them as "good history teaching." They saw evidence of success with the historical thinking model based on the historians' and teacher educators' experiences with the processes. The practices had become embedded in their philosophy of history teaching and are used now as a jumping off point for their own interpretation when designing lessons.

Finally, working in collaboration with colleagues supported their comfort level and understanding of the strategies. Teachers felt their McRAH experience enabled them to advance beyond their colleagues in these core practices. Several teachers mentioned that they are comfortable with teaching practices introduced in connection with the Common Core State Standards and are prepared for teaching at this higher critical thinking level because they had learned this in McRAH and have been teaching this way for over ten years. In districts that have promoted and encouraged instructional shifts to align teaching practices to the Common Core standards, McRAH teachers have become leaders among their colleagues. They have been involved in sharing the strategies first initiated in the *TAH* project. This has provided support for a shift in thinking about history teaching for colleagues who had not experienced the professional development project first hand. This may have also further encouraged the participants to continue sustained implementation of the strategies now that larger cultural shifts are taking place in their districts that align with the critical thinking

practices embedded in McRAH. In districts where larger institutional shifts were not taking place, teachers relied more on their own beliefs in the efficacy of this type of instruction to sustain their practices, despite a lack of district support.

For professional development projects attempting to improve history teaching, several recommendations emerge from this study. First, it is important that teachers see a demonstration of the strategies by the historians in the collaboration, in addition to an emphasis on research-based methods demonstrated by teacher educators. Teachers should be given specific experiences with and explanations of the new strategies and how they can be used. Second, it is important to be aware of the beliefs and attitudes teachers have toward the strategies being introduced, and they should be made to feel comfortable with them. In this regard, it is important to understand the developmental nature of the process of adopting new instructional strategies. The changes in beliefs need to precede the changes in behavior in order for those changes to be sustained over a longer period. Third, it is important to include ongoing support for the teachers. The McRAH project included online mentoring and contact, workshops with colleagues throughout the years, classroom observation visits by professors and peers, access to resources, and support for grant applications and dissemination through conference presentations. The author has maintained contact with many of the teachers in the years since the project ended. This contact did not provide continuing professional development, as was the case during the grant period. Therefore, sustained implementation of the strategies can be attributed to the grant period interventions. However, the contact encouraged some participants to become mentors for pre-service candidates at McRAH's college partner in subsequent years.

Overall, a model for professional development in history education that is structured around four elements is recommended. Based on the conclusions and implications above, professional development should include a focus on the "4Ps": 1) partnerships; 2) preparedness and planning; 3) pedagogical content knowledge; and 4) practical applications. Details of this model can be found in chapter nine of *The Teaching American History Project: Lessons for History Educators and Historians*.[59] In terms of partnerships, appropriate and clearly defined roles for each partner in terms of collaboration

should be built into the design. Include follow-up activities for the partners, such as classroom observations with mentor feedback from peers, faculty, or both. In terms of preparedness, training for those not already comfortable with working in school settings or the specific context of the district with which the project is partnering should be included. Projects should include activities that build on pedagogical content knowledge including both history content and teaching strategies. Within the area of history content, both historical understandings and historical thinking skills should be included. Finally, it is important to build in opportunities for teachers to apply new knowledge and skills directly with practical application projects in their own classrooms.

Undertaking a professional development project in history teaching such as McRAH without the benefit of further federal funding will be a difficult process, but the benefits to the teachers are worth the efforts to create such an opportunity. When teachers comment, ten years after the project, that this is still the most influential professional development experience of their careers, the implications are clear. As one teacher noted:

> [T]he thing I like most about being a participant is that I was able to start off learning really strong techniques and strategies in my first years of teaching. Those skills put me so far ahead of my colleagues in the district. I was so advanced that my district only a few years ago, started to require as standard teaching practice, many of the things that I have been doing since the beginning.

An original cohort teacher commented:

> McRAH taught me two very important teaching principles: that interesting, thorough lesson planning in which the kids are constantly busy makes it much easier to manage a classroom, and that in order for learning to take place, there must be constant, direct interaction between the student and whatever text is being analyzed. Those two ideas have informed my teaching for more than ten years now.

Continued implementation of the McRAH core instructional principles, and the professional development model that surrounded their creation and use, should be expanded both through in-service education for more classroom teachers and through pre-service education for future history teachers. Although alternative sources of funding must be sought, having some research-based evidence of the

efficacy of these project could help gain funding from sources beyond the U.S. Department of Education. Another recommendation that would be effective without additional funding is to incorporate these core instructional strategies into the pre-service teacher preparation programs for future history teachers. Organizing the curriculum of a history methods course around these core practices would benefit the next generation of history teachers and their future students.[60]

In summary, the most important factor that led to sustained changes in teachers' core instructional practices was changing teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the efficacy of having a student-centered classroom where students are "doing history." Once the teachers adopted a comfort level with this basic premise, they were willing to work in collaboration with historians and teacher educators to implement specific core instructional practices for effective and engaging history teaching. After continued practice and success with the strategies, teachers have sustained these practices that are now based on their own evidence of success.

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Appendix A: McRAH Instructional Strategies

Model Collaboration: Rethinking American History (McRAH) Instructional Strategies
1. Use of Primary Documents and Document-Based Questions (DBQs)
2. Historical artifact analysis
3. Use of "doing history" classroom activities (contextual analysis to question historical interpretations; present more than one possible cause for historical events and have students evaluate; use historical fact as evidence for arguments; student presentations of interpretations)
4. Use of "doing history" research assignments (where historical interpretations are questioned, students research for facts and counterfacts to build an argument for why historical events took place as they did)
5. Thematic instruction including variety of textual resources
6. Use of conceptual questions to organize lecture material
7. Use of graphic organizers, interactive note-taking, and maps to develop main concepts
8. Use of Images/Media/Multimedia/Technology as sources for historical interpretation
9. Use of counterfactual approach (What would have happened if…?)
10. Use of narrative approaches including guided imagery for response
11. Perspective-taking exercises: role-plays, scenarios, inclusive subjects and conditions, present-minded responses put in historical context, impact of individuals on history
12. Use of familiar, familial, and community connections to propose historical links

Appendix B: Levels of Use

Levels of Use (LoU) *		
0	Nonuse	Little or no knowledge, no involvement or use of strategy
1	Orientation	Have explored or is exploring the value and demands of using the strategy
2	Preparation	Preparing for first use of the strategy
3	Mechanical Use	Focusing most effort on the short-term, day-to-day use of the strategy; somewhat disjointed and superficial use
4	Routine	Use of the strategy is stabilized; few if any changes are being made in ongoing use
5	Refinement	Varying the use of the strategy to increase the impact on students
6	Integration	Combining own efforts to use the strategy with related activities of colleagues
7	Renewal	Seeking major modifications of strategies to achieve increase impact on students and explore new goals for self

* Adapted from: Procedures for Adopting Educational Innovations/CBAM Project, R&D Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas at Austin, 1974.

Appendix C: Stages of Concern

Stages of Concern (SoC) *	
1	Negative
2	Concerned
3	Indifferent
4	Tentative
5	Confident
6	Excited

* Adapted from: Procedures for Adopting Educational Innovations/CBAM Project, R&D Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas at Austin, 1974.

Appendix D: Teacher Interview Protocol

Teacher Interview Protocol (2013)

1.   What primary sources are used in your classroom and how?

2.   How often do you use primary sources?

3.   How often are document-based questions (DBQ's) used and how?

4.   What historical artifacts do you use and how?

5.   What does "doing history" mean to you?

6.   How do your students "do history" in your classrooms?

7.   How would you characterize your overall curriculum design in terms of organizational structure (i.e., thematic or chronological?) Why and how was this decision made?

8.   Describe any images, media, multimedia, or technology that you incorporate into your classroom.

9.   What community connections are you making in your classroom?

10. What ideas have you shared with colleagues in your school and how? How were they received?

11. Summarize the changes in your teaching practices that have taken place in your classroom since McRAH ended.

12. How would you evaluate your teaching strategies now, compared to fall of 2001 (pre-McRAH)?

13. What specifically caused the biggest change in your teaching strategies over the last 10 years?

14. What elements of your participation in McRAH affected you most?