

# Using Disciplinary Literacy to Develop Coherence in History Teacher Education: The Clinical Rounds Project

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AMERICANS HAVE LONG BEEN CONCERNED about the quality of history instruction offered in the public schools, and, consequently, by the ways we prepare our teachers of history. Every generation has pointed to some crisis in history education, and then placed part of the blame on the education of history teachers. For example, many nineteenth-century educators thought history instruction was dismal, “convinced,” as G. Stanley Hall argued, “that no subject so widely taught is, on the whole, taught so poorly, almost sure to create a distaste for historical study—perhaps forever.”<sup>1</sup> For these reformers, the heart of the problem was the number of unprepared teachers using ineffective methods that turned history into the driest of school subjects. “The high educational value of history is too great,” Hall explained, “to be left to teachers who merely hear recitations, keeping the finger on the place in the text-book, and only asking the questions conveniently printed for them in the margin or the back of the book.”<sup>2</sup>

Present-day reformers worried about the “crisis” caused by the death of the Teaching American History grant program might be surprised by the constancy of the concerns over the “very superficial” system of teacher preparation, one that lacked “the life-giving contact with a variety of material, including [historical] sources” and kept teachers from the historical knowledge and pedagogical skills needed to “stimulate the

pupils.”<sup>3</sup> In his analysis of fifty years of American worries about history teaching, Michael Henry found that, despite reformers efforts, “critics have shared almost identical concerns about history” in our schools. Reformers regularly attacked the “combination of poor textbooks and the age-old problem of inadequate teacher training,” thus giving certain immutability about the view of history in the schools.<sup>4</sup> Or, as one reviewer noted in comparing reformers’ views in the 1890s with those of the 1990s, “what goes around, comes around.”<sup>5</sup>

However, recognizing that a condition has a long history need not minimize current concerns, but rather it enables us to look beyond the events of the moment (e.g., the end of the Teaching American History program) to situate them in a larger and more nuanced context. Such is the case with ongoing attempts to reform history teacher education.

By the end of World War I, most teacher preparation programs involved a mix of three factors, each considered essential for learning how to teach: content knowledge, pedagogical methods, and practical experience.<sup>6</sup> Over the years, reformers have focused on one or the other of these factors, arguing for its importance as the most crucial element in preparing good teachers. Thus, some reforms have argued for more content knowledge in teacher preparation and have sought policies to ensure prospective teachers spend more time studying history with historians.<sup>7</sup> Others have argued that content knowledge, while necessary, is not sufficient to design and enact effective and interesting lessons. Teachers, therefore, need to devote more attention to their pedagogical work in schools of education or with master history teachers.<sup>8</sup> Still other reforms and reformers hold that teaching is a practice best learned *in* practice, and thus argue for more practical experiences in classrooms with students; indeed, some even urge bypassing education schools entirely.

In this article, I report on a different approach to reforming history teacher education, one that begins with a different premise regarding its weaknesses. While more content, pedagogical, and practical knowledge could certainly contribute to better-prepared teachers, the central problem, I think, resides in the compartmentalized and loosely coupled experiences that define the system of teacher preparation.<sup>9</sup> Most teacher education programs are collections of largely unrelated university courses and field experiences happening in different spaces (i.e., history seminars, education classes, and K-12 classrooms) for different purposes (i.e., to learn history, to learn to teach history, and to observe history classrooms) and led by people who do not work with one another (i.e., history professors, education professors, and cooperating teachers) and may never have even met. Although each contributes to preparing effective teachers, each does so in episodic ways that requires the learner—the prospective teacher—to

link the different educative spaces, people, and activities that make up professional training. Without explicit connections and overt actions to build upon and develop the various experiences, concepts, and discourses, the person *least* equipped to do so has the job of coordinating these into a meaningful and useful whole.

Since 2005, Elizabeth Moje and I have been engaged in a project to create a more coherent and cohesive program to prepare secondary teachers at the University of Michigan, a project we call the Clinical Rounds Project.<sup>10</sup> Central to this effort has been our use of *disciplinary literacy* to build connections and enhance prospective teachers' capacity to use reading and writing to teach history to a range of learners across a range of contexts. What began as an explicit, three-semester focus on helping prospective teachers learn to use the historian's specialized knowledge and literacy practices has mandated a number of programmatic reforms, each reducing significantly the fragmentation that preservice teachers face.

The Rounds Project thus far has centered mostly on improving the undergraduate teacher education in history and the social sciences, though we have begun to extend our efforts into the science, math, and English language arts areas. Our program is relatively small, certifying approximately 400 secondary students per year in all content areas. The vast majority of the students graduate with a degree from the College of Literature, Sciences, and the Arts, majoring, for example, in history or a social science while earning a teaching certificate through the School of Education.

In this essay, I describe our decision to make adolescent and disciplinary literacy central to the work of preparing teachers, explain what this has meant for our program, and offer a bit about what we are learning from this work.

### **Adolescent Literacy**

This project grew from larger data-driven concerns about the school-based literacy practices of young people at the secondary and post-secondary level.<sup>11</sup> There is growing evidence that “[w]e are failing to create highly literate, college and career ready adults with the literacy skill sets that qualify them for employment in the new global knowledge economy.”<sup>12</sup> The data is daunting and increasingly shapes professional conversations and policy, such as the Common Core Standards.<sup>13</sup> High school graduates do not seem to be prepared for post-secondary work, whether it is work they undertake at college or in the labor force. For example, more than eight million adolescent students read below grade level, while fewer than a third meet National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) standards for reading “proficiency” and less than five percent can read at an advanced

level.<sup>14</sup> About twenty-five percent of high school graduates lack the skills needed to take introductory-level college writing courses and only about thirty-four percent of high school graduates are ready for college.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence, American universities continue to increase the number of remedial courses for students who arrive unprepared for the quantity and quality of the work required in college. Over a third of the entering university and community college students take these courses, costing over \$1.4 billion per year in just the community colleges.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, industry spends billions each year to strengthen the writing skills of entry-level workers.<sup>17</sup> As has been widely reported, U.S. adolescents rank among the lowest in the world in international assessments, dropping dramatically from their relatively strong showing as elementary students. Despite national attention to literacy in lower grades, by almost every indicator, the literacy of our adolescents has remained stunningly stable—that is, has remained quite low—for over forty years.<sup>18</sup>

### **Increasing Text Complexity While Decreasing Literacy Instruction**

As a partial explanation for these trends, scholars of adolescent literacy point to two interconnected patterns in schooling, patterns that are important for both secondary teachers and teacher educators to recognize and then act upon.

First, the literacy demands on adolescents increase as students advance through school. Reading and writing in middle and high schools are and should be more demanding. As Moje explains, the demands are greater “in part because the texts are longer and more complex, in part because the expectations for prior knowledge are so high, in part because the concepts become more abstract and complex.”<sup>19</sup> In addition to the length and conceptual complexity, students read across a number of domains such as math, the sciences, history, and the social sciences. Each form of knowledge has a distinctive set of “big ideas,” of warrants, and of ways to represent ideas and evidence and thus requires students to navigate across different genres and discourse communities.<sup>20</sup> Comprehension of complex, disciplinary texts requires more than recognizing and understanding the vocabulary, but also familiarity with the “rules” of the disciplinary game that produced the text or the knowledge embedded in the texts.<sup>21</sup>

Secondary teachers, most of whom have both familiarity and interest in the texts they assign, often misunderstand and underestimate the comprehension challenges their students face. Using an example drawn from teaching high school students, Moje and Speyer identified four different yet interconnected skills or funds of knowledge that readers use to make sense of complicated texts: semantic, disciplinary, discursive, and

pragmatic knowledge. Adding these to students' interest or motivation to do reading or writing in secondary content areas illuminates the differences in kind as well as in degree of difficulty that students face as they progress from fourth grade through college, differences that call for formal and explicit instruction to mediate the challenges.<sup>22</sup>

Ironically—or, rather, tragically—just as the expectations for reading and writing in content areas grows, the amount and quality of intentional literacy instruction declines and does so in almost direct relation to the increase in the cognitive challenges secondary students face. The failure for secondary schools to provide literacy instruction to meet the challenges students face is the second pattern contributing to a “crisis” in secondary education. Research and experience suggests that by the time students have reached high school or college, most content-area teachers expect them to be able to gather information from the reading material given and, therefore, spend very little time teaching how to read and write in their disciplines. Research and policy studies hold that most students rarely get serious, sustained, intentional, and overt reading or writing instruction beyond seventh grade, let alone literacy instruction tied to the domains in which secondary students must read and write.<sup>23</sup> The culture of secondary schools, with its disciplinary divisions of labor, credits, certification, territorial space (e.g., science wing, social studies area), and the “coverage” demands of content-rich standards have conspired to enable secondary teachers to “off-load” responsibility for teaching reading and writing to teachers in earlier grades or to English language arts departments.

While the research points to these trends in all subject areas—math, sciences, and the social sciences—as a historian and veteran teacher of secondary history (twenty-six years), I think these two patterns are particularly relevant to history teaching. Why?

First, historians and history teachers have long recognized that studying the past is impossible without the use of text, broadly conceived. By definition, historians study events and processes that no longer exist in the present, and thus must work with the “residue” of the past.<sup>24</sup> As Collingwood and others have argued, it is historians' questions that turn the residue of the past into evidence or texts that historians must read, interpret, and analyze to create narratives, explanations, or arguments:

[Evidence] is not ready-made historical knowledge, to be swallowed and regurgitated by the historian's mind. Everything is evidence which the historian can use as evidence...It must be something here and now perceptible...And of all the things perceptible to him there is not one which he might not conceivably use as evidence on some question, if he came to it with the right question in mind...The whole perceptible world, then, is potentially and in principle evidence to the historian.<sup>25</sup>

With such a range of potential texts—“the whole perceptible world”—history, particularly over the past fifty years, has become arguably the most inclusive discipline, moving well beyond the written documents that defined and limited previous historical studies.<sup>26</sup> “Doing” history requires historians to work not only with primary and secondary print sources, but also with artifacts, objects, and data, each demanding comprehension, analysis, and evaluation.

Such variety also shapes history in the secondary schools, even if all the student reads is a tertiary text, such as the history textbook. Open almost any chapter in any American textbook published in the past thirty years or so, and you will find a smorgasbord of different types of texts for history students to read, interpret, and use in making sense of the past. In addition to the main print text, most publishers fill chapters with pictures, graphics, data charts, maps, primary source inserts, narrative or problem-framing sidebars, photographs, political cartoons, as well as primary and secondary sources. Whatever means the author of the textbook employed to select and position these other texts on the page, it is left to the student-reader to discover. Rarely does the textbook even refer to the various units on the page, let alone help students understand them. Such “inconsiderate” text forces on the *learner* the task of providing necessary background knowledge and skills to find the purpose and meaningful connections absent in the text.<sup>27</sup>

One source of the difficulty students have in constructing meaning is that their textbooks often lack coherence and explanation and some unrealistic levels of background knowledge—features that have been given the label “inconsiderateness”...For many students, inconsiderate features of a textbook’s content inhibit comprehension and the textbook’s authority causes students to attribute these difficulties to their own inadequacies. To avoid blaming themselves, they may disengage from the reading process.<sup>28</sup>

History teachers must learn, then, to add to context and content to help students make sense of how the textbook’s features—such as maps, sidebars, primary sources, and pictures—were added in all likelihood to assist and motivate the reader. General reading strategies, such as “Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review” (SQ3R), might help students use what the textbook overtly provides, such as headers and bolded words. However, generalized strategies are unlikely to get at what the author assumes young readers of history can see for themselves. Teachers then must be attuned to both the background knowledge a textbook assumes students have *and* to the background knowledge their students actually do bring with them to reading the textbook.

Even more complicated and challenging for the students are the range of “authentic” texts that history teachers seem to be using to teach or assess

history. Much has been written about the challenges students face in reading primary sources, the gaps between expert and novice approaches to primary texts, and the need for teachers to teach the heuristics that historians use to situate and corroborate texts. Likely a byproduct of the growth of the document-based assessment, many teachers now employ at least some mnemonic to teach students how to source, contextualize, and corroborate primary sources as historians do, something Wineburg first articulated almost thirty years ago.<sup>29</sup> However, there is very little evidence in teaching materials, resource books, or instructional guides that history teachers explicitly teach how to read political cartoons, photographs, art, data charts, or any of the other forms of historical evidence used in “doing” history in the classroom.

Consider, for example, the different demands on readers from the texts I used as a high school teacher to teach my ninth grade world history students about the fourteenth-century pandemic of plague. Like many world history teachers, I used translated excerpts of print primary sources (e.g., Alphonse of Cordoba’s explanation of the source of disease, the Papal Bull of 1348, sections from the *Decameron*); secondary sources (e.g., excerpts from *Plagues and People* by McNeill); pictures of objects used by historical actors (e.g., picture masks used by doctors); contemporary artists representations (e.g., pictures of Danse Macabre, stained glass windows, woodcut of burning of Jews of Strasbourg); demographic tables of population growth and decline (e.g., Levi Braci’s table of population, county death rates); maps (e.g., trade routes and the spread of plague, Janet Abu-Lughod’s map of interconnected zones from *Before European Hegemony*); and graphs of data (e.g., price of wheat in Europe from 1300-1400, wages for labor from 1300-1400).<sup>30</sup> Teaching my high school students to source, contextualize, or corroborate these texts did not fully capture the reading support students needed to understand, for example, what the economic graphs of wheat prices revealed about life before, during, and after the pandemic. How complicated would it be for students to interpret the stained glass images of the Danse Macabre or to understand McNeill’s argument concerning micro-organisms in Afroeurasia?<sup>31</sup> In a previous study of this unit, I described some of the challenges in teaching students to analyze such texts, but also pointed to the assumptions secondary students made about their learning to “do” history directly from past sources, and how they ignored my role in selecting, editing, and preparing these sources for their use—essentially missing the instructional subtext.<sup>32</sup>

I offer these examples only to suggest some of the challenges that secondary students face in studying history given the types of sources appearing in textbooks and in classrooms, and to speculate about the type of instruction teachers need to master to help their students make sense

of what they have to read and write. Like other content areas, as students move from elementary classrooms into secondary history classrooms, they encounter longer texts with more complex sentence structures, more domain-specific abstractions, specialized disciplinary vocabulary, and vocabulary that captures both procedural (e.g., corroborate, contextualize, periodize) and substantive (e.g., Columbian Exchange, Taiping Rebellion) knowledge. In addition, history students encounter a full range of texts, including some they would typically find in other courses, such as math, science, or English language arts. In this essay, I do not take up the challenges secondary teachers face in helping students “produce” rather than “reproduce” historical knowledge (e.g., write narratives, explanations, or arguments) except to note that teachers must also explicitly teach formal historical writing (e.g., narratives, causal explanations, consequential explanations, arguments) and informal writing (e.g., note-making, marking up sources), including the various formats used to represent historical understanding (e.g., essays, posters, *PowerPoint*, exhibits).

As Wineburg eloquently explained, historical thinking, in all of its manifestations, is an “unnatural act” and, therefore, if teachers want students to acquire such habits of mind, teachers must teach such thinking and thinking practices—and this includes practices connected to reading and writing.<sup>33</sup> Literacy instruction in history classrooms should not be an add-on, but rather is inherently connected to studying the past. The responsibility for teaching how to read and write history comes packaged with the responsibility for teaching history. Therefore, secondary teacher education must assume the explicit responsibility for helping teachers acquire the necessary knowledge, practices, and dispositions for meeting that responsibility.

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

Broadly considered, there are three implications for preparing secondary teachers. First, preservice teachers need to recognize the challenges their students face in using historical texts, including textbooks and lectures, to learn history. Second, they must develop practices to help secondary students meet these literacy challenges, such as selecting and preparing diverse texts; teaching secondary students how to read, use, or produce discipline-specific texts; and assessing both their students’ progress and their own instruction. Finally, given the culture of secondary schools, teachers must also develop an understanding of their responsibility in making history lessons literacy lessons, not just for the struggling readers, but for all their students. Thus, in preparing teachers to teach secondary content, the teacher education program must integrate ideas, dispositions, and practices of domain-specific



reading and writing in the service of learning that content. Every lesson, therefore, is in its own way a lesson in disciplinary literacy.

What has this meant for our program and practices in preparing teachers of history? First, it encouraged us to identify the practices that entail domain-specific literacy and, then, ways to frame those practices to help beginning teachers understand and use them in their teaching. For example, selecting and analyzing texts for teachers to use with students is a quite complicated activity. It requires teachers to understand the content *and* their students' understanding of that content to identify texts that support, extend, or challenge students' thinking. Teachers have to learn to "see" the challenges for their students embedded in the text (such as structure, vocabulary, and assumed background knowledge), features that could make a text inconsiderate. Then, they must frame instruction to help students establish the purpose for using the text and develop necessary knowledge and skills to work with texts.

Of course, this work is difficult. It is hard for novice teachers to learn to read a text from their students' perspectives, and to design and then enact instruction providing the students access to the texts. Even when one learns to do this for a specific reader, it is very difficult to do when teaching many classes filled with many readers across the school day. For teacher educators, it is also very difficult to teach these practices and dispositions in the limited time that we have (three semesters, in our case) and the limited number of courses that make up the professional program (essentially five courses, three field experiences, and three seminars). Such cannot be done in one literacy course or one methods course, but rather requires a spiraling and coherent curriculum in which preservice teachers revisit the basic ideas and practices repeatedly, building upon them until they have grasped the full formal apparatus that goes with them and are able with and, eventually, without supports to use them to teach.<sup>34</sup>

The fragmented system of teacher education will not support such a spiraling curriculum. As a consequence of our goal to improve our preservice teachers' practices and given the constraints of time and resources, Moje and I began to slowly tinker with the existing system. We began by making more explicit connections between Moje's literacy course in the first semester of the professional program and my methods course in the second term. We sat in each other's classes to understand what the students were learning. We began to think about ways to explicitly use the methods course to build on Moje's literacy class, and ways to use the literacy course both to launch practices on which methods would depend and to foreshadow what will follow subsequently.

Now this hardly led to a major revision in either course, but it did lead to explicitly connecting one course to the other for the students. For example,

both our syllabi now reference each other's courses, and the assignments refer appropriately to what came before or will follow. The need to do this came home in our second semester of working together. As usual, I gave my students their baseline assignment that involved designing a history lesson using two texts. Having sat in the literacy course the semester before, I had a new understanding and appreciation for ways the preservice teachers in my course could be analyzing texts and students in designing instruction. However, after reading their assignments, I could see no evidence that they had learned much in their literacy class. The teacher education students made almost no mention of the challenges that learners might face in using the textbook or the primary source provided. Nor did they employ any of the heuristics or tools that they successfully used in the previous term. Surprised and curious, I simply returned their papers ungraded, and told them to replace my name with Moje's, explaining that she would help grade these and that they could take a few minutes to make any modifications they wanted in the assignment.

Almost magically, what they learned came flooding back. The students rapidly used what they understood about analyzing texts, context, and reader, and employed discipline-specific language to frame instruction. When asked, my students explained that since I did not specifically use the language they used last term and did not cast the assignment as a text analysis assignment, they did not understand that I wanted them to use what they had learned. One student even wondered if "using Professor Moje's ideas was plagiarism," asking, was it "ok?"

It became clear that simply extending our understanding to build on each other's courses would not be enough to develop the skills we thought were necessary for our preservice teachers to become well-started beginning teachers. Thus, what seemed like a modest reform at the outset—to use literacy to link some activities across a few courses—led to a restructuring that connected the people, spaces, activities, and language the program used to prepare secondary teachers of history.

In what follows, I offer a brief description of some the modifications we made to the professional program. Hardly inclusive, these should illustrate the key features of our project. It is not intended as a history of our reforms or as a substantive claim about either teacher learning or the impact of the program.

### *Identifying and Assessing Competencies or High-Leverage Practices*

We began our work with research on what our preservice teachers were experiencing and learning in our program. To document their learning, we developed an assessment system that began by identifying existing instructional competencies, ideas, attitudes, and practices taught

at different points in the current program and using research to suggest areas either missing or underdeveloped. The system of assessment was for all students in the program, not just history/social science preservice teachers, and it included research-based attitudinal and dispositions inventory, performance assessments, videos of teaching, and a series of in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of our students. These assessments enabled us to understand how our prospective teachers were developing through our program, and allowed us to develop realistic indicators for preservice teachers' knowledge and skills. Subsequently, through the effort of the Rounds Project team of instructors and graduate students, we have transformed this into a set of domain-specific competencies/high-leverage practices. These competencies and associated rubrics have moved beyond just data gathering, as we have started to use these to assess and monitor students across all areas of the program. Clustered in eight areas, these competencies/high-leverage practices include using disciplinary and pedagogical understanding to select and prepare texts, organizing instruction around historical concepts and intellectual problems, soliciting and using students thinking, providing productive feedback to secondary students, and differentiating instruction.

### *Creating Disciplinary Cohorts*

Before this project, we required all secondary content majors (i.e., history, social science, science, math, English, physical education, and music) to take the same “content literacy” course. After our initial assessments and piloting work with two cohorts of history/social science and one cohort of math preservice teachers, we transformed this course to focus exclusively on literacy instruction in the separate disciplines. This structural change improved our ability to make more explicit connections between work in our students' major field, literacy and learning theory, instructional practice, professional courses, and their field-based experiences in secondary classrooms. Thus, the change encouraged curricular modifications in the literacy and methods courses, as well as the related field experiences.

For example, consider the high-leverage practice of selecting, preparing, and using texts (e.g., primary and secondary sources, textbooks). As noted above, teachers must be able to read the texts they assign—including the textbook—with their students in mind to identify challenging vocabulary, complicated text structure, implied or explicit purposes, possible seductive detail and distracting subtexts, and background knowledge needed to make sense of the text. This demands that teachers give a thoughtful, pedagogical reading of the texts *and* a thoughtful, pedagogical reading of their students before designing and teaching a lesson using texts. This “bifocal” process of keeping one eye on the text and the other on the students is difficult

even for veteran teachers, let alone novices. To learn to do this well requires discipline-specific understanding of disciplinary texts *and* a pedagogical understanding of the domain-specific challenges learners face, such as those Wineburg has illuminated in his work. It also demands that teachers can use their understandings and experiences to design, enact, and modify instruction. The cohorted course in literacy enabled the instructor, therefore, to focus more time, activities, and experiences on the discipline-specific pedagogical and literacy issues teachers might encounter as well as productive, specific pedagogical moves to meet those challenges.

However, learning to “really” do such a complicated instructional task is hardly a one-semester project. It requires structured, intentional, and specific practice over time in different settings, with different texts, with different students. With the new cohorted structured and new links across semesters, university courses, and the field (I will describe more below), teaching this task became a developmental, shared, programmatic job, and not simply the responsibility of the literacy course during the first semester. Programmatically, we started to see this as a developing competency that takes place over at least three terms. In the first term, preservice teachers *begin* the process of learning how to analyze texts in their disciplines, how to learn about their students’ literacy practices and background knowledge, and how to alter instruction using such knowledge. After cohorting the literacy course by discipline, the preservice teachers entered the second semester and their methods course with a deeper understanding and more skills in designing instruction using historical texts. This enabled—required, actually—the methods instructor to develop new or to modify existing assignments and field experiences to build upon and add to these understanding and developing pedagogical practices.

### *Establishing Explicit Programmatic Coherence Focused on Learning in the Disciplines*

As discussed above, early in our work, we explicitly linked the concepts and assignments of the disciplinary literacy course in the first semester (Moje) and the content methods course in the second semester (Bain). In subsequent terms, we modified assignments to build upon each other, linked course websites, and re-purposed and re-used course readings. Across all the courses in the professional sequence, we established a system of “hand-overs” modeled on the medical practice of formally handing-over information to new hospital shifts of physicians and nurses about patients with whom they will be working. When a course in our project ends, the instructor creates documents discussing the progress, strengths, and weaknesses of the cohort, and “hands it over” to the next set of instructors.

Moje and I meet weekly with instructors working with all the history/social science cohorts. This involves instructors (graduate student instructors, lecturers, and clinical faculty) who teach in five different courses (literacy, methods, field courses) across the three semesters in the program. Meeting across courses, semesters, and cohorts enable all to consider and understand programmatic trajectories, sequences, and learning progressions, while collaboratively working on curriculum and problems of professional practice.

### *Educational Rotations and Rounds*

Given the problem that teacher education programs face in locating effective field classrooms where preservice teachers can see and have the opportunity to work on the practices they are learning, we experimented with “teaching rotations.” Modeled on the medical rotations where interns rotate through different specialties, we started to rotate our preservice teachers through multiple school sites and classrooms to focus on specific high-leverage practices of teaching history. Without adding to the six hours the undergraduate preservice teachers spend in area classrooms each week, we restructured the time, the tasks, and the opportunities they have to work with teachers on specific practices essential to teaching history. Thus, preservice teachers move in groups of three to four to area classrooms to work on the high-leverage instructional practices with veteran teachers who we carefully selected to model a particular aspect of effective teaching.<sup>35</sup> In the first semester, preservice history teachers, all undergraduates, complete rotations focused on (a) selecting and using texts of instruction, (b) planning for instruction, (c) assessing and learning from students, and (d) developing student writing. In the second semester rotations, they integrate these components around (e) teaching concepts using multiple texts and (f) constructing and using different tools to assess secondary students’ learning. Further, over these two terms, preservice teachers move across a wide range of instructional settings, including public and independent middle and high schools in urban, ex-urban, and suburban school settings. The rotations focus on the competencies then explicitly link experiences in the university classroom with the field, as well as enabling preservice teachers to work on important practices in five different classrooms in five different school settings before taking on a full semester of student teaching.

I have only captured a few of the programmatic changes as we integrated disciplinary literacy more fully into and across the program. There are many more important modifications. For example, we also changed the discourse practices. We no longer refer to the people who work with our students as “cooperating teachers,” but rather as “attending teachers.” The change

signaled the need for teachers to intervene in real time when preservice teachers work with secondary students, much the way attending physicians would never let an intern perform a medical procedure incorrectly, waiting to debrief afterwards (we also refer to preservice teachers as “teaching interns” for similar reasons). In the last two years, we have begun “Grand Rounds,” a program where all the members of the community—our preservice teachers, our instructors, and our attending teachers—meet to work on a problem of practice, such as the challenge of planning a year of history instruction or leading discussions around controversial issues.

This short description captures some of the iterative and incremental reforms that we created to build bridges and create programmatic through lines. From the beginning, each change either triggered another opportunity to improve our practice or surfaced some disconnect or obstacle previously invisible. For example, locating or preparing “effective” history or social science teachers by necessity became more focused and specific to the task and site in which the preservice teachers would work. The general existing procedures for locating classrooms in which preservice teachers could observe and maybe teach a lesson for a semester no longer served us at all. The program now had to locate attending teachers sufficiently skilled in a specified practice (e.g., assessing students using or producing historical texts) or at least willing to work on the practice with preservice teachers. In addition, the attending teachers needed to be open to having two or three groups of preservice teachers rotate through to work in their secondary classroom.

These new field placement challenges, though, were compensated by anticipated advantages. The program needed fewer total placements because of the ways the Rounds Project grouped preservice students and because we “re-used” teachers in the course of a semester. Further, as attending teachers worked on the same task with the preservice teachers multiple times in one term, the attending teachers developed a deeper understanding of what we were trying to accomplish.

Using disciplinary literacy, then, as a unifying conceptual construct has allowed us to engage in the same kinds of navigation called for in disciplinary pedagogy itself; that is, as history teacher educators, we navigate across disciplinary boundaries, physical and social spaces, and discourse communities as we talk with historians, history teachers, literacy teachers, history educators, and literacy educators.

## **Conclusion**

As the assessment and competency system makes evident, we are documenting what we are learning, and have been from the outset. We

record weekly meetings and use video to capture preservice teachers working in the field and even, on occasion, to capture an instructor working in the field with preservice teachers. We have been using these records to make adjustments in curriculum, structure, assignments, and assessment tools. While project team members have produced numerous conference papers for a range of professional organizations (e.g., American Historical Association, International Reading Association, American Educational Research Association), a few publications, and one dissertation study, we have not to date worked through enough of the data to make substantive claims about the impact of these reforms on preservice teachers or instructors. However, I can comment on a few of the changes we are seeing in our students' dispositions and practices.

First, there seems to be a change in the sense of responsibility our preservice teachers assume for using literacy to teach historical content. At the outset of the program, most candidates do not think that teaching students to read and write was the job of a secondary teacher of history. Like many secondary teachers, most of our preservice teachers enter the program thinking that secondary students should already be able to read, especially read the textbook and primary sources, and be able to write short essays. Further, they think that developing such "basic" skills was the responsibility of secondary students' previous teachers, particularly English language arts teachers. However, by mid-way through the program, most preservice teachers assume responsibility for working on literacy with their secondary students using historical texts, understanding their role as a teacher in selecting and making texts accessible, and preparing students to encounter challenging texts.

Assuming responsibility does not mean, however, that they have mastered the skills needed to take on such instructional tasks. Indeed, it seems to heighten their concerns about the tools at their disposal and, appropriately, has also heightened our efforts to assist them in developing their skills even further. For example, across their literacy and methods courses and their fieldwork, preservice teachers regularly use historical problems and essential questions to frame instruction and establish purpose. Most report that they see the value of historical problems to hook secondary students in standards-based instruction, to establish purpose, and to build coherence. Yet when they try to do so "on their own" in student teaching, they often fall short. Sometimes the hooking activity is too successful and the preservice teacher fails to bring the secondary students around to the larger historical issue. At other times, they design a problem that is too intellectually thin and thus too easily answered, making subsequent historical study moot. We are working on this, having added "starter units" that teachers might employ with larger "transportable" problems.

Second, compared to previous cohorts, there is far less fragmentation and compartmentalization across and within the learning experiences. One source of evidence has been the end-of-term memos preservice teachers write to their “future selves,” identifying and reflecting upon the things they want to remember to use when they have their own classroom and to continue to work on as they move through the program. We are seeing increasing references to practices preservice teachers have been explicitly working upon across the different semesters, courses, and instructional sites in both the university and secondary classroom. For example, consider the way this preservice teacher’s memo about the importance of setting purpose or establishing a motivating intellectual problem makes connections between the literacy and methods courses and to fieldwork with three Clinical Rounds attending teachers:

One way to get students engaged with the material is through purpose setting as we learned in 402 [ED 402: Disciplinary Literacy] and then again in 432 [ED 432: History/ Social Science Methods]. Purpose setting provides the students with a reason to learn the material beyond knowing it for the test. This includes making the information relevant to students’ lives, using questions, and keeping the class pace up. Mr. Scott sets his purpose for the day with a “Do Now” on the chalkboard each morning that presents students with a journal topic associated with what they will be studying that day. For example, when they were studying the Spanish-American war the Do Now was, “Imagine you had the chance to interview a soldier from either side from the Spanish-American war, what would you ask him?” Ms. Corcoran and Mr. Francks set purpose in their classrooms with the aid of an essential question, which will be discussed in the next section.

Notice that though the language is slightly different across different classrooms (i.e., “do now” or “essential question”), the preservice teacher sees these as connected to purpose setting learned in two different university courses across two semesters.

In this longer “memo to self,” another preservice teacher makes claims about instructional practice using a mix of practical experience, knowledge, and research acquired over three terms to warrant those claims, while also showing how they intend to meet challenges:

In ED 402, we learned a lot about how to support our students’ literacy skills. I need to remember that reading social studies texts is not something that comes naturally to my students and so I need to scaffold this process as much as possible by giving students guidance before, during, and after reading. I need to alert students to what they are reading for, provide graphic organizers and worksheets to help guide them through the wealth of information they are encountering, and find creative ways to have them share their ideas with their classmates (list, group label, turn and talk,



conversation lines, four corners, free writes, think, pair, share, etc.). I also really enjoy Moje and Speyer's [2008] discussion on the use of text, and how multiple pieces of a text have to be scaffolded for students. What I really enjoyed about this piece was the use of probing questions to make students thinking visible...I also really enjoyed Bain's [2006] "They Thought the World Was Flat." I would really like to work on providing my students with DBQ's to help them with sourcing, critical thinking, and thinking across texts. One positive example of this that I saw in the field took place in Mr. Hogar's room; every morning, he would have students read a primary source document and fill out a sourcing worksheet that had students identify the title, author, and year, as well as the author's argument and any biases they might have...However, I know that as a teacher, I struggle with what appropriate levels of difficulty are,...I need support in picking appropriate texts as well as the best way to scaffold them (because I do not think one technique will work for every text).

Finally, as the above quotes might demonstrate, we are seeing evidence that through this more sustained and coherent focus on disciplinary literacy to teach history, most of our newly certificated beginning teachers have developed ways to "see" the literacy features that support learning history, such as establishing purpose through framing problems; making time to understand and use students' pre-instructional knowledge and interests; giving attention to selecting texts that support, extend, or challenge students' thinking, understanding, and even their interests. Most recognize some of the challenges secondary students might face in reading and writing in history classrooms, and assume some responsibility to help meet these challenges. More important, through the videos and records of practice they submit to demonstrate skills in performing the competencies, most of our newly certified teachers are developing effective, usable practices and modest confidence to teach with central problems, big ideas, and diverse texts. Of course, not all of our students are successful across all of the areas in which the program thinks well-started beginners should be skilled.

Since the preservice teachers' progress or lack of progress through the program serves as feedback for us, this is an ongoing process of continuous improvement. Though the reform work continues, we think these modifications hold promise for history teacher educators, particularly since the launch of the Common Core Standards and the national focus on reading and writing across the disciplines. In addition, we have found great value in using disciplinary literacy to aid us in knitting together the loosely coupled, fragmented system that has for far too long defined history teacher education.

## Notes

1. G. Stanley Hall, *Methods of Teaching History* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath & Company, 1885), ix; Edward Channing and Albert Bushness Hart, *Guide to the Study of American History* (Boston, MA and London, U.K.: Ginn & Company, 1896); Charles Kendall Adams, "On Methods of Teaching History," in *Methods of Teaching History*, ed. G. Stanley Hall (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath & Company, 1886), 203-214.

2. Hall, ix-x.

3. Channing and Hart, 21-22. For discussion of the current crisis in history education, see Fritz Fischer's unpublished paper, titled "Issues and Challenges Facing K-16 History Educators and Students in the Twenty-First Century," given at the 2012 Organization of American Historians annual conference.

4. Michael Henry, "A Fifty-Year Perspective on History Teaching's 'Crisis,'" *OAH Magazine of History* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 7, 8. See also Allan Nevins, "What's the Matter with History?" *The Saturday Review of Literature* 19 (4 February 1939); Bernard DeVoto, "The Easy Chair," *Harper's Magazine* 187 (1943).

5. Jennifer Nelson, "What Goes Around Comes Around: History Education in the 1890s and the 1990s," *The History Teacher* 25, no. 4 (August 1992): 463-469.

6. Stephen S. Mucher, "Subject Matter and Method in the Preparation of High School Teachers: Pedagogy and Teacher Education at the University of Michigan, 1871-1921" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2003); James W. Fraser, *Preparing America's Teachers a History*, Reflective History Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007).

7. The Teaching American History grant program, I think, typifies this approach, holding, as it did, that the purpose of the program was "to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of American history" because by "helping teachers to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of American history... these programs will improve instruction and raise student achievement" (Grant Application, 2001).

8. For an interesting take on why getting teachers to think like historians is counter-productive to preparing teachers to develop students' interest in history, see DeVoto, "The Easy Chair."

9. Karl E. Weick, "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (March 1976): 1-19; Linda Darling-Hammond, "Constructing 21st-Century Teacher Education," *Journal of Teacher Education* 57, no. 3 (May/June 2006): 300-314; Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Kenneth M. Zeichner, "Executive Summary: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education," in *Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education*, ed. Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Kenneth M. Zeichner (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 1-37; David F. Labaree, *The Trouble with Ed Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

10. Elizabeth Burr Moje is an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor in the School of Education at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research focuses on the intersections between the literacies and texts youth are asked to learn in the disciplines and those that they experience outside of school. A former high school history, biology, and drama teacher, she teaches courses in secondary and adolescent literacy. Moje and Bain developed and co-direct the Clinical Rounds Project. In 2010, they were awarded the Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize at the University of Michigan for this project in secondary teacher education.

11. We also began with a modest grant (\$50,000) from the Carnegie Corporation to devise a system of assessment to determine the success of our efforts.

12. Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, *Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2010), 1.

13. See, for example, Catherine Snow and Elizabeth Moje, "Why Is Everyone Talking about Adolescent Literacy?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 91, no. 6 (March 2010): 66-69; Vassiliki (Vicky) I. Zygouris-Coe, "Disciplinary Literacy and the Common Core State Standards," *Topics in Language Disorders* 32, no. 1 (January/March 2012): 35-50.

14. National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 2008: Trends in Academic Progress in Reading and Mathematics, 1971-2008* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Education Science, U.S. Department of Education, 2008); ACT, *Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College Ready Work* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2005); National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 2004: Trends in Academic Progress in Reading and Mathematics, 1971-2008* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Education Science, U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

15. ACT, *Crisis at the Core*; National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 2004*; Jay P. Green and Marcus Winters, *Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991-2002* (New York: Center for Civic Innovation at Manhattan Institute, 2005).

16. Alliance for Excellent Education, *Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation* (Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006); Alliance for Excellence in Education, *High School Teaching for the Twenty-First Century: Preparing Students for College*, Issues Brief (Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellence in Education, 2007).

17. Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, *Time to Act*.

18. Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, *Time to Act*; Snow and Moje, "Why Is Everyone Talking about Adolescent Literacy?"

19. Elizabeth Birr Moje, "Comprehending in the Subject Areas: The Challenges of Comprehension, Grades 7-12, and What to Do About Them," in *Comprehension Across the Curriculum: Perspectives and Practices K-12 (Solving Problems in the Teaching of Literacy)*, ed. Kathy Ganske and Douglas Fisher (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 46-74.

20. Paul H. Hirst, "Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge," in *Education and the Development of Reason*, ed. R. F. Dearden, P. H. Hirst, and R. S. Peters (London, U.K.: Routledge, 1972), 391-414.

21. Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy; Carol D. Lee and Anika Spratley, *Reading in the Disciplines: The Challenges of Adolescent Literacy* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2009); Elizabeth Birr Moje, "Foregrounding the Disciplines in Secondary Literacy Teaching and Learning: A Call for Change," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52, no. 2 (October 2008): 96-107; Moje, "Comprehending in the Subject Areas"; Timothy Shanahan and Cynthia Shanahan, "Teaching Disciplinary Literacy to Adolescents: Rethinking Content-Area Literacy," *Harvard Educational Review* 78, no. 1 (April 2008): 40-59; Zhihui Fang and Mary J. Schleppegrell, "Disciplinary Literacies Across Content Areas: Supporting Secondary Reading Through Functional Language Analysis," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53, no. 7 (April 2010): 587-597.

22. Elizabeth Birr Moje and Jennifer Speyer, "The Reality of Challenging Texts in High School Science and Social Studies: How Teachers Can Mediate Comprehension," in *Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy Instruction*, ed. Kathleen A. Hinchman and Heather K. Sheridan-Thomas (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 185-211.

23. Timothy Shanahan and Cynthia Shanahan, "What Is Disciplinary Literacy and Why Does It Matter?" *Topics in Language Disorders* 32, no. 1 (January/March 2012); Snow and Moje; Moje, "Comprehending in the Subject Areas"; Gina Biancarosa and

Catherine Snow, *Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*, second ed. (Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004), <<http://www.all4ed.org/files/ReadingNext.pdf>>.

24. See for example R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1946); Michael Stanford, *The Nature of Historical Knowledge* (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1990); Fritz R. Stern, *The Varieties of History, from Voltaire to the Present* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956).

25. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 246-247.

26. The explosion of evidence finds historians also using the findings of other disciplines, such as biology, cosmology, physics, archaeology, psychology, sociology, and geology, to name but a few. Environmental history or history of disease are rich examples of the growth of historical evidence since World War II. I think David Christian and others who use almost all the sciences in framing “big history” have established a logical and quite productive extension of this trend in the discipline of history. For example, see David Christian, *Maps of Time* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004) or Fred Spier, *Big History and the Future of Humanity* (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). For an example of extending the reach of historical evidence used in school history, see the Big History Project at <<http://www.bighistoryproject.com>>.

27. Scholars of literacy referred to “inconsiderate texts” as texts where readers struggle not because they “failed” as readers, but rather because the authors failed as writers.

28. Margaret G. McKeown, Isabel L. Beck, and M. Jo Worthy, “Grappling with Text Ideas: Questioning the Author,” *The Reading Teacher* 46, no. 7 (April 1993): 560.

29. Samuel S. Wineburg, “On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach Between School and Academy,” *American Educational Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 495-519; Samuel S. Wineburg, “Historical Problem Solving: A Study of the Cognitive Processes Used in Documentary and Pictorial Evidence,” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 83, no. 1 (March 1991): 73-87; Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001).

30. Robert B. Bain, “Rounding Up Unusual Suspects: Facing the Authority Hidden in History Textbooks and Teachers,” *Teachers College Record* 108, no. 10 (October 2006): 2080-2114.

31. Admittedly, my students worked with an unusually large set of sources in this unit on plague, but surveying other units on this pandemic reveals a wide range of type of sources. For example, see World History for Us All’s Landscape Unit 5.5: “Calamities and Recoveries: 1300-1500 CE” at <[http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/units/five/landscape/Era05\\_landscape5.php](http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/units/five/landscape/Era05_landscape5.php)> or Closeup Unit 5.5.1: “Coping with Catastrophe The Black Death of the Fourteenth Century: 1330-1355” at <[http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/units/five/closeup/Era05\\_closeup551.php](http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/units/five/closeup/Era05_closeup551.php)>.

32. Bain “Rounding Up Unusual Suspects.”

33. Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*.

34. Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 13.

35. It is important to note that this work refers only to the undergraduate program and that our program is relatively small. For example, at most, we take two cohorts of history/social science majors per year and no cohort exceeds twenty-five students. We are working on scaling this to other content areas and in our Masters of Arts in Teaching program. We do think these ideas, if not structures, will add value to programs working with more preservice teachers than ours.