(When) Does Teacher Preparation Work?
A Longitudinal Study of Beginning History/Social Studies Teachers’ Instructional Development

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Educational Studies)
in the University of Michigan
2023

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to one of the participants in this study whose life was taken too soon. He was a dedicated and passionate educator who cared deeply about connecting with his students. He touched many folks’ lives, always leaving them with a smile. His passing leaves a hole in the hearts of anyone who ever had the pleasure of connecting with him and is a tremendous loss for those who knew him and the future students that he never had the chance to meet.
Acknowledgments

For those of you who know about my life in 2017, when my wife and I decided to pack up our things in Chicago and move to Michigan, you know that I have a lot to be thankful for. First and foremost, I’d like to thank my wife, Natalie Shane, for having the courage to step this leap alongside me and for providing the love and support needed to make it through the past six years of this program. She has been my rock, my sounding board (often involuntarily), partner-in-crime, and best friend. Needless to say, I wouldn’t have made it this far without her!

I’d also like to acknowledge the many friends and family who have been supportive along this journey. Even though many of you many have been confused and disappointed we headed to the other side of Lake Michigan, your frequent visits made Michigan feel more like home over the past few years and made the process much more enjoyable.

The same can be said for the many classmates and work colleagues that I’ve had at Michigan who made my time in this program an experience that I will always cherish. In particular, I’d like to acknowledge Meghan (McDermott) Fagan for being an exceptional classmate, thought-partner, instructional leader, and co-teacher in our work in the teacher education program. Thanks also goes out to Alex Honold, Mike Ion, Saba Gerami, Mar Estrada, and Amanda Weisman for both academic and social supports along the way. I also appreciate Jungsoo Ahn for our times at TeachingWorks commiserating and our thoughtful and enriching conversations about pretty much every topic in education.

I also would not have made it this far without the professional mentorship that I’ve received along the way. First, I’d like to acknowledge the important role that Mrs. Seals, Ms. Guillory, and Principal Peggy Selma played in cultivating me as a beginning teacher in Las Vegas. Next, I’d like to thank the teachers and staff at Baker College Prep, especially Vince Gay, Mary Arrigo, and Sean Healy for the countless hours, blood, sweat, and tears that were spent opening a school on Chicago’s South Side. The work and professionalism of these folks has profoundly shaped my views of education and the dedication that I have towards the work of making sure that all students have high-quality teachers.
There were also some professional mentors who helped me navigate the graduate school process, refine my writing, and support my transition to work life outside of a K-12 environment. First, thank you goes to former Marquette University College of Education Dean Bill Henk for “taking my call” early on in my doctoral search. As a first-generation student, the process of getting into a doctoral program is very mysterious. His advice was instrumental in helping me to understand how things worked behind the scenes. I’d also like thank my uncle, Bob Zyskowski, for serving as an informal editor for some of my course papers and publication submissions over the years. Lastly, special thanks to the staff at TeachingWorks for the many projects, experiences, and professional opportunities that I’ve been involved with over the past few years. In particular, I’d like to note the important part that Jason Brasel played in being a great role model and wise colleague in our work with teacher educators across the country.

My committee has also been wonderful and supportive of me along this journey, not only during the dissertation process but also throughout my career as a doctoral student. First, I’d like to thank my advisor and chair Deborah Ball. Entering the program, I was a risky choice and unknown commodity, but Deborah took a chance on a non-math ed guy and over the years has been a relentless supporter of me and my work. She has been an invaluable resource for guidance, encouragement, and professional opportunities that have set me up for success in the next steps of my career in higher education and teacher preparation. Bob Bain has also been a huge part of my experience at the University of Michigan. I’d like to thank him for “adopting” me into his instructional team to work with preservice teachers for much of my time in the program. Bob has been a fantastic model of leadership and has always been able to ask the right question or provide the right resources to look into about my teaching and scholarship in ways that have extended, challenged, and deepened my thinking about teaching history and teacher education. Thank you to Don Peurach our valuable conversations over the years about my work and for going out of his way to be available for, include, and support doctoral students like me who are not his advisees. Lastly, I’d like to thank Chauncey Monte-Sano for excellent feedback throughout the dissertation process and for being a wealth of knowledge about literature in history and social studies teaching. This was especially important as I sometimes needed a kick in the butt in addressing my stubbornness about seeing myself a more of a teacher education generalist than a history/social studies guy! To all of my committee members, thank you for the
thoughtful comments, feedback, suggestions, and time that you’ve decided to me and this dissertation.

Last but not least, I’d like to acknowledge and express my extreme gratitude to my participants and my former students. For those who had me as a teacher in the K-12 classroom, you were my original inspiration and continue to be my motivation in this work. For the beginning teachers who welcomed me into their classrooms and spent many hours chatting in interviews, your stories have been moving, and I’m honored to be able to share them with a greater audience through my work.
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Abstract

Widespread skepticism exists about preparation programs’ impact on novice teachers’ learning to teach. This is not new. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers question whether preparation matters. Despite these questions and a growing consensus about the importance of teachers, we have a limited understanding of when, why, and how teacher preparation might impact novice teachers’ instruction (Grossman, 2008; Levine, 2006; Korthagen, 2010). Much literature about novice teacher learning considers only the impacts of a specific course or particular induction contexts. Less work has examined the effects of programs on beginning teachers’ practice.

In this study, I sought to further the field’s understanding of teacher development across the continuum of teacher education (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Considering beginning history and social studies teachers’ experiences as students, time in coursework and clinical placements, and the specific school contexts of their first two years teaching, I investigated what signature pedagogies from preparation “stick.” I ask: how and under what circumstances do novice teachers enact the practices and dispositions advocated during their preparation program? Using longitudinal data, including interviews at multiple points during their early careers and observations of instruction, I identify what aspects of novices’ preparation program are taken up or “washed out” (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) as they entered the classroom.

Findings suggest several different factors that are important across the early years of history and social studies teacher development.

Teachers in this study entered preparation more or less primed for taking up practices promoted by the programs. Teaching vision and models of instruction, especially a novice’s former K-12 history teachers, teacher educators, and mentor teachers, played a crucial role in legitimizing and demonstrating different methods. These experiences mediated whether teachers wanted to take up signature pedagogies from preparation or if they were more skeptical and rejected said practices. These findings also add evidence for the need to extend conceptions about the apprenticeship of observation into preparation coursework, as participants often
indicated that teacher educator pedagogy was instrumental in their decisions to take up or reject signature pedagogies.

Once in school contexts, factors began to overlap and stifle or promote ambitious teaching practices promoted in preparation coursework. Findings contribute evidence to theories about the importance of alignment across the continuum. A convergence of factors across the contexts of teacher education did indeed make pedagogies from preparation “stick” for many participants, with the most important being having a manageable workload, aligned curricular materials, teaching in a stable and collaborative school environment, having multiple models of practice to call upon, and personal factors such as individual’s ambition and reflectiveness.

Findings also suggest that novice teachers can progress towards more ambitious forms of history and social studies teaching in somewhat predictable ways. These included starting with beginner’s entry-point methods that were familiar and provided participants with structure for lessons, specific steps for execution, and minimized workload while also supporting teachers to maintain control over the class, while providing predictable results. More advanced and student-centered methods generally emerged in the second year.

I conclude with a discussion about how history/social studies teachers enter and experience teacher preparation and their early career school contexts. These include implications for revising current theories to incorporate personal resources as an important factor to consider, thinking about general pathways of development of beginning history/social studies teachers, and reexamining the role and structure of student teaching.
Chapter 1 Introduction and Theoretical Lens

We cannot improve the quality of education in our schools without improving the quality of the teachers in them. Curriculum plans, instructional materials, elegant classrooms, and even sensitive and intelligent administrators cannot overcome the negative effects of weak teaching, or match the positive effects of competent teaching. Although leadership, resources, and working conditions in schools influence those who enter and choose to remain in the classroom, they do not affect students' learning as directly as do teachers. The entire formal and informal curriculum of the school is filtered through the minds and hearts of classroom teachers, making the quality of school learning dependent on the quality of teachers. The quality of teachers will not be improved unless we improve the quality of their education...

(The Holmes Report, 1986, p. 23)

For decades we have known the importance, power, and impact of classroom teachers and how they can serve to further inequities in the classroom or as disruptors of injustice (Ball, April 2018). Recent research has confirmed this. For example, several studies have shown that having a high-quality teacher has significant impacts on learning gains (e.g., Rockhoff, 2004; Kane & Staiger, 2008; Kane, McCaffrey, Miller, & Staiger, 2013; Redding, 2019). In addition, racial match between teachers and students has been shown to have a positive impact on various outcomes (e.g., Gershenson et al., 2018; Redding, 2019). We also know the destructive power that teachers can have in reproducing inequities, whether through ineffective teaching, lowering expectations and having a deficit lens of children, or through practices that are exclusionary or downright harmful (e.g., Kohn, 2011; Romi et al., 2011; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). Reformers have recognized this fact as attempts to improve schools have often targeted the instruction and actions of individual teachers, whether through extensive professional development (e.g., Brady et al., 2009; Ring et al., 2017), the various attempts at standards and curricular reform (e.g., Handal & Herrington, 2003; Smith & Kovac, 2011; Smith &
Southerland, 2007), or through increased accountability for results, often through testing measures or classroom observation and evaluation (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Steinberg & Sartain, 2015).

In short, we know that teachers matter. A lot.

I saw this in my own personal experiences. As a student, I had teachers who held themselves and their students to a high standard, enacting effective and engaging instruction while supporting and encouraging kids like myself to do and be better. On the flipside, I will never forget the ninth-grade geometry teacher who, during a one-on-one chat in the hallway about my grades, questioned my ability to keep up in his class and recommended I transfer to an easier course once he found out that I attended the middle school in town that served a high proportion of working class and immigrant families. I know how teachers have the power to raise people up as well as bring them down.

My understanding of this power continued to develop during my teacher preparation and early experiences as a new teacher. I was regularly shocked by the poor instruction and chaotic environments I encountered during my various clinical placements across schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, many of which were purportedly with the “best” teachers in “good” schools. In volunteer work tutoring homeless students in an after-school program, I came to see how many students were being left behind, not because of their at-home circumstances but simply because they had never been taught to read. This strengthened my resolve and determination to become a teacher who made a difference in schools and with students who other teachers and society had forsaken as hopeless.

As a beginning teacher trying to tackle such a tremendous challenge, I saw how isolating the profession can be and realized how underprepared I was for the demands of teaching in such contexts. Thankfully, I was lucky enough to work with a group of highly motivated and effective veteran teachers who took me under their wing. Again, I was struck by the power of determined and committed teachers. Through our collective efforts, we were able to turn around a struggling middle school in North Las Vegas and I saw that despite the lack of school-wide or system-level support, good teachers could still make a powerful difference.

Once I was a more veteran teacher, I began to pay it forward. I worked with new teachers, setting up a mentoring program and peer coaching at one school and continuing to apprentice new teachers at another school in Chicago. Still, this never seemed to be enough. New
teachers were rotating into classrooms every year without the necessary foundations from preparation and into schools that were trying to “catch them up” at breakneck speeds. This system wasn’t and isn’t fair for new teachers or the kids they teach. But it seemed like these band-aid solutions weren’t enough, and I decided to enter graduate school to be a part of a larger answer to improving teacher preparation. Rather than complain about crummy preparation, I decided to do something about it.

Thankfully, I have had the opportunity to work in a secondary history/social studies preparation program and an organization that promotes the use of practice-based approaches to teacher education over the past few years. These experiences gave me the chance to teach courses in the preparation program and work with both teacher educators and teacher candidates. I have also been able to learn more about and try my hand at implementing a more practice-based approach to teacher education, something which my own experience (and my gut) tells me is necessary to prepare novice teachers. However, there seems to be this nagging feeling that I have as each cohort graduates and we send them off into the real world to take on their own classrooms: Did we actually prepare them for what they’re about to encounter? Did we really impact the way that they’ll teach for the better?

As many others have pointed out, there is a surprising lack of literature showing that teacher preparation has a positive impact on teacher candidates (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Tatto et al., 2016; Goldhaber, 2019; Goldhaber & Ronfeldt, 2020; Dack & Triplett, 2020). In many cases, we operate under the assumption that our work in teacher education makes a positive difference on our teacher candidates, or as Lightning Jay said at a recent AERA session in reference to the teacher education in history/social science, we have “good arguments, not good evidence” (April, 2023).

As other scholars have noted (e.g., Goldhaber & Ronfeldt, 2020), there is relatively little research on the impact of teacher education on beginning teachers, calling for more extensive longitudinal studies of beginning teacher development to trace the impacts of formal preparation on teachers’ practice. There is a dearth of research on the impacts of formal preparation in history/social studies teacher education in particular, where scholars have noted that we know little about what contributes to teacher learning in this content area (Adler, 2008; Jay, 2022) and where only about 7% of studies of history/social studies teaching actually follow teachers into the classroom to investigate and understand impacts on practice (Jay, 2022).
Further, rather than explaining how and under what conditions teacher preparation can successfully empower new teachers to be transformative in their instructional practices, it seems like more often than not, the canon of teacher education is steeped in reasons why PSTs might abandon the practices and methods advocated for by their teacher preparation programs.

The typical story told from the perspective of education scholars usually goes something like this:

1. Teacher candidates don’t know what good teaching is because they come in with poor models from their own schooling (Lortie, 1975) and there simply aren’t enough good teachers out there to ensure that they have good mentors, causing a disconnect between coursework and clinical placements (Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1985; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2014).

2. With how deeply rooted teacher candidates’ beliefs and values about teaching and learning are (Buehl & Beck, 2014), programs simply aren’t long enough to have a lasting impact (Denscombe, 1982; Holmes Group, 1986).

3. When teacher candidates get their first jobs, they’re then further stifled by school socialization pressures (Lortie, 1975; Hoy & Rees, 1977) and other influences such as accountability measures, standardized curriculum, more challenging course loads in tougher schools, or school specific policies and practices (e.g., Hammerness, 2004; Valencia et al., 2006; Certo, 2006; Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Waychunas, 2022).

4. In other cases, they might flounder in the isolation and extensive autonomy some schools grant teachers, leading to little support or motivation to enact ambitious teaching practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Lacey, 1977; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984).

5. In the face of all these challenges, is it any wonder that what they might have learned in teacher preparation programs is “washed out” (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) and they revert back to easier and less effective teaching methods or make only modest changes to their instruction (Cohen, 1990; Cuban, 1993; Coburn, 2004; Everitt, 2012)?
The shocking amount of literature detailing the reasons that teacher preparation doesn’t work has led me to constantly question and wonder about the impact of my own work with teacher candidates.

Call me a skeptic. Call me dissatisfied. Call me inquisitive. Whatever you might call me, I’m not one to spend time “admiring the problem,” as much of the current research has done. I find this to be uninspiring, dull, repetitive, and leaves me wanting. I can’t help but wonder that if we know that our work in teacher education isn’t having the impact that our teachers, children, and communities need, what are we going to do about it?

We know teachers matter. We know that there are challenges out there in developing teachers. If we are actually committed to advancing equity and justice through teaching, then we need a better understanding of what positive impacts teacher education does have on novice teachers and under what conditions so that we can learn to build stronger, more effective programs.

The quotation from the Holmes Report that opens this dissertation highlights some of the assumptions and approaches that policymaker, teacher educators, and others have made in attempts to improve education in the United States. It frames two major perspectives about “where to start” when it comes to improving teaching: Do we emphasize the teachers themselves or the contexts in which they teach as crucial to the quality of their practice?

On one hand, some reformers focus on who is our nation’s classrooms. This approach emphasizes teacher skill, knowledge, background, and beliefs. Reforms or initiatives also in this vein include efforts to recruit the “best and brightest” into teaching by ensuring that teachers have content knowledge proven through testing, degrees, or professional experiences, such as the Teach for America program. Initiatives that foreground this teacher-first approach may also embrace the argument that new teachers also need to have the right beliefs and understandings of teaching and learning. This can include programs that emphasize coursework that is heavily theoretical, for example, highlighting the importance placed on social foundations and developmental psychology classes or and focused on cultivating the moral and ethical understandings of schooling that can guide teachers’ instructional decision making. This might also look like efforts at developing reflective practitioners (Johns, 2009), culturally responsive (Warren, 2018) or anti-racist teachers (Utt & Tochluck, 2020), or trauma-informed educators
(Anderson et al., 2015). Similarly, attempts to make the teaching profession more racially
diverse or to recruit career-changers with real-world expertise are also built on this assumption
that getting the right people into teaching is fundamental in changing education in this country
(e.g., Carver-Thomas, 2018; Lewis & Toldson, 2013).

On the other hand, some reform initiatives stress the importance improving the contexts
of teaching as a path towards instructional improvement. In this approach to changing teaching,
we see an emphasis on the culture, accountability, and resources in schools. This is built on a
belief that creating the right environments for teaching is what matters most. This realm of
reforms would include curriculum or standards initiatives, such as the Common Core State
Standards or C3 Inquiry-based Standards. It could also include efforts towards collaboration,
such as building professional learning communities with schools and mentorship programs, or
in-service learning, such as instructional coaching or professional development seminars. It can
also take the shape of teaching accountability such as observations and evaluations, test-based
ratings of schools or teachers, and other school mandates or policies that ensure that keep a
closer eye on what teachers do from day to day. Again, in this approach, the realities of the
school context are paramount--removing barriers to excellent teaching and developing systems
or programs that encourage and support good teaching are prioritized.

Given that even the best people can’t teach in unsupportive or chaotic environments and
the most supportive school contexts still need great teachers to do the actual instruction, it seems
crucial that more research is needed to understand the teaching and instruction that happens as
teachers and their contexts intersect and influence one another. Understanding the ways in which
teachers as people, their experiences in preparation, and the realities of their school contexts
come together in ways that support or encourage good teaching would be invaluable knowledge
for many stakeholders, including teacher educators, school administrators, and teachers
themselves.

Now, more than ever, we must engage in this serious work. The pandemic and the
associated challenges of teaching through a national crisis seems to have spurred a teacher
exodus where turnover rates have increased, especially for beginning teachers (Bacher-Hicks,
Chi, & Orellana 2022). Under the current conditions with low pay and highly stressful working
conditions, fewer people are going into teaching, more are leaving teaching, and teacher
shortages have been rampant (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022). Research that points to the ways in
which teachers can enter classrooms better prepared and how schools can better support these beginning teachers’ instructional development could inform the work of the field more broadly in how we recruit, train, support, and retain teachers at a moment of crisis in our schools.

Compounding these challenges is the current political climate in the United States, one that makes the jobs of teachers, especially history and social studies teachers, even more tenuous. We live in an era of extreme polarization, one where democracy has teetered and clashed with extreme right-wing organizations and propagandistic media machines. The US capital was stormed in an insurrection, an attempted coup that was undergirded by misinformation campaigns and fundamentally misguided understandings of the world. Schools and teachers have found themselves in the crosshairs, with book banning (Dallacqua, 2022), politicization and culture wars at the school board level (Farag, 2023), and increasing challenges teaching history and social studies (Ansley, 2023; Lehrer-Small, 2023). Teachers are under fire with questions raised about whose history should be taught and the role of race, justice, and equity in the ways that we think about the past and present (Krebs, 2022; Willever, 2022). History and social studies teachers, especially government, US history, or civics teachers, have had to walk an instructional tightrope in this climate, being careful to avoid the appearance of bias or indoctrination while also hoping to develop students who are critical thinkers and can consider multiple perspectives.

Clearly, the teaching profession, and especially in the history or social studies, is in a pivotal moment. Are we, as teacher educators and those concerned about the development of beginning teachers, doing our part to prepare teachers for the particularly difficult realities that they face in the classroom? What, as the Holmes Report challenged us to consider over 30 years ago, are we doing to change the education of teachers for the better? How are we building bridges and strengthening the connections between teachers, preparation, and school contexts in a challenging time? In particular, I want to know about how preparation might “wash-in” to improve the knowledge, understanding, and instructional capabilities of our new teachers.

This is precisely the aim of this study: to advance knowledge about teacher education in ways that move beyond focusing on the individual obstacles to teacher development and instead search for the successes of preparation. It is my hope that this work will inform the efforts of teacher educators and decision makers who can impact the development of beginning teachers.
This has led me to ask a set of specific questions about how a particular sequence of teacher preparation, clinical experience, and beginning teaching might interact to shape the knowledge, understandings, and instructional practices of a group of novice teachers.

**Research Questions**

In this study, I ask the following questions:

**Question 1: Which practices promoted during teacher preparation coursework are taken up and enacted in beginning teachers’ instruction?**

- What practices that were emphasized in their program do novice teachers (NTs) report using?
- What practices do I see used across their lessons?

**Question 2: How do novice teachers say they learned these practices?**

- What elements of coursework seemed to support or hinder novice teachers’ learning and use of practices?
- How might mentor teachers and school placements for observation and student teaching play a role in whether and how NTs take up practices?
- What is the role of a novice teacher’s background and experiences as a student on their uptake of practices?
- Does school context play a role in teachers’ learning of certain methods?

**Question 3: What conditions seem to promote beginning teachers’ uptake of the practices advocated for during their preparation?**

- What school-level factors do NTs see as being obstacles to or supports for their use of specific practices that were emphasized in their preparation program?
- How might professional development programs, training, collaborative structures, or induction systems at their schools play a role in whether and how NTs take up practices?
- How might teacher background, their experiences in coursework, time spent in clinical placement, and their school contexts interact in ways that encourage uptake of practices from preparation?

To answer these questions, I conducted a longitudinal study that traces the experiences and development of new secondary history and social studies teachers, a content area that others have noted is relatively understudied in teacher education literature (Adler, 2008; Crocco & Livingston, 2017). I followed this group of teachers starting during their preparation coursework, into student teaching, and then into their first year in the classroom to understand their development over time and to examine the influences and evolution of their knowledge,
thinking, and instructional practice. As these novice teachers were once students in my literacy methods course and supervised by me during their student teaching experience, I have personal and in-depth knowledge about their experiences that I can draw upon as I explore one of the age-old questions in teaching: did they learn what I thought I was teaching them? Or as Hargreaves and Jacka (1995) wondered, what if “... new teachers do successfully acquire innovative methods of instruction, and continue to remain committed to them as they begin to teach ... what might it mean should our wishes come true?” (p. 42).

**Definitions and Theoretical Lens**

**Goals of Teacher Education**

The field of teacher education research generally agrees that there are certain things that teachers need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to effective in their classroom. We’ve seen the development of terminology, concepts, and frameworks that outline different areas of teacher knowledge, such as pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) or content knowledge for teaching (Ball et al., 2008). Similarly, many groups have attempted to identify and specify practices and skills that beginning teachers need, a field of work that other scholars have pointed out (Forzani, 2014; Zeichner, 2012) has a deep history in scholarship on teacher education. This focus on practice has gained renewed attention with the emphasis on the development of high-leverage (Ball, Sleep, Boots, & Bass, 2009), core practices (McDonald et al., 2013), and specific practice-based pedagogies (Brownell et al., 2019) that might support teachers to develop the skills and methods necessary to advance student learning.

In this sense, we can see that *change* and *practice* are foundational premises behind teacher education. In the following sections, I explain in more detail what I mean in use of the term *practice* and two different types of practices, which I call *traditional* and *ambitious* practice.

**What is Practice?**

The term *practice* is rather nebulous in the field of education research. As Magdalene Lampert described in her seminal piece about the term *practice* as it is used to think about
teacher learning (2010), there are several different ways that practice is conceptualized that are relevant to this study.

The first distinction that Lampert draws is practice as that which contrasts with theory, something that is highlighted by the frequently talked about theory and practice divide. In this sense of practice, the emphasis is placed on “what people do rather than what they think or know” (Lampert, 2010, p. 23). Action is the key in this conception rather than on what many teacher preparation courses have focused on as they attempt to shape the beliefs, values, knowledge that one hopes that teachers will put into use once they enter the classroom.

Grain size of said actions or conceptions of practice are also an important consideration to make. This is especially true when looking at teaching as a collection of practices (Lampert, 2010) such as the previously mentioned core or high leverage practices. After all, what is the difference between a practice and a method? How about a teacher move, tool, strategy, or technique? Some work (Boerst et al., 2011; Moss, 2011) organizes these into different grain sizes in a nested format that moves from broad domains of practice (such as facilitating a discussion) towards more specific components of a practice such as strategies or techniques. While it’s important to think about grain size and the scope of the words we use to describe teaching, regardless of how you categorize or organize, this conception of practice still focuses on the specific actions, even habits, that teachers use and do in their day-to-day instruction.

The final conceptualization of practice from Lampert’s work (2010) that is relevant to this study is thinking about practice in a more professional sense, namely looking at teaching as a practice similar to practicing medicine or law. This is a much more invisible way to look at practice as it “…involves adopting the identity of a teacher, being accepted as a teacher, and taking on the common values, language, and tools of teaching” (p.29) as well as taking on shared goals of the profession, responsibilities, and obligations. Lampert identifies socialization factors as especially important for how novice teachers are apprenticed into the profession during their own K-12 experiences as well as through interactions with other teachers and administrators.

For this study, I consider the values, obligations, and approaches to being a teacher as important in shaping teachers’ instruction. However, I consider them to be only semi-visible in teacher practice that I might not otherwise be able to note if only relying on data from observations. Taken in tandem with interview data and other data sources, I can connect these more intangible aspects of teachers' beliefs, understandings, and dispositions and relate them
back to their classroom teaching. For example, a teacher who indicates low expectations for students or who doesn’t express viewing teaching as necessitating a moral obligation towards student learning might (or might not) teach differently and in ways that might confirm these in their day-to-day practice by focusing more on different values, such as relying on simplistic compliance and completion of rote worksheets or by ignoring students who struggle or disengage from class activities. On the flip side, a teacher who holds themselves and their students to high expectations might demonstrate a more organized and clearly planned lesson where they take student engagement and participation into account beforehand in their planning but also in the moment by reengaging students or checking for understanding. Additionally, a teacher may express beliefs about student-centered teaching, but tend to use more traditional methods such as notes and assigned readings, a contradiction worth more deeply investigating. In this way, looking at ways that teacher beliefs, values, and professional practice manifest (or don’t) in their instruction is an insight that the study can also examine.

It’s also important to point out that this is not an evaluative study. I am not entering the classrooms of these novice teachers to evaluate their mastery of different practices. If I was, then further specifying the exact moves, practices, and strategies that they are using (and how well they are using them) would be of utmost importance. Instead, I want to see what teachers pick up, in what ways, and why. By taking this broad perspective on the term practice, I can identify areas where they are using larger domains (such as discussion, modeling, or simulations) as well as more specific teaching methods or strategies (such as a Fishbowl Discussion or Think-Pair-Share) and specific teacher moves (such as cold calling or orienting students to each other’s ideas). Wasley, Hampel, and Clark (1997) describe a similar conception of novice teacher practice as “a variety of techniques, skills, and approaches in all dimensions of education curriculum, instruction, and assessment that teachers have at their fingertips to stimulate the growth of the children with whom they work” (p. 45).

Additionally, I believe that using this wide-ranging conception of practice allows me to probe and analyze more directly the data and lived experiences of my participants, which offers a wider-ranging view of their developmental journeys. Lastly, this approach allows me to better understand what teacher candidates thought was the emphasis of their preparation, where they say they found value or not, and how and why they engage with their understandings of practices while also taking a programmatic view of practice and development at the same time.
I should also note that, for this dissertation, I use the word *practice* interchangeably with other words such as *strategies, methods*, and *techniques*. This is done in part as a stylistic choice and to avoid repeating the word *practice* several hundred (or thousand?) times across the following chapters. I also made this choice to describe broadly the actions of teachers, big and small, visible or invisible, in a way that can paint a more holistic picture of each participant’s instruction. As I argue in more detail later, these different elements of practice—including values, beliefs, and more invisible teaching work—all interact with and influence the more visible actions of teachers in ways that are important for understanding broader themes and findings.

**Which Practices? Traditional versus Ambitious Practice**

If the goal of teacher preparation is to change and improve teacher practice, it makes sense to describe what is both the most typical or modal form of instruction in classrooms and why it is problematic. Additionally, it seems key to conceptualize what the goal or ideal form of instruction that many programs, including the preparation coursework completed by the participants of this study, strive towards.

To do this, I call upon the dichotomy of traditional versus progressive or ambitious instruction. The distinction between these two types of instruction is useful as it lives in literature about teaching generally (e.g., Cuban, 1993; Smagorinsky et al., 2004), as well as history and social studies instruction (Fogo, 2014). Perhaps more useful though is its colloquial conception that is likely familiar to all teachers and as well as the general public, possibly conjuring a teacher to mind that is similar to the dry, rote, and emotionless lecturing of Ben Stein in the movie *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*.

I find these conceptions of practice to be also useful in how they align or are representative of the instructional goals that the preparation program coursework under investigation hopes to impart on its graduates as well as the experiences of these novice teachers in their prior classroom experiences and the contextual norms that they found in their first schools. However, this distinction is also problematic and has significant limitations that I will discuss further after outlining the common conceptions about the differences between traditional and ambitious teaching.

**Traditional Teaching.** I use “traditional teaching” to refer to a conception of instruction that has historically dominated the teaching profession in the United States. Generally, when
envisioning traditional teaching, one might picture “… teachers standing in the front lecturing and giving directions, rules, interpretations, and information; students sitting in rows expected to listen to and absorb what teachers say; finally, the testing and grading of their performance” (Ritchie & Wilson, 1993, p. 70). This approach has also been conceptualized as the banking model of education (Freire, 1972), or as a transmissive approach, where the teacher and textbook are regarded as the sole authorities on a subject and knowledge is transmitted to students through direct instruction methods such as lecture, notes, and readings. In this way, learning is very individualistic, with students taking on a passive role as recipients of information, providing few ideas in a generally one-sided discourse. Students take up a major part of the responsibility in memorizing and retaining information which is then assessed in ways that ask them to demonstrate their knowledge, often through independent work such as homework, recitations, summary-based reports of information, or standardized multiple-choice exams.

This emphasis on teacher and content-centered instruction has typified teaching practice for decades (Goodlad, 1984; Cuban, 1993). In addition, there is evidence that such passive or transmissive approaches remain common in history and social science classrooms (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Bolinger & Warren, 2007; Nokes, 2010; Saye et al., 2018). We might think of this type of social studies and history teaching as the “names and dates” approach which asks students to retain information rather than think critically about the content or ask any relevant, modern, or personal questions, undoubtedly leaving many a high school student to wonder, “when am I going to use this?”

These traditional approaches to teaching and learning are highly problematic. Transmissive teaching methods tend to be dull, unengaging, and result in limited student learning (Good & Lavinge, 2017), an issue that Dewey pointed out over 100 years ago (Dewey, 1916). Such traditional methods also have the potential for reproducing inequity or solidifying social castes because as they limit working class and minority students into as laborers and workers (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The canon of knowledge that is passed along in traditional approaches is also problematic in how it is Eurocentric, is white supremacist, disregards or diminishes the roles and contributions of Black and Brown folks in history, and can enforce white cultural norms onto students of color (Banks, 1993; Delpit, 2006; Nieto, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999).
It’s also important to note that traditional teaching is often seen as easier and more predictable than other approaches to teaching because it is highly stable and predictable (Fives & Buehl, 2012). The role of the teacher is rather straightforward: serve as content expert and arbiter of what is correct or incorrect, dispense this knowledge to students, and assess them to make sure that they’ve learned it. In this sense, traditional teaching is often routine and repetitive with teachers finding methods that they prefer and sticking with those throughout a course. If knowledge or content is unchanging, then little needs to be revised or reconsidered in curriculum or delivery from year to year. Further, because traditional teaching requires little student input or ideas, it also eliminates many opportunities for ambiguity and lowers the riskiness of the instruction, something that would seem especially true in contexts where classroom management or control is a concern. For example, because student voice or activity, like group work, are scarce in this approach, the risk for student disruptions is minimized, as is the chance that a student idea, question, or unexpected tangent leaves the teacher in a spot where they don’t know how to proceed in a lesson (Cohen, 2011).

This may be why teachers often default to these familiar and predictable traditional approaches (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), especially early in their careers. In one longitudinal study, Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2012) followed the instruction and career decisions of 15 beginning teachers during their first five years in the classroom and found that in some cases, teachers with low expectations for themselves or their students took up more simplistic and scripted curricula or that teachers in schools with few supports or expectations for high-quality instruction altered their personal expectations to match with less-rigorous and unambitious teaching.

Similarly, Smagorinsky and colleagues (2004) write about a beginning elementary teacher, Sharon, and similarly report the ease with which she resorted to more traditional methods. In their study, which followed Sharon from student teaching and into her first teaching job, the researchers noted the important role that school social pressures played, pointing out that novices might give into contextual pressures to teach traditionally (such as other teachers, curricula, parents, and students). Sharon felt that it would be “easier” to teach traditionally because she did not have to think as much about her practice and it didn’t come with the pushback from rocking the boat in a pedagogical sense (p. 19).
This is an area of research that could use further development. However, the following sections about ambitious practices highlight the point that traditional practices are easier for many teachers to adopt in comparison to the more challenging and unpredictable student-centered ways of teaching.

**Ambitious Teaching.** The other type of teaching that I use in this study is referred to as *ambitious teaching* (Cohen, 2011).

Ambitious teaching stresses the importance of learning experiences that engage students in active problem-solving and social sense-making that builds on their prior knowledge and ideas. Students construct their understanding collaboratively by engaging in activities in which there are multiple potential perspectives and/or solutions rather than a single right answer. This doesn’t mean that there is never a time for direct instruction, lecturing, or independent work, as Kennedy (2006) points out and which I will elaborate on further in the following section. However, discussion, group work, project-based learning, and other activities which are based in in-depth student thinking, ideas, and interaction are the methods most commonly associated with ambitious teaching. According to proponents, ambitious teaching seeks to prepare students for the real world by engaging them in critical thinking and problem-solving, especially when it comes to skills in asking questions, gathering and interpreting evidence, and developing arguments or solutions to said problems. This stands in stark contrast to traditional approaches; in ambitious classrooms knowledge is dynamic, developed with students, and put into action, while in traditional classrooms, knowledge is more static, inert, and for memorization and repetition rather than application or innovation.

Among the earliest proponents of an ambitious approach to teaching and learning were Booker T. Washington (Generals, 2000) and John Dewey (Dewey, 1916). Among Dewey’s four main principles of progressive education were learning by doing, discussion, interactive rather than passive learning, and making interdisciplinary connections, all of which are similar to the project methods employed by Washington at the Tuskegee Institute, and all of which reflect aspects of ambitious teaching. Other more recent approaches or conceptions that also fit this mold and that have similar ideals include Paulo Freire’s liberation pedagogy (Shor & Freire, 1987), critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2020), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 2014), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), or abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019). Within specific content areas, a shift towards disciplinary literacy and inquiry, which emphasizes student learning of specialized
knowledge and skills that are used by experts in the field (mathematicians, historians, scientists, etc.) to create, use, and communicate knowledge within the discipline (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012) also fits within this tradition of ambitious teaching.

History teacher education has shifted towards a more ambitious and student-centered orientation as much focus of history/social studies teacher professional development and preparation now emphasizes teaching with questions, critical thinking, and argumentation (Adler, 2008; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017; Levy et al., 2013). A significant portion of scholarship in this area focuses on what it means to think historically (Wineburg, 2010) by adopting some of the tools that historians use to construct historical arguments and narratives (Wineburg, 1991). In terms of specific methods or practices, these might include teachers using primary source investigations that give students the opportunity to “do history” (Barton & Levstik, 2004), facilitating text-based discussions (Reisman et al., 2018), supporting students’ argumentative writing in history (Monte-Sano, 2016), deliberations of contentious issues in a government class (McAvoy & Hess, 2013), and teaching social studies and history with big ideas and concepts rather than defaulting to chronological teaching (Grant & Gradwell, 2009, 2010).

Recognizing this trend in history and social studies teaching, Fogo (2014) sought to develop more consensus in the field around what practices constituted those that were core to teaching secondary history in a more authentic or ambitious sense. Fogo facilitated and reported on the work of 26 experts in the field, including scholars, teacher educators, and many award-winning and highly decorated teachers, to engage in successive and iterative rounds of developing, scoring, and revising a list of core history teaching practices. In this work, the panel determined that the following nine core practices are those that teachers need to be able to support students’ ability and skills in historical analysis and understanding of historical concepts:

- Use historical questions;
- Select and adapt historical sources;
- Explain and connect historical content;
- Model and support historical reading skills;
- Employ historical evidence;
- Use historical concepts;
- Facilitate discussion of historical topics;
- Model and support historical writing;
- Assess student thinking about history.

As I will describe in a later section, many of these ideas, practices, methods, and concepts of ambitious history and social studies teaching were present, to greater and lesser degrees, in the preparation program under study. Also, similar to the conception of practice that I employ in this study, Fogo (2014) explains that this list of core practices is “best understood as part of this larger approach to teaching” (p. 176) and that practices overlap and may be used in tandem, such how discussions might be centered around historical questions or how historical writing can be used as an assessment of students historical thinking. This assertion that such practices might be bundled or simultaneously serve similar purposes in a teacher’s lesson has been confirmed by other work that investigated how beginning history teachers took up these core practices in their first couple years of teaching (Monte-Sano et al., 2020).

This work in ambitious history teaching parallel’s other research in how it juxtaposes such approaches with the more common traditional methods, conceptualizing ways that teacher might attempts to cultivate in teachers more progressive beliefs, values, and practices. These often go by different names can include a more constructivist, inquiry-based, progressive, or student-centered orientation towards teaching and learning (Kennedy, 2006; Lee, 2012) and in history or social studies teaching, it is sometimes referred to as authentic teaching (Saye et al., 2018). Due to the various ways in which progressive or constructivist education is described in the literature, I choose to refer to these types of pedagogies under the umbrella term of “ambitious teaching” (Cohen, 2011). This is, in part, due to how the word ambitious captures the deliberate challenge that is inherent in this type of instruction, as well as the features that Cohen identifies such as ambitious teaching being relatively uncommon in American classrooms, more rigorous for both teachers and students than typical instruction, and as requiring a personal responsibility and deliberate action taken by the teacher to advance student learning (p. 27).

It is important to note that research suggests that teaching in ambitious ways can be difficult for a myriad of reasons. In his investigation of history teaching across the decades and in different schools, Cuban (2016) argued that teaching in such rigorous ways requires high levels of self-motivation, as teachers often need to find, create, and learn how to use more challenging and inquiry-based approaches (p. 173-174). Grant and Gradwell’s book on ambitious
teaching in the history classroom (2010) emphasizes that teaching in such a way is a difficult choice in the face of obstacles and challenges, arguing that,

“...the construct of ambitious teaching presumes that teachers face many conditions—subject matter, students, state policies, colleagues, and administrators—which may confound their practices. Ambitious teachers take seriously those conditions, but in contrast to their less ambitious peers, they carve out pedagogical paths that aim toward more powerful teaching and learning. Ambitious teaching, then, is defined neither by innovations nor best practices alone. Ambitious teachers use newer teaching methods, alternative assessments, and flexible student groupings, but the mere evidence of these practices without the requisite signs of robust learning opportunities is insufficient to demonstrate ambitious teaching.” (p. 9)

In this sense, it seems logical that teaching in rigorous and student-centered ways demands more from teachers than traditional approaches, meaning the personal characteristics such as determination, resilience, drive, and an improvement orientation are important considerations to make when thinking about whether or not teachers take up ambitious practice or default to more simplistic ways of teaching.

In Figure 1 below, I have used the conceptions of Smagorinsky and their colleagues (2004) as the basis for creating a more detailed view about what constitutes ambitious teaching, also incorporating descriptions from other scholars (e.g., Ritchie & Wilson, 1993; Lampert et al., 2013; Sjøberg, 2010).

As another note, I use different words to describe traditional and ambitious teaching throughout this dissertation. In part, this is a stylistic choice to avoid repetitive writing. This is also a deliberate choice on my part to reinforce the conceptual foundations of each approach to teaching. For example, I will often refer to traditional teaching as teacher- or content-centered teaching, transissional approaches, or as didactic. For ambitious teaching, I will also substitute synonymous phrasing such as progressive teaching, reform-oriented approaches, inquiry methods, or student-centered teaching. I hope that these choices will make the dissertation more readable and understandable.
Figure 1: Characteristics of Traditional and Ambitious Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Traditional Teaching</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ambitious Teaching</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular perspectives: Teachers and texts are authoritative</td>
<td>Considering and highlighting student perspective: Learning and learners are the focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is fixed and transmitted</td>
<td>Knowledge is connected and builds off of prior learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers rely on textbooks for curriculum and materials</td>
<td>Appropriate materials include various sources and perspectives, with meaning constructed by the learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on memorization, coverage, drill, practice, and assessment (breadth over depth)</td>
<td>Students’ activity and application is stressed. Fosters critical thinking (depth over breadth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is individualistic - students as passive recipients of knowledge</td>
<td>Learning is collaborative and social, emphasizing student voices and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-size-fits-most approach to instruction</td>
<td>Emphasis on equitable opportunities for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable, predictable, and relatively easy for the teacher to routinely enact</td>
<td>More challenging and difficult to enact due to dynamic and unpredictable nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Methods: Lecture, Film, Notes, Assigned readings, independent work, recitation, assessment based on memorization</td>
<td>Typical Methods: disciplinary/critical thinking skills, discussions or deliberations, problem-based investigations, forming arguments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Affordances and Constraints of a Traditional and Ambitious Practice Dichotomy**

As mentioned earlier, there are risks and downsides of using an ambitious versus traditional conception of teaching that I would like to note as well as some of the rationale behind my decision to conceptualize practice in this way.

The first and most important issue is one of oversimplification. It is likely that scholars would argue that there are critical differences between authentic teaching, progressive instruction, and more specific approaches such as inquiry-based or project-based instruction. They are most certainly correct, however, I lump these under the umbrella term because they generally share the common characteristics outlined in Table one, in that they include high levels of student involvement in the teaching and learning process, they are more active than traditional approaches, and they tend to be more challenging and rigorous with their focus on critical
thinking and problem solving. That said, I find it more useful to combine them under the conception of ambitious teaching while still acknowledging the nuanced differences between certain types of teaching that might fall under this categorization.

There is also a challenge that such a dichotomy positions student-centered teaching and traditional teaching as always good or always bad, respectively. This is a false dichotomy in some respects which creates potential misunderstandings for teachers, teacher candidates, and teacher educators, as Monte-Sano and colleagues noted (2020), it can leave folks with a view of practices serving “either information or inquiry” (p. 700) rather than understanding how traditional and ambitious methods might complement one another at times. This misunderstanding seems common, as Bob Bain (personal communication, June 9, 2023) pointed out, history/social studies teacher education program graduates often describe the main message they learn from coursework as “never lecture and never use a textbook” (which he notes they ironically learned from professors’ lectures and assigned readings from textbooks). It seems unwise to suggest that there is truly never a time for the teacher to provide students with information through a lecture or text. Likewise, it seems aloof, if not immoral, to open up all history or social studies content to interpretation as some things, such as the occurrence of events like the Holocaust or that slavery was the root cause of the American Civil War, are simply facts that are not up for debate.

In some ways, this highlights the importance of balance and purpose in how and why teachers call on traditional or ambitious teaching practices. Following the adage that “too much of anything is a bad thing,” the field seems to implicitly accept, likely based on our experiences as students, that too much lecture or too much independent work is less than ideal in the history/social studies classroom. If this is the case, might it also be true that there is such a thing as a classroom that uses too much discussion, has too many projects, and engages students in too much cooperative (rather than independent) work? Another piece of scholarship that followed how several history teachers took up ambitious teaching practices from preparation into their second year (Monte-Sano, Bordonaro, & Aumen, 2020) pointed out this limitation of examining the frequency of practice use, stating that “no one has yet successfully identified an ‘optimum’ level of implementation of core historical inquiry teaching practices,” and wondering, “how frequently should writing assignments be included in history lessons and how frequently should historical writing be explicitly taught and modeled?” (p. 701).
Monte-Sano, Bordonaro, and Aumen’s work (2020) emphasized this tension, pointing out that even the core practices for inquiry-based history instruction (Fogo, 2014) include instances where more traditional methods might be useful in supporting more ambitious practice. In particular, these included modeling of specific historical reading strategies or writing methods and providing students with context or background knowledge, perhaps through a lecture, text, or video. Several of the cases in their work highlight the importance that purpose plays in the use of historical inquiry methods: it is possible to use lecture or a video simply for the sake of content transmission while it’s also possible that the same clip or notes might support student comprehension of a forthcoming source investigation or provide them with evidence to cite during a discussion about a historical question. In this sense, more traditional history teaching sets out with a purpose of jam-packing students with knowledge that they might need someday where more inquiry-oriented instruction might use transmissional approaches to setup the students with the knowledge and skills that they will need soon, such as in the next activity or a longer-term unit or course activity or assessment. Importantly, this study also noted that these purposes seem to be rooted in teachers views of the discipline of history and contextual assessment and accountability pressures, such as whether teachers felt responsible more for content coverage or cultivating students’ reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills.

The final risk or challenge by establishing traditional and ambitious practice as a spectrum or dichotomy may overstate that ambitious practice is inherently difficult or that traditional practice is always easy. I don’t believe this to always be the case. For example, many of us have attended a wonderful lecture or seminar where we sat silently in the audience but still learned quite a lot. Writing and executing such profound public speeches or putting together an excellent and engaging lecture for a class are very difficult. Similarly, ambitious practice might be challenging because it requires more curriculum development and planning while also being unfamiliar to teachers and their students, but that does not necessarily need to be the case. I’ve spent time in schools and classrooms which utilize source investigations in ways that are more about work completion (or worksheet factories), requiring minimal effort on the teacher or student’s part, and I’ve also observed classes where the school culture supported lots of student voice, thinking, and engagement with difficult problems, which also made the work of ambitious teaching easier for teachers to implement.
In this sense, I’m not fully “in love” with the term ambitious teaching but do feel that it is the strongest conception of history and social studies teaching to help understand the teaching of my participants. As will be explicated and justified in a section to follow, the signature practices of the preparation program under examination in this study bases many of its activities, assignments, and course approaches in what I believe fits an ambitious, student-centered, and inquiry-oriented approach. Similarly, as will be showcased in the participant cases, the novice teachers in this study often framed their early-career teaching and prior experiences in classrooms based on whether it had a traditional or more progressive/ambitious orientation, making it a particularly useful and organic conception of history/social studies teaching for understanding their developmental journeys.

In this way, I hope that this study and the use of an ambitious-traditional conception of teaching can help to shine some light on how teacher preparation programs, teacher educators, and schools can make ambitious teaching less about being ambitious, in terms of effort needed, and more about being rigorous, in terms of student thinking and learning. Said another way, I believe the cases in this dissertation will help those interested in novice teacher development to better understand in what ways we can make beginning teachers more familiar with, competent with, and supported in their use of practices that promote student learning and grown by better understanding how we might avoid or lessen the burdens and obstacles they face across their preparation and induction.

**Theoretical Lens**

Understanding how I conceptualize practice as well as the differences between traditional and ambitious practice, I now move to describe some of the theories of teacher development which helped me in understanding the different challenges, supports, and contexts that can support novice teachers in enacting ambitious practice.

In this study, I draw upon the perspectives of complexity theory and sociocultural theory as lens to understanding novice teacher development. Hammerness, Stroupe, and Masko (2022) highlight the benefits and limitations of sociocultural theory and complexity theory and how their principles apply to studying teacher education. Additionally, in the sections that follow I will introduce a framework for thinking about teacher development of ambitious practices by detailing the ways in which the ideas of Sharon Feiman-Nemser influences my thinking about
teacher instructional development. In particular, these include her theories about the potential for developing a coherent continuum of teacher education across pre- and in-service (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) as well the conceptualization that she and Margret Buchmann developed, highlighting how a person, their preparation program, and the school contexts they work in interact to shape their learning to teach (1987).

**Complexity Theory**

Complexity theory in education focuses upon questions about how multiple relationships and interactions among stakeholders and elements of systems are responsible for patterns and phenomena (Byrne, 1998; Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Davis & Sumara, 1997; Ell et al., 2017; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). As used in education research, complexity theory-based scholarship draws understandings from different disciplines in order to provide rich understandings of how teacher development occurs under the influences of various elements (Martin et al., 2019). In this way, my use of complexity theory allows me consider many different influences on teacher development and to carefully avoiding simplistic or reductionist conceptualizations of teacher learning that other scholars have pointed to as a problem in the field (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). Others have also shown the usefulness of complexity theories in teacher development as they allow for multiple elements, actors, tools, and contexts (including those which are not initially anticipated by the researcher) to enter conversation with one another as teacher’s journey down nonlinear paths of development (Davis & Sumara, 1997). Rather than looking for predictable linear effects, research based in ideas of complexity theory allows for more descriptive understandings of how interactions with systems can result in patterns and describe phenomena in more holistic ways (Byrne, 1998). In research on teacher education, this helps to bring together the many different phases, people, communities, resources, tools, obstacles, and contexts in which teacher learning happens, including considerations for novice teachers’ K-12 experiences, preparation coursework, clinical experiences, student teaching or practicum, and the many different elements of their first-year contexts such as work with other teachers, students, administrators, and the community.

In many ways, this is similar to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory about child development but applied to adult learners instead of young children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Understanding the development of the child, from an ecological lens requires developing a deep
and meaningful understanding of how various actors and factors in their environment, such as a child’s family, peers, school, and community, interact with one another in ways that push and pull a child’s development in various different directions. Just as ecological systems theory points to the complex layers of environment and the importance of looking beyond immediate environment but also at larger systems and histories, complexity theory points to the nested contexts where teachers learn.

Applied to teacher development, ecological systems theory suggests that research should consider many different factors across time and place in terms of how multiple, overlapping, and often nonlinear factors influence teacher learning. Wideen and colleagues (1998) take up this idea in their review of teacher education scholarship. They recommend, as a means of improving teacher education, an increased use of the ecological approach “which focuses on the interrelations among and connectedness of organisms, objects, and particles and their contexts” (p. 168). They take a holistic approach that considers the different ways in which the phases, systems, and contexts of preparation interact in ways that can reinforce and encourage teachers to take up desired instructional practices. In their review, they determined that work on teacher learning is very disconnected, usually focusing on discrete segments or aspects of the ecological setting. Instead, they call for more extensive and inclusive representations of teacher development that consider the complexity of beginning teachers’ journeys.

Applying complexity theory as a lens on teacher development helps to account for the unevenness of teacher development and how teachers can be pushed and pulled in different directions, by different factors, at different times, and in different contexts. Complexity theory draws attention to the idea that within systems, feedback loops (sometimes non-linear) shape learning (Hammerness et al., 2022, p. 11) in ways that can influence teacher practice in overlapping or contradictory ways across their developmental continuum. Rather than studying a single intervention, such as a new curriculum or professional development program, an approach based in complexity theory takes a “here’s where we started,” “here’s what happened,” and “this also happened,” “we did this,” “which affected this,” and “here’s what happened as a result” approach to understanding teaching.

The field has known for decades that teachers, especially in their early years, are in a constant interplay between individual and contextual constraints with differing expectations and demands (e.g., Cohen, 1991; Stanton & Hunt, 1992; Strom et al., 2018; Tabachnick & Zeichner,
1984). It seems logical that coherence of systems and elements is an important factor in the ways that different actors and elements within a system can work to mutually support each other or can act in ways that offset or contradict each other. These could include pressures from administrators or accountability measures, social pressures from students or other teachers to teach in certain ways, or the way that resources and tools, such as curriculum or school discipline systems, can act in ways that support or detract from ambitious teaching.

The ways in which these different factors and experiences aligned or misalign across a teacher’s development are therefore a foundational part of this study. For example, complexity theory would suggest that simply looking at a novice teacher’s experiences in student teaching would be insufficient for understanding their overall development. Although a school context is certainly a complex system, looking backward and forward in time would be a necessary element to understanding what knowledge and beliefs a teacher brought with them from coursework or their own experiences as a K-12 student and how those shaped their interpretation of their student teaching. They might reject learning experiences with a mentor teacher whose practices were wildly foreign to them or eagerly uptake them as a preferable way of teaching in comparison to their experiences as students, with intervening factors to consider such as how their teaching vision may have been shaped during coursework. Similarly, if a preparation program and a teacher’s first year school both promoted ambitious teaching practices, this would be experienced differently by teachers who had conflicting or aligned educational values or came a more traditional or progressives schooling background.

I would also like to note that, as a long time K-12 teacher myself, I have personally experienced the complexity that teachers undergo as they develop in their first few years in the classroom. I have navigated, balanced, and negotiated my instruction with considerations to my own experiences as a student, the ideas and perspectives gained from preparation, and the daily demands of classroom teaching. At different points in this trajectory, I know that mentoring, resources, drawing from past teachers, and professional development opportunities took prominent roles in determining my instruction and collectively shaped me into the teacher I was when I left the classroom for this doctoral program.

From this perspective, I would find it unfair and inaccurate to paint narratives of teacher’s instruction and development without considering the complexity to what it means to become a teacher. As such, I take on the ideas and concepts of ecological and complexity theory
as an essential design element and consideration in the development and execution of this study. In a later section, I further describe the research base and important concepts in school organizational scholarship that helped to inform my understanding and design of this study, suggesting areas of particular importance in how school settings and systems can influence novice teachers’ instruction.

**Sociocultural Theory**

In a similar vein, I also know the importance that social and cultural factors and interactions played in my own developmental experiences as an educator. Thankfully, sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990) backs up the insights gained in my own developmental journey, with other scholarship framed with complexity or ecological theories making similar explicit connections to sociocultural theories are at play with the systems where teachers learn how to teach (Davis & Sumara, 1997).

Although this study primarily takes a broad lens by looking across the nested contexts of teacher learning, it is also highly influenced by the ideas of sociocultural theory as I acknowledge that teacher learning is situated within various communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They suggest that the apprenticeship of newcomers, such as the novice teachers in this study, into their specific school contexts is an important variable to consider as the communities of practice in schools can be very different. The contexts that a teacher is apprenticed into matter for how they negotiate the meaning of what is happening in their schools and their understanding of what it means to be a teacher as they develop their professional identities within these contexts (e.g., Chen & Mensah, 2018; Findlay, 2006). Similarly, different school community contexts may have different values (control, learning, creativity, demonstrating competency), tools (curricular resources, school policies), and skills or practices (project-based learning, classical education, discussion-based) that shape teacher development. In this sense, social influences and interactions among teachers, students, teacher educators, school resources, mentor teachers, parents, and administrators are highly influential in how teachers develop their practice.

As scholars have noted, there is not a singular sociocultural learning theory; the perspective describes a family of theories that share six similar features (Esmonde, 2016, pp. 7–
8), of which, this study foregrounds four as foundational to understanding how teachers learn in the complex and nested systems described previously.

- Learning should be studied as it occurs in everyday life, not just in the laboratory.
- As people cross boundaries between different contexts, their learning both endures and shifts.
- Multiple historical timescales are relevant for the study of learning.
- Learning should be studied using a developmental method that allows insight into the process of learning, not just the outcomes.

With these ideas in mind, I developed this study to make sure that I captured the complex environments that teachers enter as they start their careers. Simply talking to teachers about their new schools and about their practice isn’t enough. Only looking at first-year instructional practices would not cut it. To understand their development, I also needed to know about their relationships with other teachers and people along their developmental paths who influenced them. I needed to ask about the cultures of the different schools that they’ve been in, both as children themselves but also for clinical work and their current school norms and versions of teacher professionalism.

In tandem with the ideas from complexity theory, I designed this study to make sure that I considered the big, small, and as much as I could in-between, about the development of these teachers. In doing so, I’ve been sure to ask teachers questions about their interactions with other teachers, staff, administrators, students, and parents. I’ve purposefully sought to understand school professional cultures throughout my data collection to understand the backdrop against which these novices have learned to teach as these are all critically relevant to understanding their development.
Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Teacher Education as a Continuum

I approached this study with an understanding that teacher development occurs in many different contexts and across time. This study considers the ways that beginning history teachers learn practices and develop as instructors across time and contexts, while acknowledging the different challenges, dilemmas, tensions, and opportunities that each setting present, as describe in the next section. Before diving into those dilemmas and relevant literature, I first describe these different contexts for teacher development and their intended purposes, goals, and impacts on teacher development.

In Feiman-Nemser’s work (2001) on the continuum of teacher education, she suggests that the field stop looking exclusively at segments of teacher education, such as looking exclusively at coursework, student teaching, or in-service professional development. Instead, she suggests that research look across time and context to examine how the experiences of teachers in each of these contexts come together to shape teachers’ instruction. Furthermore, her work promotes the idea that alignment or convergence across these different settings, such as coursework that promotes a certain view of reading instruction that is supported by a student teaching setting that mirrors this approach might be further enhanced if teachers land in school settings with curriculum and continued professional develop in this way of teaching reading, would increase the likelihood that teachers deeply understand and know how to enact such practices in their own classrooms.

The Contexts and Central Tasks of Teacher Education

In each of the different contexts of teacher education, Feiman-Nemser identified central tasks that are the aims or goals that continuously build toward developing effective teachers.

Other work by Feiman-Nemser and Buchman (1987) about student teacher development creates a framework similar to Feiman-Nemser’s work (2001) on the continuum and proposes a
framework for understanding teacher development as being influenced by three different domains: the teacher as person, the preparation program, and the student teaching context.

Using their ideas and the works of other scholars, I have developed my own framework for understanding the different important contexts where beginning teachers’ instruction is cultivated. In my own conception of development, I conceptualize four distinct areas of significant influence on teacher development: the personhood of the teacher, their experiences in preparation program coursework, their experiences in clinical work, and their experiences in their current school context. These four areas of influence push, pull, draw, or inspire them to teach across a spectrum of instruction that is either more ambitious and progressive or more didactic and traditional.

Figure 2 below is a representation of how the different areas of teacher development can push or pulling teacher vision and practice in different directions.

The sections following the figure unpack each area in more detail, using the central tasks identified by Feiman-Nemser to explicate what we know about teacher development at each stage or how each element influences teacher practice.

Figure 2: Influences on Teacher Vision and Practice

Note. This diagram is meant to represent a teacher’s pedagogy and how their vision of instruction and practice may be pulled in different directions by different factors and is based mostly on the work of Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987)
Person. Preservice teachers as people bring much to the table as actors within complex systems. They enter teacher preparation programs with extensive ideas and beliefs about their content areas, the purposes of schooling, and what it means to be a teacher (e.g., Ball, 1988; Hollinsworth, 1989), with sources in their own experiences as students as well as cultural understandings of schooling. Their beliefs, ideas, and dispositions playing an instrumental role in how they experience different elements along their developmental journey and how they construct their practice as a result.

Lortie’s theory of the apprenticeship of observation (1975) is among the foremost ideas about how experiences before teacher preparation shape teachers’ future practice. He postulated that teachers replicate the practices of the teachers whom they spent thousands of hours watching while they themselves were students. Buchman (1987) called this process the “folkways of teaching” where teachers teach in the ways they were taught with “ready-made recipes for action and interpretation that do not require testing or analysis while promising familiar, safe results” (p. 161). Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) further explained that, “[t]hese “default options” from one’s apprenticeship of observation provide a set of reliable strategies that teachers can fall back on when they are uncertain about how to proceed pedagogically,” (p. 30) suggesting that the reproduction of traditional teaching is rooted both in teachers’ competence with alternative methods and their willingness to put in the “hard thinking” needed to put their ideas into practice (Borko et al., 1992).

However, given that Lortie’s (1975) findings were about teachers in a different era over 50 years ago, a reconsideration of his claims might be important. Lortie reflected (2005) on this seminal work, calling for more research on teachers and their work, specifically pointing to a need for “[g]reater knowledge of differences in the ways and extent to which teachers are influenced by former teachers”, and that “much remains to be learned about the carry-over of student experience into the work lives of classroom teachers” (Lortie, 2005, p. 139). He also recommends studies that can compare how teacher experiences in different programs, professional development, or treatment groups “effects ... how teachers see themselves and their teaching practices" and how they might “carry over what they learn into their classrooms" (Lortie, 2005, p. 148).
Taking up this call, Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) investigated the experiences of preservice teachers to see if traditional, teacher-centered teaching was still the norm. What they found is that modern preservice teachers report experiences with models of more progressive or constructivist approaches to teaching in their own experiences as students and generally view these experiences as more favorable role models that they’d like to emulate (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014, p. 30). Importantly, their experiences also included negative teacher role models, typically more traditional teachers, whom PSTs said they’d like to avoid being like in their own practice (Cook et al., 2002). This is important to consider because the models and teaching that preservice teachers have seen and experienced can greatly shape their visions as these observational apprenticeships “can influence both the types of assumptions teachers have about the way school ought to occur and the success of those practices in particular institutional contexts” (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 22).

These “folkways of teaching” that shape how PSTs view “teaching as usual” (Buchmann, 1987) and that are rooted in their experiences in classrooms before they ever arrive in teacher preparation seem to also play a role in appropriation of methods and approaches promoted during their preparation. Preprogram beliefs shape how PSTs experience, and concurrently what they learn, from their TPPs (Hollingsworth, 1989) by influencing what they attend to in coursework, what they think is reasonable or beneficial to enact in their future practice, and which practices they appropriate (Windschitl, 2004).

Teacher beliefs should also be emphasized as an important factor in understanding how they practice. Teacher beliefs act as filters, frames, and guides for how they understand and enact their teaching (Buehl & Beck, 2014) and show up in different ways such as through lesson planning, unit goals, problems or tasks, activity choices, and in-the-moment decision making (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Some beliefs are more core or central to teacher thinking, and it is these core beliefs that are most likely to manifest in teachers’ practice (Phipps & Borg, 2009). For example, teachers might enter the profession with different yet strong beliefs about the goals and purposes of teaching in their content area, such as a desire to develop active citizens, a core belief in history as a means of diverse representation and inclusion or having a goal of making classes fun and social. These beliefs would be most reflected in their teaching practices, such as a classroom that links learning to modern issues, one where “hidden histories” of marginalized populations is made central, or a class where they play lots of games and do group work,
respectively. Understanding what makes teachers tick is a crucial element in understanding their teaching practices.

But simply having strong beliefs is not enough to guarantee that those beliefs are reflected in a teacher’s practice (Jorgensen et al., 2010; Liu, 2011). Beltman, Mansfield, and Price’s (2011) review of research on teacher resilience is especially useful in considering how teachers as people may impact how they endure in classrooms and whether or not they have the characteristics necessary to put beliefs and ambitious practices into action. The authors showed that intrinsic motivation and having altruistic motives for teaching, including taking on a personal responsibility for student learning and well-being as a means to improving society, has shown to be a critical factor in reviews of teacher resilience. They also found that teacher self-efficacy, or “feeling confident and competent, taking credit for and drawing sustenance from their accomplishments” (p. 190), was important and especially impacted by teachers first few years in the field. This mirrors other findings that suggest that self-efficacy is important in whether or not teachers enact beliefs in practice (Thoonen et al., 2011). Buehl and Beck summarized this relationship in their review of teacher beliefs, self-efficacy, and practice by stating that, “...the teacher must believe in his or her ability to implement a practice, view him or herself as responsible for students’ learning, and believe that students are capable of learning for beliefs about content and instruction to be implemented in practice.” (2014, p. 75)

Taken together, teachers’ personal characteristics seemed to be relevant to whether or not they can overcome obstacles and challenges they face in the field, something which is likely to happen as novice teachers try to enact more rigorous and ambitious methods. Thus, knowing the teacher as a person is critical to understanding their practice because their backgrounds and personal histories in the classroom shape their future teaching. Understanding teachers’ core beliefs, values, goals, and their feelings of efficacy or confidence in enacting methods is essential for helping teacher educators and researchers to understand their development.

**Preparation Coursework.** In research about teacher development, many scholars have concluded that preparation, especially coursework, is a weak intervention and has minimal impact on teachers’ practice. This is a particular issue because, as many have noted (Boyd et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Helms-Lorenz et al, 2015; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000), there is a limited literature base showing that formal teacher preparation makes beginning
teachers more effective. One reason that this is the case is because longitudinal studies of teacher development are difficult, time consuming, and challenging to do at scale, meaning it is difficult to trace teacher development in ways that allow for causal claims and generalizations to be made about the impacts of teacher preparation.

However, there are studies that do suggest that teacher preparation does impact novice teachers’ beliefs, skills, and instruction. In the following sections, I will outline some of these findings in relation to what Feiman-Nemser (2001) deemed as the central tasks of learning to teach in the preservice phase. As was noted in the previous section, beliefs matter for new teachers’ practice, so one task identified as key in preparation is providing opportunities for novice teachers to examine their own beliefs about teaching and learning through a critical lens and in relation to a vision of good teaching, such as ambitious practice. Two other central tasks identified as crucial in the preparation context are the development of a beginners’ repertoire (i.e., basic mastery and knowledge of curricular materials, methods, and models of teaching to tap into once in the field) and developing the tools, skills, and habits to study teaching (i.e., the ability to observe, notice, interpret, analyze, and reflect forward on one’s teaching).

Examining Beliefs and Vision of Teaching. Research in the 1980s and 1990s about teaching and teacher preparation examined how coursework impacted teachers’ beliefs and visions of practice. Though teachers cite learning more in clinical placements, the influence of theories and ideas in developing images or visions of the possible (Hammerness, 2003; Shulman, 1990, p. 309) in coursework help shape these understandings (Grossman & Richert, 1988). Other studies suggest that particularly innovative programs do affect the way that teachers see and think about teaching and learning (Florio & Lensmire, 1990; Ball, 1990; Featherstone & Feiman-Nemser, 1992; Cochran-Smith, 1991), especially when aspects of the program force PSTs to engage with their own experiences in school to reexamine and reconstruct their understanding of these experiences as they simultaneously learn how to interpret new experiences in classrooms (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). More recent work builds on these claims, pointing out that coursework helps to provide novice teachers with the conceptual tools and understandings that shape their visions of ideal practice and create an image of their classroom that they strive for as they enter their second year (Grossman et al., 2000). Research in history and social studies teacher education generally concludes the same thing: coursework and
preparation can shape teachers’ beliefs and conceptualizations of instruction (Adler, 2008; Martell, 2020).

**Beginners’ Repertoires.** Although there are examples in literature where teachers attributed their knowledge of a range of instructional strategies, classroom discipline and management, and classroom routines to their education coursework (Adams & Krockover, 1997; Grossman & Richert, 1988; Valli & Agostinelli, 1993), there is a general consensus that in typical teacher preparation programs, clinical placements and practica out in real classroom settings are where teachers get to develop their instructional skill. This is problematic and will be described in more detail in a future section, but the main issue is that although teachers may gain conceptual understandings of teaching and revise their beliefs to more ambitious models of instruction, they often cite lacking practical skills and knowledge to put these ideas into use (Martell, 2020; Kloser et al., 2019).

That said, there are some promising studies that suggest how coursework might influence the development of these practical skills. Recent studies suggest that novice teachers leave preparation programs feeling prepared to enact structural aspects of teaching such as lesson planning and standards-based instruction, but feel less prepared in areas such as classroom management and using assessments to guide instruction (e.g., Doran, 2020; Livers et al., 2021). Programs that are carefully constructed (i.e., by making coherent connections across courses, making explicit connections between theory and practice, and having closely linked clinical placements) have been shown to positively influence novice teachers’ literacy practice (Dillon et al., 2011; Risko et al., 2018). Teachers are more likely to take-up said practices both in rehearsals (or classroom simulations) as well as in their actual classroom practice, where modeled practices that are left implicit or unexamined are less evident in rehearsal and real classroom practice (Kloser et al., 2019). Similar impacts on developing teacher candidates’ pedagogical reasoning and understanding of a practice have been found when they are able to see several models of the practice in action paired with deliberative conversation that make instructional decision-making explicit (Kavanagh, Conrad, Dagogo-Jack, 2020).

The modeling of ambitious practice done by teacher educators and its impact on developing novice teachers’ repertoire of practice is “almost a blank spot in … the body of knowledge on teacher education” (Lunenberg, Korthagan, & Swennen, 2007, p. 586) and continues to be described as sparse (Warren, 2019). Though some teacher educators may strive
to “walk the walk” and embody the ambitious practices they promote (e.g., Russell, 1997), it seems that explicit modeling in coursework remains rare (Lunenberg, Korthagan, & Swennen, 2007; Warren, 2019). Some work investigating teacher educator modeling points out the incongruence of teacher educators not practicing what they preach (Ruys et al., 2013), and leaving teacher candidates the impression that they should teach as their instructors say, not as they do (Brown et al., 2021). Other work finds that when teacher educators do model what they what their teacher candidates to do in their future classrooms, that it is often left implicit and may remain invisible to many teacher candidates (Warren, 2019). The scholarship that does exist about teacher educator modeling of practice suggests that explicit modeling and public sharing or teacher educators’ pedagogical thinking is a powerful way for teacher candidates to be exposed and better understand more ambitious teaching practices (Estaïteyeh, 2022; Ritter, 2012), although teacher educator modeling is experienced and interpreted differently by different teacher candidates (Hogg & Yates, 2013).

Though there is a wide range of research that cites the work of Lunenberg and colleagues (2007) about the role of modeling or teacher educators as role models, this piece is mostly used as a guidepost citation with which other authors underscore that teacher educators should strive to model the practices that we promote in our coursework, or, as Moore and Bell (2019) characterize it, “a side note of practice…with an implicit assumption of effectiveness” (p. 326). Still, even as “the role of the teacher educator in modelling new practices becomes more central, [the] published debate and research is hard to come by” (Wright, 2010, p. 287), especially studies which examine if “modeling results in effective changes once preservice teachers begin their practice” (Moore & Bell, 2019, p. 339).

**Studying Teaching.** Reflective practice and the ability to study one’s teaching have been a hallmark of teacher preparation programs for decades (Beauchamp, 2015; Osterman 1990). In part, this skill seems to be particularly important because the work of teaching can be professionally isolating and self-reflection can often be the primary means for self-improvement as teachers learn in practice (Lisle, 2006). Self-reflection also serves as a bridge between theory or ideas learned in coursework and the practical work done in the classroom (Corbin Frazier & Eick, 2015; Foong, Nor, & Nolan, 2018; Stenberg et al., 2016). Generally speaking, coursework assignments and activities that focus on reflection can promote the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of reflective practitioners (Slade et al., 2019). However, the depth and quality of
preservice teachers’ reflection can be highly variable with some teachers engaging in low-level habitual work when reflecting and others reflecting in ways that are more transformative of their practice (Harland & Wondra, 2011; Slade et al., 2019). Other scholars have noted differences in how novice and veteran teachers reflect on their teaching, suggesting that reflection is a skill that needs to be explicitly taught and practiced (Russell, 2005; Shoffner, 2011; Williams & Grudnoff, 2011) and should be modeled by teacher educators (Amobi, 2006).

Practice-based teacher education may also play a role in novice teachers’ ability to productively analyze and reflect on their instruction. Such approaches in coursework, which were used extensively with the participants in this study, revolve around a set of core practices (Grossman & McDonald, 2008) or high-leverage practices (Ball & Forzani, 2011) and providing opportunities for teachers to engage with and practice using these methods before being in front of real children in actual classrooms (Ball & Forzani, 2009). This is done through a “learning cycle” (TEDD, 2014), shown in Figure 3 below, in which teachers are first introduced to a practice by naming and decomposing its parts; then have the opportunity to prepare and enact the practice in a simulated setting, typically called a rehearsal (Lampert et al, 2013; Kazemi et al., 2016; Kavanagh et al., 2019); followed by a structured analysis and reflection on the enactment with an eye towards improvement. Studies of practice-based approaches to teacher education have shown that practice-based approaches used in preparation coursework can provide opportunities for novices to engage in collaborative inquiry and reflection on their own and other’s practice (DeMink-Carthew et al., 2017). Such an approach seems especially important in developing a shared understanding and language to analyze, discuss, and reflect on practice (Grossman & Dean, 2019; Kavanagh et al., 2020; Reisman et al., 2018).
Given that practice-based work is undertaken collaboratively in coursework with preservice teachers and teacher educators engaging in analysis and simulations together, there is potential that engaging in discussing, analyzing, and reflecting on practice in coursework can establish a culture of reflective practice (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008), something that programs hope carries over into novices’ future teaching careers as a form of continuous improvement. The literature base on the reflective and long-term potential of practice-based methods is relatively thin (see Wetzel et al., 2018 for a notable exception) and is a potentially rich area to examine how such approaches might engage teachers to “study teaching” and impact their practice over the long run.

**Clinical Work.** In Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) conception of the continuum of teacher education, the next important context for teacher development is what I call clinical work, referring to experiences that novice teachers have in classrooms before becoming the full-time teacher of record. These experiences center around student teaching, sometimes referred to as practicum or internship, a field that was among the earliest areas of teacher education research.
As teacher education continued to develop, this research also has grown to include field experiences (Goodman, 1985; Knutsen-Miller et al., 2009; Martin & Wood, 1983) which occur often prior to student teaching and often involve observation of mentor teacher practices with some opportunities to work with students or lead the class.

Clinical work is generally viewed as an apprenticeship period for novice teachers to gain experience in a classroom under the guidance and supervision of an expert teacher. As such, I consider this context to be most similar to Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) induction phase, which I argue starts in student teaching and continues into a teacher’s first few years in the classroom. In this phase, Feiman-Nemser defines the critical tasks of teacher development to include novice teachers learning about their school contexts (i.e., students, curriculum, and school community), designing a responsive instructional program, creating a classroom learning community, enacting and refining the methods and practices from their beginner’s repertoire, and developing their professional identity and understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

Cooperating or mentor teachers can be among the most influential factors in changing student teacher beliefs and practices (Borko and Mayfield, 1995). Several studies have shown that novice teachers commonly gravitate towards the practices and dispositions of their mentor teachers (e.g., Ronfeldt et al., 2018; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). In an ethnography of a handful of student teachers, Rozelle and Wilson (2012) showed the interaction between teacher beliefs and practice and how the cooperating teacher plays an important facilitating role. By watching student teachers go through stages of mimicking their cooperating teachers’ lessons, to channeling their cooperating teachers’ “patterns of practice” (p. 1197), student teachers first shifted their practice to match their cooperating teacher, then later their beliefs about teaching to more closely align with those practices. Other research has shown that the quality of cooperating teachers rather than the length of student teaching has significant and positive effects on feelings of preparedness, efficacy, and career plans (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012), further elevating the importance of finding qualified and supportive cooperating teachers to help novices develop their practices and beliefs.

Having the space and encouragement to navigate these tensions by trying out new practices during student teaching might play a role in truly changing PSTs’ thinking and practice. Some work suggests that student teachers who are given more freedom to teach the way they
want are more likely to utilize the practices of their teacher education programs (Anderson & Stillman, 2010). Further, this experimenting with method in placements (with opportunities to fail), with field instructors or supervisors pushing or forcing PSTs to try out practices when they are reluctant, seems important for teacher learning and uptake of practices from preparation (Hollingsworth, 1989).

Novice teachers also cite clinical experiences as among the most important and impactful parts of teacher preparation (Wilson et al., 2001). Through the clinical setting, novices have the opportunity to apply the knowledge and practices learned in their coursework in a supportive environment while improving over the course of the placement (Leko & Brownell, 2011; Scott et al., 2014). A major support during this development stage is the mentor teacher who is seen as crucial to supporting the development of novice teachers’ skills and development (Mena, Hennissen, & Loughran, 2017).

Time spent in practicum seems to also play a role in building teachers’ self-efficacy and as a proving ground for legitimizing practice. Interactions between PSTs and cooperating teachers are influential in PSTs being able to negotiate meaning and to begin developing their sense of legitimacy and confidence as teachers (Izadina, 2015). In a study of 71 pre-service elementary school teachers, researchers found that teacher perceptions of preparedness and efficacy both increased significantly after student teaching with the opportunities to practice, observe master teaching, and receive mentorship from their cooperating teacher as playing a pivotal role in this phenomenon (Brown, Lee, & Collins, 2015). In another example, Cuenca’s (2011) study of two student teachers undertaking their final field placement found that when cooperating teachers shared their tools of teaching, inducted PSTs into their classroom rituals, and provided ‘tethered learning, where the student teacher gained access to the activity of teaching and felt like a legitimate teacher in a bounded manner. Cuenca described tethered learning as allowing PSTs to practice, and at times make mistakes, with the ‘safety net’ of the cooperating teacher’s active monitoring of their teaching.

However, experiences in student teaching do not inherently contribute to building either efficacy or confidence. A review of practica in STEM teaching concluded that studies generally find that student teaching impacts novices teachers’ confidence, feelings of efficacy, conceptions of teaching in their content area in ways that are both positive and negative (Österling & Christiansen, 2022). Unsuccessful student teaching experiences have the potential to discourage
teachers from using ambitious teaching practices, such as when mentor teachers discourage and are unsupportive of student teachers attempts at using more student-centered practices like discussions. The authors of this review also called into question the impact of practicum on teacher identity and affect, noting that novices’ preconceptions as they enter student teaching may be more important than the practicum experience itself. This includes the possibility that student teachers might ignore the practices and guidance of their mentor teacher, viewing student teaching as a temporary obstacle to get through before they have their own classrooms and can teach the way that they want. Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) also raised these concerns as the visions of practices and beliefs that student teachers bring with them seem to give direction and act as a filter to how they understand the student teaching experience.

Mentor teachers’ alignment with ambitious practices also seems to also play a role in promoting the uptake of practices promoted during preparation. One study of secondary science student teachers found that alignment between the mentor teachers’ instruction and the frameworks promoted by the preparation program influenced whether or not student teachers took up ambitious practices (Stroupe, 2016). Another study that followed a pair of history/social studies student teachers had similar findings, noting that the mentor teacher who was more aligned with program instruction and practices influenced their student teacher’s uptake of program methods positively (Fitchett & Moore, 2022).

Although why this happens is unclear, referring back to Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) critical tasks of clinical work would suggest that in the right settings, novice teachers have the opportunity to see master teachers who use ambitious teaching practices and who can help them in learning how to develop responsive instructional programs, cultivate a classroom community focused on learning, and to get feedback and support to refine their beginner’s repertoire of methods and teaching approaches. We can also see how clinical experiences can support teacher confidence and efficacy with enacting ambitious methods by learning in supportive environments that encourage novices to give said methods a try. It also seems logical that such experiences shapes novice teachers’ professional identities and understanding of what it means to be an ambitious instructor.

**Beginning Teaching and Context.** Without question, the in-school context has long been viewed as instrumental in the development of teachers in ways that directly impacts their
instruction (Clift & Brady, 2005; Lortie, 1975). In this sense, I call upon research and scholarship in school organization and improvement to inform my understanding of what contextual elements the teachers in this study might encounter and how these might be experienced in ways that shapes their instruction. However, because this study did not investigate the school district leaders’ goals, visions, and strategies for realizing these, I use them instead as a sensemaking lens to understand more deeply the in-service experiences of participants and to aid in my interpretation of the data.

A teacher’s first few years in the profession are considered to be a distinct and formative phase of teacher development (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986; Huberman, 1989; Day & Gu, 2007; Brunetti & Marston, 2018) in which novice teacher identity and instructional practices take shape. Feiman-Nemser (2001) points towards the importance of induction tasks for schools such as opportunities for teachers to deepen their knowledge of content and curriculum, to add to their skills and repertoire of instructional methods, to continue developing their vision of teaching, to further solidify their teacher identity, and to strengthen their skills in studying their teaching with an eye towards improvement. Because “[a]s teachers develop professionally ... they are developing concurrently in their identity as teachers,” (Brunetti & Marston, 2018, p. 887), teacher identity, instructional development, and school context, are deeply intertwined and can have long lasting effects as they form the foundation upon which a teachers’ future instruction is based.

**Schools as Organized Systems.** Today’s schools are not the schools of yesteryear. American classroom life in previous decades was often characterized by isolation and professional autonomy for teachers. Lortie called this the egg-crate school (1975) where teachers operated independently in their own classrooms but within the same school building. In such settings, efforts at instructional change were particularly difficult with challenges of loose-coupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) between education policies and classroom practices where teachers could enact new methods or policies in shallow, ceremonial, or superficial ways while predominately teaching in the same ways that they had always taught (Lacy, 1977; Lloyd, 2007; Sikes et al., 1985).

However, in the past 30 years, American public education has experienced major shifts in purpose and organization, especially in regards to changing views from concerns about access and resources in schools towards creating more instructionally focused education systems which
organize and manage instruction towards academic ends and outcomes (Peurach et al., 2019). Relatedly, “[s]tates have wagered on alignment and accountability” as the means to achieve instructional change in classrooms and, concurrently, student learning and achievement (Coburn et al., 2016, p. 246).

These ideas about school transformation are based on understandings that unsuccessful attempts at reforms were the result of misalignments between policies and implementation supports, calling for systemic reforms that create coherence and links across instructional factors such as standards, professional development, assessment, curricular materials, and opportunities for staff collaboration around said instructional changes (Bryk, 2010; Desimone et al., 2002; O’Day & Smith, 1993; Porter, 1994).

Senge’s work (1990; 2006) about learning organizations, proposes a theoretical framework for understanding how members of organizations develop structures to help facilitate learning, adaptability, and collective work. In particular, Senge identifies that personal mastery of individuals, a shared vision or goals, possessing mental models to achieve this vision, and team learning opportunities were interdependent and could mutually reinforce one another in ways that help organizations to grow and develop.

In education research, these different elements that support a school’s instructional development are often called educational infrastructures (Hopkins & Woulfin, 2015; Shirrell, Hopkins, & Spillane, 2019; Spillane, Hopkins, & Sweet, 2015, 2018) for the way that they act as “as scaffolds or networks that facilitate function” and allow teachers, staff, and administrators to “engage with networks of tools and relationships to accomplish their work” within a school (Hopkins & Woulfin, 2015, p. 372). According to Spillane, Hopkins, and Sweet (2015, 2018), educational infrastructures include the formal systems, policies, and resources intended to enable, improve, or support high-quality instruction such as curricular materials, assessments, administrative procedures, classroom and school routines, and supports for learning and developing teacher knowledge, beliefs, and practice such as collaborative time, professional development, or instructional coaching. In this logic, a new set of standards or curriculum is likely to be ineffective in bringing about instructional change without proper training, professional development, or supervision. However, even in these cases, new approaches might only be adopted by individual teachers rather than entire school or department, suggesting that continuous work around the new method, standard, or curriculum, such as collaboration amongst
teachers, instructional coaching, and assessment, might further encourage teachers to take up new ways of teaching.

In this theory of action, teachers are more likely to adopt more effective practices by creating incentives for them to adopt new approaches, with the hopes that aligned supports make such pressure more enabling than coercive (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Cynthia Coburn’s (2004) study of the implementation of instructional reform and corresponding changes in teachers’ practice is especially relevant in this regard. She found that:

... teachers are more likely to respond to messages by bringing ideas or approaches into their classrooms in a substantive way when these messages have a high degree of intensity, or a high degree of pervasiveness or are accompanied by normative pressures. The degree of intensity is especially influential, since it provides a mechanism for teachers to engage with messages over time, allowing them to draw connections with messages that may at first seem incongruent, to experiment with and adjust new practices in ways that may allow them to shift classroom routines and regularities in more substantial ways; and to interact with knowledgeable others in ways the encourage them to surface, question, and possibly rethink their tacit assumptions. (p. 233-234).

Said another way, teachers who are in schools with systems and infrastructures--such as coaching, assessment, curriculum, and collaboration--that support and link different tools, resources, and individuals around ambitious practice increases the likelihood that teachers do take up such approaches and are less likely to fall back on more familiar traditional approaches. This again points to the importance of taking an ecological approach that considers the complexity of teacher development and the different educational infrastructures that they may encounter within their early-career school contexts.

This is not to say that all schools, grade levels, or content areas are highly organized and coherent. Schools and districts have varying degrees to which they implement and interweave educational infrastructures, including some schools that establish robust links between practices and systems such as hiring, professional development, teacher collaboration, and schoolwide discipline systems (Johnson, 2019) while others remain “shit shows” (Lefebvre & Thomas, 2017) or maintain more traditional structures that prioritize teacher autonomy and independence (Waychunas, 2022a, 2022b). As Peurach and colleagues (2019) acknowledge, in efforts to develop instructionally focused education systems, “[p]rogress of this sort is slow” (p. 56), where
“[s]ome [schools and districts] are advancing coordinated, strategic plans for comprehensive district redesign... [while]... others are muddling through in ways that are more incremental and evolutionary” (p. 48). At a school and district level, there is variation in how much accountability pressure is placed on individual school leaders and how much autonomy said schools have with district policies and mandates (Hashim et al., 2023). At a smaller grain size, teachers’ understanding of school visions and how they see infrastructures as connected (or not) seems to vary and can mediate the extent to which a school is actually organized and coherent from top to bottom (Higgins, 2022).

Taken together, it seems that the participants in this study would likely experience different school contexts with varying of types of educational infrastructures, levels of coherence amongst infrastructures, and a range intensity (accountability or normative pressures) to follow along with such systems. It should also be noted that secondary history/social science teaching has not received the same amount of attention in reform efforts as other grade levels and content areas. State and local standardized testing efforts and instructional reforms have generally centered around elementary-aged students and teaching in math, science, and literacy. Others have noted that the emphasis in these areas has led to a general narrowing of the curriculum (Berliner, 2011) where social studies teaching has been deprioritized (Kelleher-Bianchi, 2020) or reduced to a focus on literacy and reading skills in the history classroom (Pace, 2011). Taking these into account, it seems more likely that teachers in history and social studies, especially at the secondary level, would encounter less pressure, emphasis, supports, or educational infrastructures that other teachers.

In the following sections, I highlight some of the more important ways in which educational infrastructures and organizational elements that exist in school context seem to shape the instruction of beginning teachers.

**Socialization.** Especially important seem to be the socialization factors experienced in school settings that can encourage or discourage teachers from teaching ambitiously (Hoy & Rees, 1977; Zeichner & Gore, 1989). Alignment across educational infrastructures may be especially significant for the development of novice teachers’ approaches as these environments encourage the uptake of the shared practices (Smylie, 1995; Wang et al., 2008, Eick, 2002),
especially through normative pressures (Scott, 2001) that socialize teachers into the organization's way of operating.

In particular, the collaborative relationships novices develop with colleagues have shown to be important for beginning teachers’ identity and instructional development (Day & Gu, 2007; Brunetti & Marston, 2018). The onboarding of new teachers is one way that schools ensure understanding and alignment with the schools’ vision or approach (Johnson, 2019; Mehta & Fine, 2019) with continued professional development opportunities showing the potential to further socialize teachers into said approached by the development teacher knowledge, understanding, and skill over time (Bryk, 2010; Camburn & Han, 2015; Peurach & Neumerski, 2015; Cobb et al., 2018). Borko and colleagues (1992) found that, in developing pedagogical content knowledge, teachers need opportunities to discuss their reasoning and practice with a more expert teacher who can both assist them with their thinking and model their own expert practices, potentially further socializing novice teachers into a school’s way of doing things. Some work shows that beginning teachers are more likely to use inquiry-based practices if their cooperating teachers and colleagues also had inquiry-oriented beliefs about practice (Bickmore et al., 2005; Martell, 2013, 2014; Newell et al., 2009), demonstrating a “rubbing off” effect where new teachers are socialized into the organization’s approaches to instruction.

Environments where teachers share common instructional visions, goals, and where collaboration is common facilitate the idea that novice teacher induction is a school-wide responsibility (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989) and supports uptake of the shared practices (Wang et al., 2008, Eick, 2002).

**Feedback, Coaching, and Collaboration.** There is some work that suggests that beginning teachers crave feedback, coaching, and guidance (Waychunas, 2022b) that is different from veteran teachers (Day & Gu, 2007; Wilkins, 2011). Reviews of teacher coaching have found that coaching has significant potential to positively impact teachers’ instruction and student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018). International research also shows that pairing a collaborative school culture with empowering teachers to take action in their classrooms promotes collective teacher innovativeness in their instruction (Nguyen et al., 2021).

In addition, teachers working together collaboratively in teacher networks has been shown to be related to schoolwide feelings of efficacy and student achievement (Moolenarr et al., 2012). When paired with instructional coaching, on-the-job interactions such as conversations
with colleagues, peer observation and feedback, sharing resources, sharing information, and sharing advice between teachers predict self-reported changes in teachers’ practices (Shirrell et al., 2019). In general, these informal advice networks (Coburn et al., 2012) and social interactions can help teachers to reflect on their practice (Camburn & Han, 2015) and serve as a way for teachers to validate the utility and implementation of new instructional practices (Everitt, 2012). Research on teacher learning communities has concluded similar findings in more formalized collaboration structures, noting that they have the potential to build problem-solving capacities within schools, serve as support networks for improvement of teaching, and enhance student learning (Lieberman & Miller, 2011).

Having such experiences that are actively and directly rooted in classroom practice seems especially important for teacher’s trying out and continuing to use new instructional methods (Camburn & Han, 2015; Parise & Spillane, 2010). Such practice-rooted social interactions can positively impact teacher efficacy (Neugebauer et al., 2019), which can also increase teacher persistence with trying new practices (Beuhl & Beck, 2014; Goddard et al., 2004). Again, we see that links between educational infrastructures is important as Higgins’ work (2022) showed that teachers in turnaround school contexts found collaboration sessions more useful when they were linked to staff meetings (where they would learn about a strategy or method) and where they had the opportunity to try them out in classrooms with feedback from an instructional coach.

However, not all collaboration time is created equal, as meetings that lack structure and focus can be less impactful on teachers' development towards a school’s instructional vision and that veteran teachers who were resistant to school chance efforts could undermine potential instructional development when they expressed doubts and skepticism about methods promoted by school-wide professional development sessions (Higgins, 2022).

**Curriculum.** Curricular materials are another contextual factor that appear to influence teachers’ development and whether or not they take up ambitious and student-centered teaching practices. The provision of curricular materials with aligned assessments can enable teachers to enact and track progress towards the instructional vision in ways that are coherent across lessons, classrooms, and grade levels (Bryk, 2010; Cohen, 2011; Cobb et al., 2018; Johnson, 2019).

However, some studies have indicated that curriculum can be an obstacle to ambitious practice (Grisham, et al., 2014). Restrictive and mandated curricula can certainly constrain the development of teaching methods (Sims et al., 2020), and research in history/social studies
teacher has suggested that such mandates and accountability measures like high-stakes testing can limit teachers’ ability to enact ambitious practice (Conklin, 2012).

But for beginning teachers, the demands of developing a curriculum and daily lessons from scratch is a tremendous challenge and burden, something that especially affects history and social studies teachers who may need to have the content knowledge and plan for several different courses (Conklin, 2012; Voet & De Wever, 2016), such as economics, US or world history, civics and government, psychology, and geography. The immediate need for classroom materials and strategies takes precedence for new teachers over the desire to teach in ways aligned with their own beliefs and visions, meaning this burden of fabricating materials from scratch can result in teachers resorting to more traditional practices (Grossman, et al, 2000). Some recent work with new teachers’ uptake of ambitious practice suggests that having prescriptive curricular resources with some local autonomy to modify and adjust is not only appreciated by beginning teachers but also enables them to teach more ambitious in their early years (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2020). Higgins (2022) found that providing newer teachers with more “scripted” curricular materials was key to their developing confidence in taking up practices because it allowed them to focus on their teaching rather than on lesson planning and curriculum development.

At the same time, having access to curricula that are aligned with more ambitious approaches is not, on its own, enough to ensure ambitious teaching practices. A longitudinal study of early career middle school math teachers found that even when curricular materials were aligned with more student-centered approaches, teachers “often degraded the initial rigor of the task, pointing to teacher rather than curricular influence” (Desimone, Hochberg, & McMaken, 2016, p. 40). Findings are similar in history teaching, as simply providing new teachers with curricular materials which frame history in a certain way is not enough for them to necessarily enact it as intended (Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). Again, linking curricular materials to other infrastructures, such as collaboration systems, is an important mediating factor where teachers can work together to develop, teach, reflect on, and refine said curriculum (Camburn and Han, 2015; Nguyen & Ng, 2020; Peurach et al., 2019)

Impact of Students. Lortie (1975) wrote about the psychic rewards that teachers draw from their work, referring to the non-monetary benefits that can make the job fulfilling and rewarding. In the classroom this can look like making meaningful connections with students,
watching them grow, and a feeling that the teacher is making a difference. Due to the isolating nature of the teaching profession, these psychic rewards (or the absence of them) can often be the primary way that teachers receive feedback on their instruction (Gehrke, 1981). This phenomenon remains true as Higgins (2022) found that a major mediating factor for whether or not teachers bought into reform methods was based on their experiences in using them in the classroom, specifically noting the importance of student engagement, enjoyment, and learning in justifying the future use of said methods. Logically, if students seem to enjoy and learn from a lesson that uses a certain method, teachers may continue to teach in that way. The inverse is likely also true with negative classroom experiences pushing teachers away from using practices that did not go over well in their classroom.

The impact of student reactions and the psychic rewards of teaching, and their corresponding influence on teacher practice, is scattered across literature. Student teachers who tried to “break the mold” and teach outside of traditional, or inherited roles and practices (Cohen, 1991), often face resistance from students as they can protest more rigorous instruction (Anderson & Stillman, 2010). One study (Serrano et al., 2019) of elementary math teachers taking up ambitious practice found that teachers reported difficulties in facilitating methods that students were unfamiliar with, breaking what Stigler and Hiebert (2009) would refer to as the cultural scripts of the classroom. Martell (2020) also noted that student resistance and struggle were cited as major barriers by novice history teachers attempting to teach in more student-centered or inquiry-based ways.

Importantly, it is teacher perception of student engagement and readiness for more ambitious practices that has shown to be an important influence on teacher responses to instructional reforms (McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993; Spillane, 1999). In one study of history teachers (Conklin, 2012), one participant, who started off using ambitious practices, became more traditional, believing that his middle school students were too immature and incapable of more difficult activities. Research in other content areas suggests that low levels of teacher reported student readiness and motivations are significant obstacles to teaching in more student-centered ways (Burkhauser & Lesaux, 2017; Serrano et al., 2019). In one such study, a teacher tried to use more progressive teaching approaches in a school setting with more traditional norms but eventually concluded, “… these kids didn’t respond well to constructive learning. They went crazy… they just went berserk … they couldn’t handle not having their structures they were so
used to” (Smagorinsky et al., 2014, p. 18). In these ways, it seems that teaching ambitiously may require teaching in a school where rigorous instruction is the norm or, in the absence of that, novice teachers possessing the gumption to persevere despite perceived student resistance.

**Classroom Management.** Research suggests that effective classroom management and classroom stability are foundations upon which teachers enact high-quality instruction (Korpershoek et al., 2016; Lekwa et al., 2019), including whether or not teachers are able to take up more ambitious teaching practices (Youngs et al., 2022; Cohen et al., 2016). Student misbehavior (as perceived by the teacher) is a major factor in teacher reported well-being (exhaustion and enthusiasm) and the ability to build relationships with students (Aldrup et al., 2018). Teachers need to manage student behavior not only as a matter of public safety but also to ensure that students are not distracting each other, or distracting the teacher, from the lesson (Kennedy, 2016) and other scholars have suggested that a stable school environment with standards for order and student safety is a necessary foundation for protecting students and instructional time (Bryk, 2010; Peurach & Neumerski, 2015; Johnson, 2019).

Coordinated and school wide efforts to address uncertainties in teaching, including student behavior and discipline, seem to be major factors in establishing environments that are stable enough for ambitious teaching, especially in urban schools serving low-income student populations (Kraft et al., 2015). Teaching in chaotic environments contributes to teacher stress and burnout (Grant et al., 2015) and inconsistent rule enforcement in schools has serious negative implications on teacher motivation, performance, and retention (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). Some studies have found that issues with student behavior and classroom management as in urban, high-poverty schools as serious impediments to teaching in more student-centered ways (e.g., Anagnostopoulos et al., 2020; McKinney et al., 2007; Serrano et al., 2019). One study of preservice math teachers enacting ambitious instruction in field placements found that teachers who were in schools with minimal behavior and engagement issues were “unencumbered by having to monitor behavior and support students in the moment...[and were] able to observe and describe the exact mistakes students made” (Wieman, 2019, p. 339). However, there is some work (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2020) that suggests that ambitious or more-student centered teacher may negatively impact the classroom management effectiveness of beginning teachers, such as how small group instruction or differentiated practices can make lesson pacing and monitoring other group behavior more challenging.
**Vision and Leadership.** Other school factors also seem to be influential on how novice teachers develop and use rigorous methods.

A school with a common instructional vision, shared goals, an improvement orientation, and a deep sense of responsibility across teachers and administrators for student learning is a building block upon which instructionally oriented schools are developed (Newman et al., 2001; Bryk, 2010; Camburn and Han, 2015; Peurach and Neumerski, 2015; Cobb et al., 2018; Fullan et al., 2015; Peurach et al., 2019; Mehta & Fine, 2019; Johnson, 2019). In schools where there is a shared conception of what "good" teaching looks like and which is communicated to teachers both explicitly and implicitly through educational infrastructures, such as testing, standards, or curricula (Bengston & Connors, 2014) or academically-oriented coaching and collaboration (Waychunas, 2022a) have shown to shape teacher practice in context. Teacher leaders, or “middle leaders” in schools, have shown to be key facilitators in creating environments where teachers feel empowered, establishing structures and systems for taking up curriculum, and in cultivating professional dialogue amongst staff (Bryant et al., 2020)

Meaningful instructional change as a result of school context seems most likely to occur where there is alignment between school culture or vision, resources, and infrastructures in ways that make them mutually reinforcing (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015; Cobb et al., 2018; Johnson, 2019; Shirrell et al., 2019). A study by Lampert, Boerst, and Graziani (2011) described this phenomenon, including how the organization of a language school supported ambitious teaching across classrooms. In particular, they noted the structures of a school that support collective work amongst teachers, using shared curricular materials and instructional resources, and which are centered around a common instructional vision makes ambitious teaching more manageable and attainable for teachers. Additionally, they point to the ways in which these individual elements or aspects of school organization work in concert to reinforce one another and create an environment where ambitious teaching becomes the norm.

Some schools are not so organized and are not always on the same page when it comes to these visions and overlapping of aligned supports. Some work shows that teachers and administrators may not share the same level of understanding this academic vision and instructional expectations, especially in schools that lacked systems and structures to support the enactment of said visions (Higgins, 2022). New curriculum can be misunderstood by teachers (Wilson, 1990), interpreted differently by different teachers (Lloyd, 1999), or implemented in
ways that distort the instructional purposes (Cohen, 1990). Additionally, messages from professional development sessions are commonly misinterpreted by teachers (Zeichner & Gore, 1989; Staton & Hunt, 1992). In this sense, it is possible that novice teachers encounter unorganized schools that lack vision and have poor leadership, something that is considered in this study.

The Formative years of Teacher Development

The first few years in the classroom are a crucial time in a teacher’s career in which they decide to take up approaches and enact practices promoted during their preparation or to disregard them. This is also a time in which they form their foundational vision and identity as a teacher, and it is critically important for teacher educators to understand how teachers navigate and emerge from this crucial developmental phase. With such knowledge, we might better understand what it takes to cultivate ambitious instruction in novice teachers and develop systems and structures to support wide-scale instructional change.

Surprisingly, studies that take a longitudinal approach to investigating how school contexts impact teacher development and interact with their existing beliefs and preparation to shape instruction are rare. In a 2008 review of teacher induction programs’ influence on novice teacher practice, Wang, Odell, and Schwille noted this longitudinal gap in research when they pointed out that, “[n]one of the studies examined beginning teachers’ beliefs and teaching practice and documented how these interacted with the structured components of teacher induction and whether the beliefs and practices were modified or transformed” (p. 147). Beyond the induction period, few studies have directly examined the interaction between the contextual environments of schools and teachers’ instruction, especially how such practice is constructed over time (see Coburn, 2004 for a notable exception). This is true in history/social studies teacher education as well, with scholars noting that there is still relatively little longitudinal evidence of how teachers learn to teach in ambitious or student-centered ways (Monte-Sano & Cochran, 2009).

Given that the first few years in the classroom has such a profound effect on novice teachers’ professional identity and instruction, it is critical that the field of teacher education better understand how the different elements of preparation, personal background, and clinical work come together to shape teacher practice in different contexts. With better knowledge about
this process, the field of teacher education, at both the preservice and in-service levels, might find ways to better facilitate the uptake of rigorous and ambitious instruction.

A Visual Framework for Understanding Novice Teacher Development

*Person-Program-Context-Clinical Placement*

Based on my reading of the literature presented here, I am revising Figure 1 to incorporate several new elements. First, I overlay a spectrum of practice across the figure, representing a spectrum of practice ranging from more traditional to more ambitious and progressive. Next, I place two circles along the spectrum representing a teacher’s instructional vision and their actual practice, which may or may not overlap depending on to what extent their practice matches their vision. A given teachers’ vision and practice may “slide” left or right along this spectrum to represent the ambitiousness of their vision and practices.

Next, I use the four identified elements that impact teacher instructions fluidly along the spectrum. In this sense, the placement and size of elements, such as the teacher as person, clinical experiences, preparation coursework, and school contexts can be represented in how they can push or pull teachers’ vision of good teaching and their day-to-day practice in different directions.

Below I provide two examples to illustrate this point. In one case, a teacher who has had traditional experiences as a student and who teaches in a school where this is the instructional norm, yet who experienced coursework and clinical placements with more progressive teaching may be drawn in their vision and practice towards more ambitious and instruction (Figure 4).
In a second potential scenario (shown in Figure 5), a novice teacher might come to a program with experiences in their own schooling, their clinical placements, and in the school where they teach that have more traditional orientations, with preparation being the discontinuous outlier (Denscombe, 1982). In such a case it would seem likely that a teacher in this situation would probably skew more towards the traditional end of the spectrum with their coursework being the outlier that draws them towards more ambitious practice.
In sum, I entered this study very curious to see exactly what factors along this continuum push, pull, inspire, or discourage teachers from taking up more rigorous and student-centered teaching practices. What I have written so far focuses mostly on the ideals of a preparation continuum, but we live in an unideal world. The realities that teachers face in a study such as this are equally important to consider.

**Additional Challenges of Teacher Education**

In addition to the factors outlined above, Hammerness, Stroupe, and Masko (2022) have identified six perennial problems in teacher education that interfere with or interrupt efforts to get teachers to teach in more ambitious and rigorous ways. Here, I highlight what the field already knows about teacher development in each area as they are critical to understanding novice teacher development. In better understanding these challenges, and their potential solutions, it helps to interpret and explain the ways in which the novice teachers in this study are hindered by, overcome, or avoid these particular challenges along their developmental journeys.
Observation

The problem of observation stems from a longtime adage that “[t]eachers teach as they are taught and not as they are taught to teach” (Blume, 1971, p. 412). We know that the instructional practice of novices’ past teachers influences new teachers’ future instruction (Lortie, 1975; Malderz, et al., 2007). Teachers who enter teacher preparation programs with strong commitments to transmissional approaches also seem unlikely to change their views even when programs advocate for wildly different approaches (Alger, 2009; Cook, et al., 2002; Donnell, 2007; Seung, Park, & Jung, 2014). This also seems to be true for history and social studies teachers whose own experiences as students were dominated by traditional teaching, limiting their ability to teach in inquiry-oriented ways (Martell, 2020).

During preparation, some teacher candidates might just be going through the motions of coursework without seriously intending to take up ideas from preparation (Feese, 2006). In many cases, teachers may seem like they’re buying into program methods, but this might be a superficial compliance and survival strategy aimed at simply completing the requirement for certification rather than on deeper learning (Rennert-Ariev, 2008). In other cases, teachers may outright reject and resist the ideas and practices promoted within their preparation programs, such as white men’s aversion to courses in diversity and racial justice (Vianden, 2018). Teachers are more likely to reject or symbolically comply with new approaches that are highly incongruent with their existing conceptions of teaching (Lacey, 2012; Lloyd, 2007). Because teaching is a highly individualistic profession, teachers can “decouple” from outside influences (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) where they buffer themselves from the pressures of environment by making symbolic or artificial actions to change structure or procedures without significantly changing their practices (Deal & Celotti, 1980; Driscoll, 1995; Firestone, 1985).

In this sense, attending to the prior experiences of novice teachers and how they viewed and experienced teaching during their many years as students seems important as they are likely to call upon or fall back on these models once they are in the classroom.

Enactment

At the heart of this challenge is the long-standing tension between theory and practice in teacher preparation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Harfitt & Chan, 2017; Toom & Husu, 2021; Korthagen et al., 2001). The problem of enactment centers around the common struggle of
novice teacher to take the ideas and theories learned about during preparation and putting them into practice (Kennedy, 1998).

In this sense, it’s not that teachers are not learning anything from their preparation. There are numerous studies that suggest that teachers do learn and understand the theories and ideas from coursework but simply don’t know how to put those theories into practice (Wilson et al., 2001; Grisham et al., 2014). This also seems to be true in learning to teach history, as preparation may give beginning teachers the conceptual tools to understand and envision ambitious teaching but not the practical tools needed to realize these ideals (Martell, 2013, 2014, 2020). Correspondingly, teachers often report that the practical strategies and opportunities to apply theory in practice during coursework are most useful in helping teacher candidates feel prepared to enter the classroom (Livers, 2012).

**Vision**

Changing teacher beliefs isn’t easy. As Wineburg and Wilson wrote, teachers’ “beliefs run deep, and uprooting them may require not the equivalent of a garden hoe, but of a bulldozer” (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988, p. 537). However, we know that teachers’ visions of good practice are important for how they think about and enact their own teaching. Research with history and social studies teachers confirms that teachers develop practice alongside their values and goals in teaching (Conklin, 2012; Monte-Sano & Cochran, 2009). The belief-to-practice approach in teacher education, where programs work to instill the right ideas and ideals in novice teachers hoping that they will use them in the classroom, puts teacher educators in the role of trying to convince preservice teachers that different approaches to teaching are valuable (Eisenhart et al., 1991).

Relatedly, teacher candidates may “develop an ambitious and personal vision of good teaching but enter the classroom perceiving that they are unable to teach in the ways that they had hoped” (p. 7) which has commonly been referred to in literature as practice shock (Veenman, 1984) or transition shock (Britzman, 1986; Wubbels et al., 1982). In many ways, I see this as closely related to the enactment challenge but is more about teacher expectations of the work and contextual challenges than simply knowing how to enact a practice or method.

**Equity**
This challenge acknowledges that the funds of knowledge which children bring to the classroom (Moll & Diaz, 1987) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) are not commonly recognized in classroom teaching. This includes considerations for how knowledge is cultural (Nasir, 2008) and the persistent white supremacy and racism that many teacher candidates bring with them into preparation and that manifests in inequitable and exclusionary instructional practices.

In terms of promoting equity and justice in teaching, it is important to note that “[t]eachers bring their own experiences based on race, class, gender, and culture, and these are both resource and liability in relating to students” (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 9). Scales and colleagues (2017) found that teachers’ high regard for student ability and appreciation for their diversity was key to whether they attempt more ambitious practices from their preparation. Additionally, some studies suggest that history teachers who view history as a more fixed content area (with less emphasis on the interpretational and inclusive view of the field) are more reluctant to take up ambitious practices (Monte-Sano & Cochran, 2009).

**Complexity**

In teaching, the problem of complexity (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Jackson, 1968; Lampert, 2003) has been front and center in trying to understand the multiple, overwhelming, and sometimes conflicting demands of teaching. Hammerness, Stroupe, and Masko (2022) describe this perennial challenge in teacher learning as accounting for “… the intra- and interpersonal aspects of human interaction [that] require teachers to always be aware of social and emotional dynamics while balancing goals for deeper learning” (p. 7), something which places a demanding (if not overwhelming) cognitive load on beginning teachers (Bannert, 2002). When student teachers are overwhelmed with learning to teach, they may revert or default to teaching as they were taught (Eisenhart et al., 1991) or to more teacher-centered and didactic methods (Martell, 2013, 2019, 2020).

Excessive teacher workloads seem to be a major contributor to this issue. Liston, Whitcomb, and Borko (2006) point out that “… the sheer quantity of the typical teacher’s workload is daunting” (p. 353) and that “… every aspect of a teacher’s workload is time-consuming and cumulatively, it is exhausting” (p. 353). Given such workload demands, many teachers seem to fall back on or rely on habitual, rather than deliberative, instructional practices.
(Sims et al., 2020). Research in history teaching confirms these conclusions with examples of teachers citing workload as one of the main obstacles to finding and creating ambitious lessons (Conklin, 2012; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013).

**Fragmentation**

This challenge refers to coherence within and across a teacher education programs and alignment between coursework and clinical placements, which has also been a long-time concern in teacher education (Denscombe, 1982; Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1985; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Anagnostopoulous, et al., 2007). Fragmentation and misalignment can happen within programs with different courses and teacher educators promoting different visions of good teaching. Establishing such coherence across a program is no simple task but is hypothesized to increase the likelihood that preparation obtains the desired effect on teachers’ practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Incoherence within programs is an underdiscussed issue, with many education courses taught in different ways that are disconnected and impersonal (Tom, 1997). This seems especially important when considering that many teacher educators do not practice what they preach when it comes to instruction, with most courses relying on traditional methods (Schroeder et al., 2021), including history/social studies methods courses that center on passive engagement from novice teachers (Martell, 2019).

Fragmentation further increases as novice teachers enter schools. The “two worlds pitfall” (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985), where novice teachers face conflicting conceptions of good teaching from their preparation programs and their school placements, has been a longstanding issue in the field (Valenica, et al., 2009; Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Goodman, 1985; Hollingsworth, 1989). In this way, the models of practice that teachers are apprenticed into can be problematic, with schools often promoting more traditional approaches, making clinical work and induction miseducative or trending away from ambitious teaching (Tabachick et al., 1979).

With this in mind, it is no wonder that beginning teachers experience “wash-out” of program practices (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984) when teacher preparation is the only context where ambitious teaching is promoted and encouraged. However, teachers are not captives of their past or their current school contexts. Ambitious teaching can emerge regardless of factors
that would suggest otherwise, often with teachers creating hybrid practices that still include ambitious practice (Lloyd, 2007; Anderson & Stillman, 2010).

**Promises of Coherence across the Continuum**

Literature across the field of teacher education often assumes that alignment or coherence across the different contexts of teacher education is a pathway towards significant changes in teacher’s instruction and student learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Similarly, scholarship around school improvement and organization has posited that alignment and accountability within schools is a crucial factor in whether or not teachers take up promoted instructional reforms (Coburn et al., 2016), suggesting that little accountability in a school undermines the incentives for instructional change and that a lack of alignment among educational infrastructures can limit teachers' ability, skill, and buy in for taking up new methods or practices. Although I have not found a single study that longitudinally links across the contexts of teacher education to prove that this is the case, it seems that across the literature, coherence or the convergence of interlocking and aligned elements does indeed promote instructional change and development.

For preservice teachers, studies have shown that aligned, focused, and structured clinical experiences lead to more instructional development (Wilson et al., 2001) and that overlapping messages and consistency between university supervisors and mentor teachers can be more impactful, as long as teacher candidates are receptive to such coaching (Angell, 1998; Adler, 2008). In history teacher education, findings are similar, suggesting that student teachers who are paired with more progressive mentor teachers are more likely to take up program practices (Fitchett & Moore, 2022) and that being surrounded by colleagues who align better with ambitious practices promoted during preparation encourages novices to use such practices in their day-to-day instruction (Martell, 2020). Longitudinal studies that span preparation and induction of history teachers also suggests that alignment among program, clinical placements, and early-career teaching contexts may play an important role in whether or not novice teachers enact ambitious and student-centered teaching practices (Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013).

Studies of in-service teacher development have similar findings, suggesting that such alignment is crucial to improving schools and teachers’ instruction (Bryk, 2010; Peurach & Neumerski, 2015; Johnson, 2019). For example, one study of physical education teachers suggests that the alignment of school resources is pivotal in whether or not teachers use practices
promoted during their preparation (Blankenship & Coleman, 200). Other studies of educational reform find that providing tools, curricular materials, and social engagement around these instructional practices (e.g., coaching and professional development) can promote teacher uptake of ambitious and reform-oriented practices (Spillane, 1999; Shirrell et al., 2019). Monte-Sano and colleagues’ study (2020) of novice teachers’ enactment of history core practices in their first two years of teaching also suggests that teachers in schools with educational infrastructures which aligned with ambitious history teaching, especially provided curricular materials and assessments which valued writing and historical thinking rather than simply rote memorization, may be a key in encouraging teachers to use more student-centered and inquiry-oriented practices. Overlapping supports such as professional development programs, teacher collaboration, and informal advice networks can facilitate teacher reflection in ways that promotes their instructional development (Camburg & Han, 2015; Wilcoxen et al., 2022).

Based on this foundation in the literature about teacher development, it seems absolutely critical to understand the alignment, misalignment, and coherence of novice teachers’ instructional journeys. Ignoring any of these pivotal contexts for learning undermines the comprehensive and usefulness of such work.
Chapter 3 Data, Methods, and Analysis

Given what we know about the development of beginning teachers, such as the various ecological and social factors that influence their instruction, I developed a study that would account for the various elements as I followed nine secondary history and social studies teachers from their preparation and into their second year of teaching.

To do this, I set up a multiple case design (Stake, 2013) and collected data to better understand each participant as a person, such as their K-12 experiences and educational beliefs, the preparation program, such as the practices promoted and teacher experiences in coursework, clinical work, including field experiences and student teaching, and the school context where they teach, considering factors such as the professional culture, resources for teaching, and alignment with the other areas.

Below, I describe in further detail the data sources that I collected, how I determined the core or signature practices of the preparation program, and how I analyzed the data. With each step, I keep in mind my research questions goals, which are to understand better which practices from preparation are and are not taken up, to learn how teachers learn these practices, and to expand on what conditions seem to promote or support the uptake and use of ambitious teaching practices?

Study Design and Context

To answer these questions, I conducted a longitudinal study that traces the experiences and development of new secondary history and social studies teachers, a content area that others have noted is relatively understudied in teacher education literature (Adler, 2008; Crocco & Livingston, 2017). I followed this group of teachers from their preparation coursework into student teaching and into their second year in the classroom to trace their development over time and examine the influences and evolution of their knowledge, thinking, and instructional practice.
Previous research that follows teachers into their classrooms has several limitations addressed in this study's design. In some cases, studies rely on self-reports of practice through surveys or interviews to measure teachers' instruction (i.e., Broemmel et al., 2021; Camburn & Han, 2015). This is problematic as we know that how teachers describe and self-report their teaching is often very different from what observers note (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Cohen, 1990; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Zhukova, 2018). As such, I designed this study to collect data from multiple sources in addition to teachers’ self-reports to triangulate findings and capture a more accurate and informed picture of teachers' typical instructional practices.

Additionally, other studies attempting to answer similar questions about novice teacher practice follow one or two teachers (Conklin, 2012; Dack & Triplett, 2020; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013), offering limitations in determining what might be more generalizable findings versus what might be the idiosyncratic realities of individuals in specific contexts. Though I am not looking to make broad generalizations, I view this work as potentially contributing to theory-building that may apply to broader populations of teachers. To address this, I have selected a larger sample of teachers to study and develop case studies that capture the specificity of individual teachers' experiences while also enabling me to look across cases to find commonalities and differences in background, preparation experiences, and school context factors that may shape which and how novices take up practices from their preparation. Additionally, having a larger sample of teachers ensures that I capture more diverse experiences in preparation while increasing the reliability that I am capturing an accurate picture of the various factors, influences, and challenges that were faced by teachers in this cohort rather than simply the experiences of one or two teachers. This also ensures that I am not only following the journey of the most promising of teacher candidates; a larger sample means that I had teachers of many different trajectories as they graduated from the preparation program.

Lastly, we know that the first year of teaching is often a tumultuous experience. Other studies indicate that teacher practice evolves as they move out of the survival stage of teaching and enter a more stable phase where they can better connect their beliefs and commitments to their practice (Grossman et al., 2000; Zhukova, 2018), a finding which holds for history teachers as well (Cuban, 2016; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). Taking this into consideration, this study follows teachers into their second year, hoping to capture better the practices that emerge, stick, were discarded or ignored, or refined as they sharpen their teaching skills.
Positionality Statement

My own personal background and experience serve as an asset in this study, though some considerations must be made to ensure the integrity of the data and findings.

First, I have worked extensively as a secondary social studies teacher, which gives me insight into understanding teaching and the realities of the classroom. Second, I taught middle school social studies (all subjects, 6th - 8th grades) for several years and four years at the high school level, teaching civics, government, and world history. My experience lies primarily in urban schools teaching student populations that were mostly Black and Brown and in schools serving low-income and working-class communities. This experience parallels many of the current schools where participants teach and helps me better understand their contexts and experiences. My time as a field instructor with over 25 student teachers has given me other insights into teaching in the region and various other settings, such as suburban and rural schools, which should help address this shortcoming in my teaching experience.

However, I have acknowledged that my own vision of teaching and expertise can bias my observations and analysis of the participant's instruction. I have kept in mind that these are early-career teachers and that excellence in teaching is unlikely as they are still learning to teach, which is doubly important as many participants never had the opportunity to teach in person during their student teaching. Keeping this in mind, as I reviewed the videos of their teaching, I needed to stay focused not on the quality of enactment but on its attempts and presence, which I found difficult at times during the analysis.

My role as a course instructor and field supervisor gives me important insider knowledge of how the program operates and to better understand and interpret participant experiences than if I had not been their instructor or came as an outside observer. This also helped in the development and determination of program signature practices and clinical placements as well.

I have also developed relationships with this group of teachers that I believe helped support open and honest communication during the data collection process, which can help address potential power differential between myself and the participants. During the semester before student teaching, I served as a methods instructor for each of these teachers, engaging in extensive work with practice-based approaches, such as rehearsals, that gave me multiple opportunities to co-plan, see, and give feedback on their instruction. Through these interactions, I
believe that I have a rapport established with each participant, not as a harsh critic whom they need to perform for during observations but as an honest and trusted colleague.

This insider status and examination of participants who are, in part, the product of my own work as a teacher educator could also skew my analysis. It would be natural for someone studying their work to look too much for good, overemphasize the positive outcomes, and be defensive or dismissive of shortcomings. I believe that using more quantitative measures, such as the data from the follow-up survey, will help prevent some bias, as concrete numbers can back up my interpretations. The member checking of themes and claims during follow-up interviews also helped to confirm or disconfirm my initial interpretations. Additionally, I believe that my personality as a skeptical and reflective person who craves critical feedback will help me overcome these tendencies.

It is also important to note that my positionality may have hindered my ability to fairly analyze and interpret data to fit my point of view. To account for this, I took several measures. First, I already have a skeptical personality and entered the study with doubts about the impact of the preparation and my courses on teachers’ practice. Secondly, I relied on what the data said to guide my interpretations, constantly returning to transcripts, follow-up survey results, and observation notes to search for discrepant cases. Additionally, the follow-up survey and final interviews were conducted largely as a member-checking measure to give participants an opportunity to speak back to or elaborate on initial claims that I was making about their experiences.

Overall, my positionality in this study is extremely important to this work and something that I have considered deeply in how the study was designed and carried out. Overall, I believe that my experiences, knowledge, and relationships with the participants served as an asset in the completion of this work, helping me to connect with and understand the developmental journeys of the nine novices I studied.

**Determining Program Practices**

In order to answer my research questions about which, how, and under what conditions practices from preparation are taken up by novice teachers, I had to determine what practices were, in fact, being promoted by the program in the first place. Other teacher education studies have done similar work in determining the core practices or signature aspects of their programs.
or individual courses to trace them into teachers' future thinking or instruction (Grisham et al., 2014; Scales et al., 2017; Fitchett & Moore, 2022). However, many of these studies do not explain how they determined which practices or program aspects were, in fact, signature. This is problematic for several reasons. As noted earlier, we know that what teachers think or say they are doing does not always match theories-in-use (i.e., the actual instructional practices) (Argyis & Schon, 1974). This same phenomenon also appears to be an issue for faculty in higher education (Phillips, 2005). Therefore, it seems necessary to carefully interrogate and verify claims by instructors about the core practices or signature pedagogies promoted by their courses.

The same goes for making broad claims about the signature pedagogies of an entire preparation program, especially as we know that programs may not be as coherent or organized as we (as instructors in said programs) would like to think (Hammerness, 2006; Smagorinsky et al., 2003). Thus, I set out to systematically determine and confirm core or signature practices of the core social studies/history preparation coursework my participants completed. As we will see, many of the program signature pedagogies fit nicely with the conception of ambitious history teaching, while others are more program specific or address more generic teaching methods or lesson structures.

I began by leveraging my own experiences instructing and working as a teaching assistant or lead instructor in each of the core history/social studies courses in the focal program. I also drew on data from a different study I had conducted previously in which I interviewed program graduates about their experiences in the program and with practice-based teacher education pedagogies. Then, using this knowledge and experience, I drafted an initial list of what I believed were the signature pedagogies emphasized across the history and social studies courses and the focal program more generally.

I then further refined this draft list during the summer of 2021 with another course instructor with extensive experience in the focal program. In a planning meeting for the following year, I asked this instructor to think about what they believed the signature pedagogies and values were that we promoted within our program. In this conversation, they verified many practices from the initial list I had developed. They also added several more practices that I had overlooked, including using assessments and various methods to promote student engagement. Next, we read through the draft list and revised the wording to create a complete initial draft of our program’s signature pedagogies.
To further verify that these signature pedagogies were evident in our courses, I thoroughly reviewed course materials to see which practices might have been present and in what ways.

First, I collected course materials from the four core courses that comprise this cohort's secondary history/social studies sequence, including course syllabi, reading lists, assignment descriptions and rubrics, class slides, and agendas. In the fall semester, these courses included *History/Social Studies Methods* (3 credits), *Literacy in History/Social Studies* (3 credits), and a *Practicum* seminar (2 credits) linked to a bi-weekly clinical placement. During the winter/spring semester, this included the *Problems and Principles of Secondary Teaching* seminar (2 credits) which was co-taught by all instructors and linked to student teaching experiences. These courses were all taught by the same four-person instructional team and students from this cohort were together with only other secondary history/social studies teacher candidates.

I coded course materials using a hybrid approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrene, 2006) to determine which practices, methods, and ideas were emphasized by how frequently they appeared in assignments, course reading titles, activities described in course slides, and other course artifacts. I began by applying a predetermined set of codes based on the instructor-developed list of the program’s core or signature pedagogies. I also looked for new codes that emerged from the data regarding practices and pedagogies we instructors may have overlooked in our initial list creation and refined existing codes' wording for better data applicability. As I added and refined codes, I would return to previous documents and reapply the revised codes as needed in an iterative process. New codes and practices added throughout this process included *Differentiated Instruction* or *Classroom Management Techniques*. Using this iterative and hybrid approach, I revised other codes, including adding *Social Justice* to the *Promoting Active Citizenship* code and *Revising* to the *Evaluating Curricular Materials* code. I then tallied the frequency of each code to determine to what extent each practice or pedagogy appeared throughout the program.

Though frequency is an imperfect measure, it does lend some level of credibility to the initial claims about program signature pedagogies and their pervasiveness across courses. One potential limitation of using frequency to measure signature pedagogies is that it does not necessarily capture the duration or intensity of instruction. For example, core practices such as *Facilitating Discussion* or *Modeling/Direct Instruction* were towards the middle and bottom of
the ranked lists regarding frequency. However, they were the subject of several practice-based activities, including lesson simulations and assignments in which students video recorded themselves leading an activity. Conversely, *Standards-based Instruction* may be over-represented on the frequency table as occurrences were more common but less likely to be the focus of a course session or activity, such as being included in lesson planning assignments. As a result, I took an additional step during the interviews with participants of asking them to identify what they believed were the methods, practices, and beliefs promoted by the program. This step is discussed further below.

Table 1 below shows the signature pedagogies of participants’ preparation program and how often each practice appeared in course materials, and sorted to from most frequent to least frequent. Correspondingly, I verified which of these pedagogies seemed more prominent to participants in the first interview by asking them to tell me about what practices they felt the program promoted and what type of teacher the program wanted its graduates to become. Overwhelmingly, participants identified unit and lesson planning, reflective practice, inquiry teaching or teaching with compelling problems, and developing positive relationships and classroom culture as what stood out most to them. Additionally, participants identified an overall perception that the program wanted progressive and not traditional teachers and promoted more active teaching and learning as opposed to more passive approaches. Though these are imperfect measures of program practices, it does add at least a new level of validity to my claims about what the program emphasized in coursework.
### Table 1: Preparation Program Signature Pedagogies Ranked by Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature Practice Name</th>
<th># of Instances:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating and Using Formative and Summative Assessments</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry/Teaching with Compelling Problems</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backwards Design (Unit and Lesson Planning)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Students, Contexts, &amp; Cultures for Creating Positive Classroom cultures</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching with Concepts</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practice/Continuous Instruction Improvement</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving and Receiving Feedback on Teaching</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards-based Instruction</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Discussion</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods to Support Student Reading</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Controversial Topics</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Multiple Types of Text (including Primary Sources)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating, Choosing, and Revising Curricular Materials</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Writing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with Colleagues (talking about teaching)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Practice Teaching (rehearsals, simulations, etc.)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Responsive or Anti-racist teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating historical and critical thinking skills</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing lessons and units relevant to student identity, interests, and needs</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigorous Instruction: Higher Order/Critical Thinking</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolding/Apprenticeship Teaching Models</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating, Choosing, and Adjusting Methods</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Variety: Methods for student engagement</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooks, Bellringers, and Exit Tickets</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing students with feedback</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Knowledge (factual, conceptual, procedural)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting active citizenship</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Vision and Professional Dispositions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling/Direct Instruction/Explicit Teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated Instruction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Signature pedagogies of the preparation program ranked by frequency of appearance when coding materials from the core history and social studies education courses.
Participants

Participating teachers came from a single cohort who graduated from the same secondary social studies teacher preparation program. I made several considerations in assembling a group of participants for this study.

First, to ensure that participants had similar "exposures" during the program, I selected teachers who had worked with the same cooperating teachers during their clinical observation experiences. As teachers rotated between different clinical placements in pairs, they saw different models of teaching practice and had varying opportunities to teach. Although they might not have been in the same classrooms at the same time, I selected sets of preservice teachers who spent time in the same classrooms and schools at various points during their clinical rotations. Further, because teacher candidates in this program rotate placements (having two different placements during their clinical semester), I could select participants who were not only paired with one another but who "swapped" placements with another pair of novice teachers during the semester. For example, if two participants were initially placed with teacher A and rotated to teacher B during the second half of the term, I also selected two other teachers who started with teacher B and then rotated to teacher A during the second half of the term.

More specifically, Jake and Dexter were paired for clinical observations and swapped schools with Jason and Albert halfway through the semester. Trevor, Addison, and Kris were also grouped for clinical placements, rotating together to a new school and a new mentor teacher together during the semester. Stella and Kylie had less overlap with the other participants, though Stella had a placement at the same school as some other teachers but with a different cooperating teacher.

This approach to participant selection helps to minimize, though not eliminate, the impact that different clinical placements may have on novice teacher development and potentially allows for connecting the use of practices in their future teaching to experiences (or lack of experiences) during their clinical placements.

Next, I wanted to ensure that I had a group of participants who represented various experiences in their own schooling (both those that aligned or were different from the pedagogies and practices the program promoted) and who expressed different levels of desire to enact program practices in their future teaching. As part of a course assignment to track their development, the entire cohort of teachers completed a survey in my class at the beginning and
end of the term, asking them to describe how often teachers used specific historical literacy and general instructional practices in their schooling experiences. This survey also asked them how regularly they expected to employ these different practices once they had their own classrooms. Some practices included those promoted by coursework, including using primary sources, discussion, simulations, projects, and engaging with controversial issues. In contrast, others represented more traditional practices such as lectures, writing reports, worksheets, and textbooks. The assignment asked them compare where their views had changed or remained the same over the course of the term, but I used these for this study in a different way.

Taking this survey data into account, as well as my interactions with the teacher candidates across the term, I was able to roughly estimate to what extent each novice teacher in the cohort had experiences as K-12 students and visions of their future practice which were more traditionally- or progressively-oriented. For example, I categorized teachers who indicated that they expected to assign readings from the textbook regularly or emphasize lectures and notes as being more traditional, while those who expressed a desire to use source investigations, debates, and group work were categorized as more aligned with the program's progressive practices.

Using this data and approach, I determined that several novice teachers in the cohort seemed to have much more progressive backgrounds (Kylie, Jason, Kris, and Albert) and espoused a desire to teach progressively in their future classrooms (especially Stella, Kylie, Addison, and Jason). Similarly, I determined which teachers seemed to have more traditional experiences in school (Stella, Jake, Trevor, Addison, and Dexter) and who seemed to want to continue using traditional approaches in their future teaching (Dexter and Jake).

Figure 6: Participants Described K-12 Experiences and Espoused Future Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K-12 Experiences</th>
<th>Espoused Future Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Teaching Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Stella, Jake, Trevor, Addison, Dexter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambitious/Program Aligned Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Kylie, Jason, Kris, Albert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. These were based instructor’s coursework observations and survey data collected at the end of student teaching.
This information allowed me to select participants from the wider cohort with various backgrounds and future visions of teaching. In this sense, I could then make sure that I had a participant pool with some teachers who experienced “wash-in” of program practices (Stella and Addison), those who remained traditional throughout (Jake and Dexter), those who came and left the program wanting to teach ambitiously (Kylie), and others who had experiences somewhere in between these categories (Kris, Albert, Trevor). Once I narrowed selected participants, I gathered much more data about their backgrounds and clinical experiences during interviews to confirm where their backgrounds, clinical placements, and espoused practice fell along a spectrum of traditional or ambitious practice. By having this diversity in the participant pool, I could make important considerations for how a novice teacher's apprenticeship of observation and experiences during student teaching interacted with contextual factors in their schools during the first couple of years in the classroom.

Other aspects worth noting about participants are similarities and differences that helped me understand the data and findings. Although they are not racially diverse, this group of participants was representative racially of the cohort, which was almost entirely White. Three of the nine participants were female, while the other six were male. This parallels other demographic trends as teachers are disproportionately White (NCES, 2021) and secondary history/social studies teachers are about 60% male nationwide (Hansen, Levesque, Valant, Quintero, 2018).

All PSTs attended K-12 schools in the same state as the public university in which they enrolled. Moreover, all participants have roots within the same state, with all but one attending high school in-state. This lends some consistency to experiences of classroom culture and the influence of state-wide policies, including experiencing the use of the same state standards and assessments. Additionally, because all participants (except for one) were undergraduate students, they also likely had similar experiences with the teacher education institution's culture and in their experiences in history and social sciences coursework.

However, the participants came from various backgrounds, some having grown up in rural areas and small towns while others came from larger cities or affluent suburbs. Additionally, the participants' family backgrounds vary significantly, as do their political leanings and views about the purposes of schooling. Similarly, they are currently teaching in a
wide variety of schools, with the group almost evenly split among teaching in rural, urban, and suburban public schools.

I contacted the eleven teachers I identified as potential participants for this study. Of the eleven, two were ineligible because they lacked full-time teaching positions. The other nine agreed to participate in the interviews during the summer between their first and second years of teaching. Of these nine teachers, I could observe and video or audio record lessons of seven participants during the second year. The two I did not observe requested to only participate in the interviews (Dexter) or taught out of state and was logistically challenging to visit (Jason).

**Data Sources**

In order to best capture a holistic view of teachers' instructional practices, beliefs, and experiences in preparation and in their early-career school contexts, I collected data from several different sources to capture different aspects of their practice and their understanding of it. This ensured a more accurate picture of their practice by making possible triangulation of data sources so I could develop detailed descriptive cases. These data sources included initial interviews conducted between their first and second years, classroom visits with recordings and field notes, and a follow-up survey and interview to member check and collect further information about themes and initial findings.

**Initial Interviews.** I conducted and recorded initial interviews for this study over Zoom during the summer of 2022, between participants' first and second years of teaching. The interviews were semi-structured, relying on an interview protocol with consistent questions across participants and allowing for unique probes, follow-ups, and lines of questioning for topics or themes that emerged for individuals.

I sought to avoid questions that would elicit answers that satisfice or were socially desirable, such as “sugar coating,” avoiding extremes, or seeking to please the interviewer with their answers (Holbrook, Green, & Krosnick, 2003). For example, given that I was their instructor, some participants might have a tendency to tell me what they think I want to hear, such as reporting that they do indeed engage students in lots of discussions, even though, in reality, they rarely use the method. In other instances, they might have harsh feelings about the preparation program or my class but choose to hide this in interviews to avoid conflict or hurting my feelings. To minimize this, I took several steps.
First, in my introduction to the interview, I voiced my skepticism about the preparation program and teacher preparation in general to create a safe space and show that I was open to and even encouraging their honest critique. This included the following portion of the opening script:

I have my own doubts about whether coursework and the program actually makes an impact on teachers' future practice. I also know that the program can do a better job in preparing teachers. So, I hope that you will be honest and forthright, including in your criticisms and opinions about the program, as I believe that they can truly help inform not only how the program approaches training new teachers but can also offer some insights for programs across the country to help better prepare new teachers to teach in effective and transformative ways.

This move helped to break down the authority hierarchy between the interviewer and participants in a way that created a more conversational and reflective tone to the interviews.

I also emphasized that I welcomed their critique and they would not hurt my feelings if they had harsh things to say about me or my class. Additionally, I let them know that I would use pseudonyms and take other steps to anonymize their identities, and that, if they had pointed critiques as individuals in preparation or in their school, I would be careful to write in a way that captured main points instead of personal attacks that could be attributed back to them.

Next, I was careful to avoid leading questions that suggested that I might have a desired answer in mind (e.g., "How do you think course readings contributed to your instructional development?"). I instead employed a strategy of questioning that started with broad and open-ended questions (e.g., "Are there particular practices, methods, or strategies that you learned during your preparation program that you have used in your teaching this past school year?") and then moved on to more specific probes and follow-up questions. This allowed teachers to share their thoughts and experiences in an organic way while seeking to reduce my influence over their responses. This approach to questioning should increase the validity of my conclusions because it’s likely that teachers would mention the more important and prominent practices, contextual factors, and experiences when responding to open-ended questions. I sought more nuanced specifics in more detailed follow-up questions. This process of moving from open-ended to more specific probes was also a way to confirm and disconfirm my findings about the program's
signature practices in how participants initially identified what they recalled being emphasized and promoted in the preparation program.

I also organized questions in rounds that focused on my three research questions, starting with open-ended prompts and then moving to more specific probes. Figure 7 below shows each research question, the initial open-ended prompts, and examples or descriptions of the more specific follow-up questions.
Figure 7: Initial Interview Prompts Organized by Research Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 1: Which practices promoted during teacher preparation coursework are taken up and enacted in beginning teachers’ instruction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Open-Ended Prompts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you feel were the practices and methods most promoted in the teacher preparation program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What type of history/social studies teachers did the program idealize?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which types of history/social studies teachers did we want you to avoid becoming?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are there particular practices, methods, or strategies that you learned during your preparation program that you have used in your teaching this past school year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What about practices, methods, or strategies that you’ve wanted to use but haven’t? What do you feel has prevented you from using them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Follow-Up Prompts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When given grouped lists of the program’s “signature pedagogies,” asked to think aloud and share thoughts about:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which of these have you tried to use in your practice this year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which ones haven’t you used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are there any reasons why you have or have not tried some of these methods or used these practices? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2: How do novice teachers say they learned these practices during preparation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Open-Ended Prompts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Looking back on your time in preparation, are there any experiences that stand out to you as especially influential in shaping your current instruction and practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are there particular practices, methods, or habits that you feel you picked up from your preparation (either coursework or field placements)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Follow-Up Prompts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given a list of different aspects of preparation (e.g. teaching simulation, seeing practices in the field, course readings, and major assignments), participants were asked to do a think-aloud and describe which factors were most, least, or somewhat impactful on their teaching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 3: What conditions seem to promote beginning teachers' uptake of the practices advocated for during their preparation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Open-Ended Prompts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tell me about your first year teaching and the school you were at:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are there any practices from your preparation program that you feel are/were common, work well, or are encouraged to be used in your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In what ways has your school been supportive of your teaching in the ways promoted by your preparation program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What about practices or approaches that your school seems to discourage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would you say that your teaching is mostly similar to or different from other teachers in your school or in your department? How so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Follow-Up Prompts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have been some of the supports, obstacles, and challenges that you have faced in being able to enact practices from your preparation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrators?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accountability and evaluations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students? Parents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your colleagues or department chair?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curricular materials and resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Schedule?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other school policies?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations and Lesson Recordings. Recognizing or describing good teaching is different from being able to enact such teaching. Therefore, I sought to visit, observe, and video or audio record each participant teaching a sequence of lessons to analyze their ability to put their teaching beliefs and values into action within their current school context. Trying to accurately capture a teacher's instruction poses several challenges for researchers. By consulting research about observation and evaluation and carefully designing this portion of the study, I have attempted to mitigate some of these concerns.

One particular challenge with teacher observation as a representation of practice lies in the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972) wherein the presence of an observer changes the behavior of the observed—in this case, for both teachers and students. For example, the presence of an observer might lead teachers to create showcase lessons (Gabrielatos, 2004). In such cases, the teacher's knowledge that they will be observed results in lessons that are more polished or use more engaging methods to impress or satisfy the observer and which do not reflect their typical daily classroom practices.

Additionally, questions about when and how often a teacher must be observed to capture the essence of their instruction is a challenge that researchers have had to face. This question has become especially important in light of the recent nationwide push for teacher evaluation systems. Though the purpose of existing studies (Hill et al., 2012; Kane, 2012; Mashburn et al., 2013) that examine this issue emphasize the validity and reliability of observation tools with the goal of creating both fair and accurate observation tools, their work provides insights that informed the development of this study. In general, these studies explore the use of specific observation tools rather than a broad study of the validity of observations as a data collection method. One study even advised against looking too deeply into their results, stating that “there is no optimal number of observations or raters that transcends specific instruments and rater populations, and we caution against extrapolating our results to other observational instruments and scoring designs” (Hill et al., 2012).

In terms of the number of observations needed to capture accurate pictures of teacher practice, the lowest number of observations suggested is two (Gates Foundation, Jan. 2013; Mashburn et al., 2013), with most studies concluding that four observations were sufficient (Kane, 2012; Classroom Assessment Scoring System [CLASS], 2022; Hill et al., 2012).
Other authors have pointed out that, in some content areas, teacher ratings can vary significantly within a given time frame (Patrick & Mantizicopoulos, 2016) because teachers can employ different methods from day to day (Mikeska et al., 2019). For example, observation of secondary science where there are "lab" and "non-lab" days could skew findings, potentially leaving observers with the impression that labs are a frequent or completely absent aspect of a teacher's typical practice. Mikeska and colleagues (2019) noted that incorporating only a few observation ratings risked under sampling and created an inaccurate picture of a teacher’s instructional approach if the observer happened to view more of one type of lesson than another (Mikeska et al., 2019). In a history classroom, this is also a possibility to consider. For example, a teacher could spend some lessons developing students' background or content knowledge about a specific topic as they build up towards a more student-centered lesson such as a source investigation, a project, or a simulation.

I provide these examples to say that observing only one class period is insufficient to justify claims about teachers’ instruction. Given that I follow a more ethnographic observation style based in field notes (Emerson et al., 2011) than one that is evaluating with an observation tool, I follow the rough standard set by the field and other longitudinal research on teacher development (e.g., Grossman et al., 2000; Martell, 2020; Conklin, 2012). I tried to observe or record each participant teaching three consecutive lessons to the same group of students across several days. This enabled me to see how a teacher's lessons build, connect, and develop while minimizing the potential for variation from seeing different student groups. In addition, visiting the same class on consecutive days diminished the likelihood that teachers would be able to put together a singular showcase lesson because of the time and effort such teaching would take, giving me a better picture of their day-to-day instruction. These consecutive visits also helped normalize my presence in the classroom, putting the teachers and students at ease and potentially encouraging them to act in more typical ways. Finally, as practices and methods from preparation may emerge as novice teachers gain competence (Grossman et al. 1999; Hargreaves & Jacka, 1995), I did not observe or record any lessons until a few months into participants’ second year, allowing them to "get their feet under them" before drawing conclusions about their instruction.

These steps allowed me to examine which pedagogies participants take up and how frequently and make connections among their experiences as students, in preparation, and
contextual factors to understand what conditions promote or undermine the enactment of practice. Taken together, they provide the opportunity to surface and investigate patterns in each teacher's daily practices while countering the potential random bias created by observing too infrequently or the risks of only relying on teacher self-report of practice from the interviews. Additionally, by visiting schools and seeing classrooms, I can triangulate teachers' descriptions of school culture and contextual factors that they may have described in initial interviews.

During observations, I took detailed field notes while beginning the coding process by noting different methods or practices used, various activity categories, and marking time stamps to get a rough idea of how teachers broke down lessons. In my notes, I detailed things that the teacher or students said, especially in small groups that were difficult to hear in videos, noted overall student engagement and actions, and recorded other observations about materials, classroom setup, and other noticings. An example of these field notes (from Addison's first lesson) is located in Appendix B.

After all the lessons that I observed in person, I would quickly chat with the teacher, asking clarifying questions about their teaching, students, and schools, as well as continue building rapport. However, I was careful not to give feedback or praise during these brief conversations so as not to influence future observations or interviews. Instead of providing feedback, I caught up with the teachers and asked them questions about the school, the lesson, or moments that happened during the class period. Additionally, after concluding my sequence of observations with each participant, I sent them a short online questionnaire asking them to describe the methods they used in the lessons I observed or recorded that week and to do a quick reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons. This form also asked them to describe how their teaching in their second year was similar to or different from their teaching in their first year.

Table 2 below summarizes the number of lessons observed for each participant, which content areas I observed, and if the lessons were self-recorded, observed by me in person, or audio recorded.
Table 2: List of Participants and Number/Type of Lessons Observed in Year Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Observation Number, Type, and Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addison</td>
<td>2 lessons - self-recorded (US History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 lessons - observed in person (US History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>1 lesson - self-recorded (World History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 lessons - observed in person (Government/Civics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>3 lessons - observed in person (US History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 lessons - observed in person (Civics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>2 lesson - observed in person (US History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kylie</td>
<td>1 lesson - observed in person (Civics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 lessons - self-recorded (Civics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>2 lessons - observed in person** (Economics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 lesson - observed in person** (US History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris</td>
<td>2 lessons - observed in-person (US History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 lesson - have materials for lesson but school was cancelled for a snow day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Did not observe due to logistical issues (teaching out of state)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**audio recording only

**Member Checking and Follow-Up Interviews.** Research of this manner must be careful to ensure that novice teachers' experiences are accurately represented in ways that limit bias and lead to rich and valuable findings for both teachers and participants. This is why I next engaged in a series of member-checking steps to gather more data and confirm or disconfirm my claims about each teacher's story. First, I developed and sent a survey to participants in the spring of their second year of teaching that dove deeper into several important areas in their developmental journeys. (A full version of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A)

The first section of the survey explored their familiarity with program practices and their initial levels of skepticism or open-mindedness when it came to what they felt they could learn from coursework. I used these responses in this section to confirm how participants came into the program in terms of their eagerness to learn from coursework, how much they were primed to learn or dismiss practices from preparation, and to what extent the signature pedagogies
promoted by the program were new or unfamiliar in their own K-12 experiences and current school contexts.

The next section probed participants' approaches to planning and views of the profession by asking them to select statements that they felt most and least reflected their approach to teaching. The responses are not from a tested or validated tool but rather emerged from the data as I thought about what drove their teaching, what their values were, and how they approached their day-to-day instruction. In a way, these were claims that I believed fit certain participants more than others and by having them select from a list, I could confirm or disconfirm my suspicions. This section served as a proxy to measure the amount of thought, effort, and time they dedicated to planning, reflecting, and revising their instruction. This section also checked on their views of teaching, with options about believing strongly in teachers' moral and ethical obligations towards their students or if they viewed teaching more so as a stable job that does some good for society. Taken together, this section helped to verify the teacher's professionalism and ambition.

Interview data and observations suggested that teacher values and beliefs played a significant role in whether, which, and how teachers took up, rejected, or adapted program signature pedagogies. Thus, in the next section, I asked participants to pick several statements that represented their most and least important priorities or goals as a teacher, with options that reflected values such as student engagement, learning, rigor, professional respect, inclusivity, as well as views about classroom management and emphasis on content. This section of the survey provided a better understanding of and helped to confirm initial claims about teachers' orientations towards being teacher/content-centered or student-centered, as well as their sensitivity towards social factors (such as reputation with other teachers, administrators, students, and parents).

Finally, I used this questionnaire to gather further information about the prevalence and importance of different supports and obstacles that promoted or hindered their use of program pedagogies. In the last section, I asked teachers which supports they felt were most important to their development in terms of shaping their practice, as well as what the most common obstacles were in their attempts to use signature pedagogies of the preparation program.

Options for all questions in this survey were based initially on what we know about teacher development from literature but also from the responses of participants. For example, we
know a lot about the challenges that teachers face in their preparation and first few years of teaching and interviews suggested several new areas to examine such as teacher educators as role models or a more nuanced perspective on how veteran teachers can socialize new teachers in positive ways. Additionally, it is worth noting that with each section or set of questions, I allowed participants to provide "other" answers that I might not have included in the possible selections. This option was rarely used, with the only exception being one teacher pointing towards professional experiences outside of preparation as influential on their practice.

Next, I invited participants to a follow-up interview. First and foremost, these interviews allowed for conducting member checking of the initial claims and themes that I had identified from the initial phases of data analysis and for clarifying responses on the questionnaire. This contributed significantly to my effort to capture a fair and accurate portrait of teacher development and experiences both in an individual as well as collective sense. Additionally, these interviews provided the opportunity to ask more specific questions of participants, clarify points and understandings, and probe deeper into areas identified as important through the initial analysis. Finally, since these occurred during the second half of the school year, these interviews also offered a reflection point for the participants to better describe their instructional practices during their second year.

Follow-up interviews were semi-structured, with prompts that all participants were asked and specific follow-up probes that I asked of certain individuals. They lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, were conducted over Zoom, and were transcribed verbatim.

I first asked participants the following questions about their second year of teaching:
1. How has year two been in comparison to last year?
2. How have you changed as a teacher over the past year? Are there practices that you are using more or less frequently than last year?
3. Are there any obstacles or supports/resources to your teaching that have been similar or different this school year?

While they shared responses to these questions, I interjected with further probing questions to clarify, connect with previous interviews or observations, and ask participants to elaborate on specific points.
Next, I engaged participants with a member-checking interviews and also to hear about how their second year of teaching was going. I first explained the purpose of this portion of the interview, telling them that I had a set of general claims that appeared to be mostly true across the participant pool and that I hoped to include in the final paper. I then showed them initial claims one at a time, prompting them to comment on each, telling me whether they felt they were accurate to their experiences, and to elaborate on them if they had new experiences or examples to share from their second year of teaching. This was helpful for confirming claims that did apply across the cohort but was especially helpful for those which only applied to certain groups of participants and not others. Participants' willingness to disagree in these instances adds further credibility to claims because it provided evidence that they were not simply satisficing in responses. This was also crucial in confirming some of the participant groupings I had developed by showing key similarities and differences across cases, something which was instrumental in developing and confirming the aggregate cases that I will share in the findings chapter.

**Data Analysis**

**Interview Analysis**

Using Atlas.ti software, I created code groups based on my three research questions that incorporated the themes or topics in my literature review and memos and notes taken during the summer of 2022 after conducting initial interviews. The codes grouped by research question included the following:

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**Figure 8: Interview Codes Organized by Research Question**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1: Which practices promoted during teacher preparation coursework are taken up and enacted in beginning teachers’ instruction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice: Used Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice: Used Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice: Used Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice: Wanted to but...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature Practices: PST Identified Core Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature Practices: PST Confusion/Misunderstanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2: How do novice teachers say they learned these practices during preparation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Preparation: Least Influential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Elements of Preparation: Most Influential

### Elements of Preparation: Somewhat Influential

- Origin: Curricular Resources
- Origin: Practices Directly Attributed to Clinical Work
- Origin: Practices Directly Attributed to Coursework
- Origin: Practices Directly Attributed to Experiences as a Student
- Origin: Professional Development
- Student Teaching: Alignment with TPP
- Student Teaching: Opportunities to Practice
  - Uptake: Little Impact
  - Uptake: Negative Influence/Wash-Out
  - Uptake: Positive Influence

### Question 3: What conditions seem to promote beginning teachers’ uptake of the practices advocated for during their preparation?

- Alignment: between TPP and App of Observation
- Alignment: Clinical Placements and Mentor Teacher w/TPP
- Alignment: Current Teaching and Apprenticeship of Observation
- Alignment: Teacher Vision and School Vision
- Alignment: TPP and Current School
- Beliefs: About Content Area (knowledge/skill)
- Beliefs: About Students' Skills/Ability
- Beliefs: Teaching and Learning
- Beliefs: Values and Goals of Education
- Current School: Administration
- Current School: Interactions with Colleagues
- Current School: Policies and Mandates
- Current School: Professional Culture and Norms
- Experimenting: Failure with Practices
- Experimenting: Success with Practices
- Instructional Resources: Assessment
- Instructional Resources: Curriculum
- Instructional Resources: Discipline Systems
- Instructional Resources: Mentorship/Coaching/Collaboration
- Life Experiences: Other Influential Moments
- Misalignment: between TPP and App of Observation
- Misalignment: Clinical Placements and Mentor Teacher w/TPP
- Misalignment: Current Teaching and Apprenticeship of Observation
- Misalignment: Skepticism of practices
- Misalignment: Teacher Vision and School Vision
Additionally, I created codes for the signature pedagogies determined in the initial analysis phases. Some examples of these included CP: Facilitating Discussion, CP: Teaching Controversial or Sensitive Topics, or CP: Inquiry/Teaching with Compelling Questions.

I purposefully developed a dual codebook for signature pedagogies and the research questions. First, this allowed for overlapping tagging as a participant could be describing their use of discussion methods in their teaching (coded as a Signature Pedagogy: Discussion) while simultaneously telling a story about how they wish they used it more (coded as Practice: Wanted to but) but were turned off from it when they tried it in the past and it did not go very well (coded as Experimenting: Failure with Practice). Looking across cases for a single signature pedagogy, such as discussion or backward curriculum design, enabled me to analyze whether there were more general patterns about that practice across participants. Similarly, I was able to use the research question code groups to look across cases and make determinations that generalize across the group, such as which practices they say they use most/least frequently, what elements of their preparation they found most/least influential (e.g., specific clinical experiences, coursework readings, or field instruction), and what types of obstacles/supports were most
common in the field (e.g., classroom management issues or supports, curricular resources or constraints, and school professional norms that enhanced or hindered their teaching).

This then led me to look for similarities and differences among participants, identifying common ways in which their experiences as students, in preparation, and in their school context might come together to shape their instruction in ways that encouraged uptake of the signature pedagogies and practices, challenged or substantiated skepticism of program practices, or resulted in wash-out.

To develop these codebooks, I tested and refined them with two interviews by applying codes, developing an example bank with Atlas.ti for reference, and adding and modifying codes as I went. One example of a code revision during this process included changing the code *Obstacle: Time* to *Obstacle: Time/Workload*, as these two elements went hand-in-hand. I also added several codes during this testing and refinement phase, including codes for alignment between the preparation program and teachers' current schools and several new obstacle codes, such as ones that considered interruptions and chaotic school environments (schedule changes, disruptions to the school day, etc.), feelings of professional isolation, the physical environment of the school (such as problems with HVAC and classroom setup), and indications that they struggled to remember everything from their preparation.

**Video Analysis**

When analyzing the videos, my two main goals were to gather additional data to support conclusions about which practices teachers took up and how often these were happening in their classrooms. To do this, I used the signature pedagogies identified in the course analysis, plus included new and more specific practices/revised phrasing that emerged from interviews and might fall under different codes. So, for example, under scaffolding, strategies for building background knowledge were included, under facilitating discussion would fall something like a think-pair-share, and under classroom management strategies came small methods such as perch points, attention getters, and circulating the classroom.

When I observed teachers' lessons, I created a rough coding system based simply on the types of activities I saw in the classroom that were similar to the codes used for interview analysis. In a spreadsheet, I would timestamp different parts of the lesson, naming them as I went while recording field notes and details that I noticed, especially those which might have been
difficult to see from a video recording. Then, using the notes from a handful of observations, I created a refined list of codes for the different types of activities that I was seeing. The initial list included Downtime/Deadtime, Independent Work, Group Work, Assessment, Housekeeping, and Lecture. I then consulted a more developed observation protocol, the COPUS protocol (Smith et al., 2013), and refined wordings, including changing "Housekeeping" to "Administrative" and adding "Waiting" instead of Downtime/Deadtime. Some examples of codes that I added in this process included Scaffold Moves (e.g., teacher has the students read, listen, and repeat the word "sovereignty" to promote oral language development) or Activating/Connecting Background Knowledge (e.g., the teacher asks students to recall information from a previous lesson or make a connection with something they already know or understand). Other codes were refined, such as Directions/Instructions which I expanded to include taking and answering student questions about an activity. I split the Lecture/Notes code into two different codes based on the level of student engagement and interaction, with one code including the tag "little student input" and the other being "interactive lecture," which was where the teacher incorporated regular opportunities for student engagement and checks for understanding. I also noted general categorizations for student engagement with the lesson based on informal observations of student participation during different activities.

After taking notes and coding different parts of a teacher’s lesson, I would write memos to note trends in their instruction, especially those that included routines or commonly used instructional patterns. For example, codes such as the use of opening warm-up or bellringer activities, the use of different dialogue routines such as think-pair-shares or cold-calling, and the larger formats for instruction, including the use of guided then independent practice or activating prior knowledge, new content, and checking for understanding were commonly noted in observations. Collectively, the field notes and memos were instrumental in developing an accurate description each teacher's instruction and were useful as a comparison point to verify the instruction participants described in interviews.

**Memos and Development of Case Profiles**

With this comprehensive data set, I made connections across novice teachers' experiences to gain a deeper understanding of how these different elements of their background, coursework, practicum, and school context can come together in a "recipe" that promotes the uptake of the the
preparation program’s signature pedagogies. Such an understanding could influence how we recruit teachers, select mentor teachers and school placements, and understand which aspects of preparation may be most powerful in cultivating highly effective novice teachers.

In order to engage in such theory development, I look to Cochran-Smith and colleagues' (2012) longitudinal research following beginning teachers into their first few years of teaching to observe their career decisions, school mobility, and practice development. By looking across the 15 participants in their study, the authors were able to develop five "configurations" that typified teacher mobility and pedagogical development, such as "strong teaching and continuing to teach in the same school" or "problematic/weak teaching and moving schools/positions in order to continue to teach." In this way, they could link common experiences across participants and group them into a composite or aggregate case study.

To determine trends among my participants, I first employed a multiple case study design (Stake, 2013), creating individual case profiles for each participant regarding specific characteristics such as practice they did and did not utilize, meaningful experiences during preparation, and supports or obstacles faced in their school context. Then, using a spreadsheet, I created a tab for each participant and took notes after coding interviews, reviewing lesson recordings, and studying teaching artifacts. I organized these notes by research question and larger code buckets. For example, for research question one about which practices are and are not taken up, I noted instances for each participant where they used practices frequently or rarely, as well as other relevant information such as which specific signature pedagogies of the program they identified as core to the program.

Using these case profiles, I looked within and across the different cases' qualitative summary matrices (Saldana, 2003) in a theory-building process. I began with a "categories of categories" approach as described by Saldana (2016), where codes are clustered into bigger categories and are then organized into a visual or graphic display that links the "if-then/when-then/since-that's why logic" (pp. 277-279) that provides more generalizable insights into how, why, and under what circumstances novice teachers take up the practices advocated for during their preparation. For example, I began to write initial claims that I had noticed seemed to be commonplace across as least some of the different cases, such as trends about when and under what conditions practices seemed to be taken up or not and similarities in where and how specific teachers attributed learning these practices along their journey. I then would go through
the individual cases and compile quotes, examples, and notes from each candidate that supported these statements, non-examples, and emerging sub-claims. Along the way, I revised the wording of initial claims to more accurately reflect the data and develop new and more nuanced themes to reflect the variety of experiences.

Using this approach to categorization, I could also investigate whether individual teachers’ particular experiences, supports, or understandings are related to and influence one another, such as through hierarchical, sequential, cascading, or networked relationships.

**Limitations**

With such a research design, some inherent limitations and challenges arise. These include considerations for the generalizability of the findings, the accuracy and validity of data sources, and limiting bias introduced by the researcher in analysis.

This study only examines nine beginning teachers’ experiences and instructional development in a particular content area. Therefore, it is difficult to say that findings represent all, or even a majority, of novice teacher experiences across grade levels and content areas. Some of the challenges, supports, and experiences investigated in this study may be specific to secondary history and social studies teaching. Given that all teachers in the sample are White, attended a highly selective institution, and were nearly all from and teaching in a single state means that other intervening factors may apply specifically to these participants and not teachers more broadly. That said, these experiences will likely resonate with other research on beginning teachers in different locations, from different backgrounds, and in different grade levels and content areas, as my own experiences in teaching and working with teachers six different states tells me that many of the challenges are the same. Additionally, this theory-building study might inform larger-scale studies or investigations in other content areas or grade levels.

Another challenge with data accuracy is the potential questions about the observer’s paradox (Labov, 1972), where the presence of an observer changes the behavior of the observed. It is possible that the observed lessons do not represent these teachers' typical day-to-day instruction and that they have gone above and beyond in their planning and instruction to impress me as the observer. Though this is undeniably a possibility, the extent of the observations (several lessons instead of just one) and the triangulation of data from interviews
and teaching materials should help to address this issue and capture an accurate picture of teachers’ practice.

Additionally, having experience in my background with observing teachers and working as an instructional coach, I have seen "showcase" lessons before where teachers try to enact a method that is new in their classrooms to try and impress the observer. In those cases, there are often signs that suggest a lesson is out of the ordinary, such as student confusion or struggle with a new method or unfamiliar routine, as well as a general clunkiness on the teacher’s part as they try something for the first time in their classroom. In this sense, I cannot say that any of the lessons I observed and recorded stood out in this manner. Sure, teachers may have spent more time preparing materials and thinking through their lessons, knowing that I would be there, but even with a more polished delivery, what I saw in their classes appeared to be more or less typical of their day-to-day teaching.

The observer’s paradox could also have impacted how kids acted in these classes. To help with this, on the first day of observations, the teacher introduced me to the class, and we both emphasized that I was there to watch the teacher and not the students. Also, in none of my conversations with teachers after lessons did any participants note that students were remarkably well-behaved or engaged because I was in the room. In fact, I was honestly shocked by student behavior in many cases. Even with the camera rolling and me sitting at a table next to or behind students, I was surprised by the number of instances where I "caught" students doing things like cussing or slapping a classmate in the back of the head. Given that many students seemed not to care, or even forgot, that I was there, I believe that students were generally not influenced by my presence.

In interviews, there is potential for inaccuracies to be introduced through respondent tendencies to select socially desirable answers to satisfice the interviewer (see Simon, 1956 or Krosnick, 1991). Again, the longitudinal nature of this study and the multiple reference points for confirming or disconfirming claims about teachers' practice helps to mitigate this potential problem by providing more data to notice patterns or discrepancies as well as to develop more trust better researcher and participants.

Additionally, recent research on interview bias has shown that developing long-term relationships between interviewers and participants helps to reduce this satisficing problem and encourages respondents to be more honest and critical in their responses (Kühne, 2018). The
extended nature of relationships I established with participants, as well as my deliberate efforts to establish trust within interviews make it more likely that they responded honestly rather than merely satisficing.

During interviews and conversations with participants, some moments confirmed that they were not just telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. For example, some participants were critical of my own practices as a teacher educator or shared moments of blunt honesty, such as when Trevor proclaimed that "nothing I can say will 'hurt' my degree" before revealing that he never read a single assigned article for my class.

There were other moments in closing of follow-up interviews where participants made statements that lead me to believe that I had their trust and that they had been honest with me. Two prime examples came from teachers at the opposite edges of the progressive and traditional orientations. Stella, for example, expressed that she "just enjoyed talking about it…you know, not everyone wants to hear about teaching" and that it was nice to reflect with "somebody that gets it." When I asked Jake about wanting a copy of the final work, he was eager to take a look, telling me that his interest stemmed from him “also kind of having a mindset like you and being a little bit more skeptical of the whole experience” of preparation and induction. Both teachers felt that I was “on their side,” or at least that I was a compassionate set of ears. If I was able to establish trust and rapport despite the differences in these two teachers’ orientations, experiences, and practices, I feel that was likely true for other participants as well.

Another potential limitation is the challenge regarding the researcher's and participants' perceptions and understandings of different practices and methods. As previously noted, much of the data in this study is based on teacher self-report, though partially verified in part through observations. This means that interview data relies on participants and researchers having a similar understanding of what is meant by specific practices or methods. During interviews, the think-aloud method used when giving participants a list of core practices helped to mediate this challenge. It allowed participants to ask questions and clarify what different terms mean, something nearly all participants took advantage of at one point or another. Still, the potential exists for participants to have a different understanding of "what counts" for a particular practice being different from my own, especially for more nebulous ideas such as inquiry teaching, culturally responsive instruction, or facilitating discussion. The rich data sets that offer
opportunities for triangulation, as well as my ability to member-check claims and clarify understandings in the follow-up interviews, help to mitigate this issue.

As with all research, there is an interpretive aspect where my own and participant's understandings of contexts and influences may introduce inaccuracies and bias. In this sense, I am relying on teachers' self-reporting about their school contexts and K12 experiences. It would be difficult to gain a true understanding of beginning teachers' actual versus interpreted experiences in their secondary classrooms. Future work could better understand the school context through more ethnographic approaches and immersion into school environments to gain a fuller perspective of the school environment, not just the teacher’s perception of that environment.

Another limitation affecting this cohort is the reality that their preparation and induction periods occurred during a global pandemic. As a result, this cohort had a wide range of experiences in clinical placements and student teaching, with some having completely remote student teaching experiences and others being primarily in person. This also carried over a bit into their first year, with some teachers having hybrid classrooms or shifting to online teaching at various times. Based on this, this cohort might have been behind in their development compared to peers with more typical induction contexts. However, since this study is not evaluating the effectiveness of their instruction, this is only a minor consideration. That said, these limited experiences in classrooms likely overemphasize the struggles that they had with classroom management, as this is typically something that is foregrounded during student teaching. In both cases, following them and observing them during their second year of full-time teaching, which was also the most normal in terms of returning to pre-pandemic norms, helps to address these concerns.
Chapter 4 Findings

After going through the process of data collection and analysis as outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter presents findings, followed by a chapter for conclusions and discussion.

In presenting that data in this chapter, I take the following approach. First, I will present a detailed case for each of the nine participants, organized by research question to describe which signature pedagogies from preparation they did or did not use in their first two years of teaching, the origins of what they perceived and what I interpreted to be the origins of their instructional practices, and a final section describing the conditions that seem to promote or hinder their use of signature pedagogies. Next, I look across cases to articulate patterns of similarity and difference, again organized by research questions. Finally, I look at collective survey results, showing in a more quantified manner what these novice teachers believed were the most important sources of their practice, as well as what obstacles and supports were most commonly experienced across the group.

Individual Case Profiles

Dexter

**Background.** Dexter taught middle school social studies in an urban K-8 school in a major Midwestern city. The school where he taught during his first two years served about 500 students who were almost exclusively Black, with most students receiving free and reduced-price lunch. This school also had a history of very low achievement on state tests, with less than 5% of students testing proficient in math and reading each year.

As we will see in the following sections, Dexter taught in a very difficult school context. This was why he asked me not to visit his classroom, and I was unable to observe his teaching. Across interviews, he related feelings of shame and disappointment in his teaching and, as a result, he did not want to be observed.

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** Overall, Dexter described many reasons why he was unable to use hardly any of the signature pedagogies. Classroom management
struggles, student academic skills, and schoolwide discipline issues were the most significant obstacles to more ambitious or student-centered instruction. Additionally, Dexter’s personal beliefs and views about teaching and learning served as an obstacle to taking up more rigorous instruction.

Although Dexter wanted to use more discussion, he believed it was not “viable” in his school, linking the struggle between classroom management and rigorous teaching. He highlighted this struggle when he posed a dilemma in an interview, wondering where his time and energy should be spent in a chaotic classroom, with “the kid who’s trying to start a fight” or another group that needs more help in comprehending a text.

Dexter related that classroom management and school-wide behavior issues did not drastically improve in his second year, further discouraging his use of the program’s signature pedagogies. Administrators were inconsistent with school discipline and tried to avoid “laying down the law,” according to Dexter. This seemed to undercut teachers’ ability to count on school-wide discipline structures or systems as they tried to establish their own classroom systems. In his follow-up interview, Dexter told me that “it’s just been incredibly difficult to set routines and stuff and like having the back-up [from administrators] to set those routines.” These challenges he faced in his second year were still a tremendous obstacle to more ambitious instruction, something which he lamented, pointing out his disappointment that he was “barely getting the chance to do lower-level learning stuff” with all of the obstacles.

Student motivation, ability, and engagement were also issues Dexter identified with respect to enacting signature pedagogies. In the final interview, he described what happened when trying more rigorous instruction, such as discussion, in his school. He argued that discussions flopped in his classroom due to the wide range of student ability, specifically pointing out that “either they don’t have the prior knowledge or the higher order thinking is difficult for them, or they don’t have the kind of mental routines” to engage in the activities.

Dexter reported his beliefs that ambitious practices promoted in the program were way over the heads of most of his students. In this sense, Dexter pointed out that you cannot run a Socratic Seminar when most of the class either does not comprehend the text or is in a rowdy classroom “where everyone wants to scream over one another and [he] could barely get through the directions.”
This, in part, stemmed from the school’s overall learning culture. Dexter and his colleagues noticed that many of their students suffered from a cycle of learned helplessness that resulted in misbehavior. For example, he described understanding how a student who struggles with academic work might give up or quit to hide that they are having trouble and “might not be smart” from their classmates. This disengagement then could manifest in further misbehavior as the student tries to fill their time otherwise.

School policies also seemed to further these problems, especially how the school engaged in a mastery-based approach to grading. In this system, students had the entire year to turn in assignments and retake assessments, meaning that Dexter had “kids turning stuff in that they were supposed to do in September or October,” a grading burden that he found formidable. Dexter also described how these policies sapped students’ motivation to engage in day-to-day activities, taking away any sense of urgency as students knew that they could always make up the work later. In this way, Dexter described how students were at many different places in the curriculum or would decide to take days off, making activities that require pacing and sustained engagement, like a discussion or source investigations, rather difficult.

Dexter told me about how he and fellow teachers were sucked into a similar cycle of learned helplessness where spending extra time and energy on developing engaging lessons was rewarded with failed and chaotic lessons, foiled by student disinterest and misbehavior, dampening interest in planning future ambitious lessons. As a result, Dexter explained that he was very skeptical of any method “that requires high levels of student buy-in,” noting in other parts of the interviews that in these cases, he had seen that kids “weren’t really into it” and wondered if teaching in certain inquiry-based methods were actually “compelling to an 11-year-old.” In this way, he had a defeated outlook on the signature pedagogies, telling me that “no matter what I do, some of these kids aren’t gonna do it,” making such efforts feel like a waste of time.

Dexter’s views and beliefs about teaching and the contextual factors of the school played a significant role in determining which practices he took up and which he did not.

Across interviews, Dexter showed that he was not a particularly planning-oriented teacher, noting that backwards design was very theoretical. Instead, he held a belief that teaching is more spontaneous and that lesson plans can take out the human element of teaching. This
seemed to be rooted in how lesson plans he did spend time modifying went poorly in class, saying that “no plan survives contact with the enemy.”

Relatedly, he admitted that his “desire to teach started from a love for history, not necessarily a love for teaching,” an orientation that shaped how he approached his instruction. In a sense, Dexter seemed on the fence about his commitment to teaching. Though he told me that he had considered teaching as a potential career when he was a middle school student, he only made a final choice to go into education about halfway through his undergraduate program. During undergrad, Dexter explained that he initially wanted to get a history or political science degree but decided against it because he “couldn’t really get a satisfactory answer as to what [he] would do with those degrees” after graduation. He then made the decision to seek teacher certification, a path that served as something of a backup plan.

Dexter’s lackluster enthusiasm about teaching was further justified by data collected later in the study. On a follow-up survey, when asked to select among statements that most and least described his teaching, Dexter was the only participant to say that “I’m satisfied with my teaching and don’t spend a ton of time thinking about ways to change my instruction or lessons for the better” as most representative of his teaching. This is especially notable because all other participants selected this statement as one that least described their instruction. Additionally, Dexter was one of two participants to select “I look at teaching as a stable profession where I get to do some good by society” as representative of his teaching, further evidencing a generally lower level of professional ambitiousness.

The school context that Dexter was in certainly did not help with these notions. Overall, the school that Dexter taught at in his first few years was not very aligned with the ideals of the preparation program he attended, or as Dexter put it when asked if there was alignment, “… like in what I was trained to do versus what I’m expected to do, not so much.”

Dexter also was operating mostly in isolation. He was the only social studies teacher in his building, and described his relationships with other teachers as generally revolving around sharing stories about student behavior and commiserating. The school was not very collaborative either. Even though he attended regular grade-level team meetings, he did not find these to be useful, explaining that “sometimes the other teachers would just like complain about stuff for 15 minutes and then it’s like, time to go. I’m like, well, that didn’t seem very productive.”
Staffing was generally an issue too, with Dexter noting that in the first year, they were running on a “skeleton crew.” This did improve the following year with the school adding a social worker, a justice counselor, hall monitors, and having a full middle school staff to share the workload. Although these were seen as additional supports, they were not enough to overcome the enormous obstacles he faced in his school.

**Taking up Signature Pedagogies.** Dexter was an outlier in this participant group based on his experiences with curriculum. He was provided with a very thoroughly developed curricular program, something that he told me he was expected to implement with only minor revisions. Even though Dexter had a more traditional orientation, the curriculum he showed me took up many ideas and practices that were promoted in preparation, such as backward design, scaffolded skill development, formative and summative assessments, projects, and more inquiry-based writing instruction using primary sources.

He seemed to have a complicated relationship with the curriculum. In one sense, it did not feel as authentic to him as a teacher, but at the same time, he acknowledged that if he were lesson planning everything from scratch, he probably would leave his job for his own “mental capacity and emotional wellbeing.” He did not feel that this was an extensively constraining curriculum, telling me that, “I think of it as, like, they give me the script, but I can choose how to direct it.” He said that he was reluctant to revise the provided materials as it was a “pain” to do, so he mostly stuck with what they gave him.

By following this curriculum, Dexter did describe at least attempting to engage with some ambitious teaching practices from preparation. With the writing portions of the curriculum, Dexter regularly used modeling and provided students with regular feedback. At several points, he described providing students with exemplar paragraphs or activities to break apart paragraphs and identify the claim and evidence.

**Experimenting with Practice.** Dexter’s curricular situation led him to not experiment much with practice and he indicated that what he did learn was mostly “trial-and-error” with how to best use the curricular materials. When he did modify curriculum and try out new methods, he felt that he did this in ways that emphasized engagement. In this way, he felt like he was making a difficult bargain, as these changes often lowered the rigor of the teaching and learning. Dexter made an astute comparison between rigorous methods and “junk food” teaching methods that have higher engagement, pointing out a dilemma that the less rigorous methods allowed him to
maintain more control of the class and also get kids more engaged in the lessons but prevented him from using more ambitious practices.

Dexter also was not getting much support or encouragement to try out new practices from colleagues in his school. Although he received regular instructional coaching, he felt it was generally ineffective. When discussing classroom observations and feedback from an instructional coach, he was frustrated and referred to her comments as “no-shit kind of stuff.” In his elaboration, Dexter gave a few examples where feedback pointed to what his classroom should look like or what he should be doing but provided no guidance on how to create that type of classroom environment. This continued in the second year, with Dexter wishing the teacher coach could “kind of step in here and show me how it should be done” and that the feedback was not bad, he just did not know how to do it himself.

**Sources of Instruction.** When it came to identifying the sources of his practice, Dexter pointed to clinical placements and teaching simulations as the most important in impacting his instruction. In particular, he noted, “I feel like the times where you’re actually doing it or doing like an approximation of it were helpful cause it’s like, okay, this is more so than, you know, reading the books,” pointing towards the important role that authentic or semi-authentic practice opportunities played a key role in his development.

However, when pressed to talk about what he learned in student teaching, he talked little about specific practices or methods and instead described how it was a necessary trial by fire and made him “very self-aware” in the classroom. He also pointed to it as an important stepping stone for learning about the workload demands of teaching and how to interact with young people. For Dexter, student teaching was more about learning what it was like to be a teacher rather than about learning how to teach.

When it came to learning from his past teachers, Dexter could only recall one or two teachers that he felt inspired him, mostly about how he enjoyed their teaching delivery or personality in the classroom. He was drawn to being a “witty” teacher with a dry and sarcastic sense of humor, something which he acknowledged often went over the heads of his sixth graders. In telling me about his AP US History teacher that he admired, Dexter described him as “semi-retired” and that “he was very just ‘done’ with it, like, in a very fun way” and that he remembers thinking, “I will definitely do that” once he had his own classroom. Dexter’s own
apprenticeship of observation was not only misaligned with the preparation program, but it seems that the teachers he preferred were problematic and less than ambitious.

Dexter reported experiencing the preparation program differently than many of the other participants. Dexter described having a belief that, while course readings or watching video clips is not the worst idea to learn some things about teaching, teachers learn with “boots on the ground” and in real classrooms. In this way, Dexter took a more laid-approach to his preparation coursework, stating that he only became “conscious” when it came time to student teach. In the final member-checking interview, Dexter was also the only teacher to say that he did not pick up any methods or practices from watching program faculty teaching in coursework, believing that it was too “meta” and that he would have much preferred to talk about content rather than teaching.

**Final Thoughts.** Dexter’s case shows how school context factors, a teacher’s experiences during preparation, and other personal factors can promote or serve as obstacles to using signature pedagogies of preparation. In particular, it seems that Dexter came into preparation with misalignment and lacking ambitious models of instruction from his own experiences as a student. Some skepticism and his beliefs that you can only learn teaching by teaching seemed to hinder any uptake of program practices during preparation. His student teaching experiences and the school context where he ended up during his first two years of teaching did not push him towards more ambitious practice promoted in coursework, meaning, at no point did signature pedagogies ever totally “wash in.” Given the extreme obstacles faced in his school context, it is not surprising that Dexter resorted to more traditional teaching approaches.

**Trevor**

**Background.** I had the chance to observe Trevor’s class over two school days during his second year. During those visits, I watched him teach an economics class and one lesson in United States history.

Trevor is a unique case, in part because he switched schools between his first and second year, offering an interesting and informative comparison point for thinking about the impact that each context had on his instruction. In his second year, Trevor began teaching at his former high school, a large suburban public school with a predominantly White student population.
He taught at an urban middle school in his first year, serving predominantly Black and Brown students. This particular school faced a lot of challenges and Trevor found it to be a difficult and frustrating context to teach in, which spurred him to switch schools at his first year.

**Noticings from Observations.** During his lessons, he was highly personable, sharing stories such as how he ran into some students that weekend at the movies and making frequent pop culture references that would better connect content with students’ backgrounds and interests.

His lessons were generally very content-heavy and used mostly traditional approaches, with hints of using some of the more progressive practices promoted in preparation coursework. For example, in one lesson I observed, he used compelling questions and concepts in his teaching, asking “What is price elasticity? Why are some people willing to continue purchasing products after the prices increase?” The lesson delivery hedged more towards traditional teacher- and content- centered teaching as he predominantly relied on lecture and notes, and where students were passively engaged in the lesson. Outside of the lecture moments, the classes were also based mostly on student independent work, such as completing worksheets or online games related to the content that the teacher just delivered or in review for an upcoming assessment.

**Taking up Signature Pedagogies.** From my classroom visits and our interviews, one of the practices promoted during preparation which Trevor took up was the way that he connected with students and valued building positive relationships with his classes. He reported being active in extra-curriculars, such as sponsoring the Video Game Club, and participated in non-instructional ways, such as organizing a field trip to a basketball game and performing in a school lip-syncing fundraiser.

My classroom visits further verified the value he placed on student relationships and classroom culture. My first observation started with overhearing a conversation Trevor had with a student who dropped by during the passing period to let Trevor know that his schedule changed and that they would miss having him as a teacher. Trevor expressed that he would miss them to and sent them off with a “don’t be a stranger!”

Based on interviews, and, to some extent, observations, there were several other methods from preparation that Trevor used regularly. These included explicit modeling of skills, such as writing arguments, chunking assignments to promote engagement and check for understanding, and actively using “perch points” to monitor student work by circulating the room. Trevor used
the See-Think-Wonder strategy learned in the program for image analysis and also described doing occasional work with primary sources in his classes.

Lesson planning was one program signature pedagogy that Trevor did not take up in his first few years of teaching. In the initial interview, when prompted about his use of backward design, he asked, “That’s like starting with an assessment and then working back into the regular stuff, right?” and then responded with, “I didn’t do that once. Absolutely not.” At his first school, administrators required that he submit lesson plans for the first couple of months, but “once November was done, they stopped. And then [Trevor] did not make another lesson plan the entire rest of the school year.”

This is not to say that Trevor was making up his lessons as he went along as he reported doing lots of curriculum development with other teachers during his second year. It seemed that, for him, his lessons were guided by the materials (slides, handouts, texts, etc.) rather than by doing the more formalized versions promoted during preparation. This, however, brings up an interesting point about Trevor. He expressed an aversion to planning, repeating a quotation from Mike Tyson that “everybody’s got a plan until they get punched in the mouth.” In this sense, he did not see the value of planning because even the best-laid plans have the potential to go off track and simply were not worth the time and effort.

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** In his first school, Trevor told me about challenges with classroom management, workload, and student motivation that he felt sabotaged his attempts at the more ambitious signature pedagogies. In this situation, Trevor felt that his only option was to resort to more traditional methods. He told me that “behavior was a really big issue” in his first school, and that he had one particularly difficult class that guided how he taught the lessons that day, scrapping lesson ideas that were more rigorous and engaging. Trevor explained how the behavior issues in that class pushed his instructional practice away from progressive methods and more towards traditional teachers as he explained his thinking about that class as he gathered lesson materials:

Oh, can I watch this video? It’s 10 minutes. They’re not going to be quiet for it, so probably not. Oh, can I do this group activity? They’re probably going to be distracted. Probably can’t do that. Can I make this my desk layout? Nah, they’ll probably have their backs turned to me.
In this context, Trevor lamented that he “did a lot of explicit teaching … where [he] just kind of talked to a room,” something he said was “not great.” He reflected back on his first year of teaching, explaining things that he wished he had done differently, which were mostly about classroom discipline issues, noting that “classroom management is hard still for [him]” and that he was still “working on it.”

At his first school, Trevor shared that student resistance and motivations were major obstacles as well, telling me that:

Apathy was my biggest villain … because I just had so many kids look at me and say, ‘Mr. Trevor, you know that I’m not gonna do this assignment.’ And then I’d say, ‘How can I get you to’, and they’re like, ‘You can’t.’ So, I can’t get them to think outside the box if they don’t want to be inside the box.

The challenges with student motivation were linked to schoolwide dysfunction where learning and academics were not a priority, and schoolwide issues with discipline and student behavior were major obstacles. This discouraged Trevor from using signature pedagogies, with him explaining that “lack of motivation was a big thing … why would I go forward with all of this extra effort and be creative if they’re not going to do it? That definitely shattered my morale.” In this sense, the school context played an important role in shifting Trevor’s practice towards traditional methods that better allowed him to control the class, something that he said became his top priority when developing his lessons.

Trevor found these obstacles difficult to overcome, especially as they compounded. He explained that the teachers at his first school “were largely building everything from scratch with student resistance … [and that his] colleagues were trying to do [their] best to make do with what [they] had,” which meant resorting to more traditional methods in an administrative culture focused on “teaching to the test.”

There were also personal factors which prevented Trevor from taking up signature pedagogies from his preparation program. Trevor had a deep skepticism of what could be learned from coursework, something that created a mental block and seemed to hinder his uptake of practice. In the follow-up survey responses, he was one of two participants to strongly agree that the statement “I pretty much knew the type of teacher that I wanted to be when I started the program … (and it did/didn’t change much once I got into the field).” He also reported that he never did class readings and that he cut corners on assignments or had a mindset about activities
in preparation coursework that barred him from learning about unfamiliar and more ambitious practice more deeply. His mentor teacher from student teaching fueled his skepticism about the value of coursework, with Trevor telling me that his mentor teacher’s “favorite line” was “they’re not going to teach you this at [the university].”

This stemmed from Trevor’s perception during coursework that teaching was not very difficult, diminishing the urgency or value that he saw in preparation. This perception changed a bit once he was in the classroom, with Trevor expressing that all the details and things teachers need to think about caught him off guard during his first year of teaching. He explained that some of the more invisible aspects of teaching, such as developing classroom routines, creating coherent lessons, and meeting administrative demands (such as taking attendance) was more complex than he thought and was just “not something that [he] put too much thought into until I was actually in front of a classroom.”

This perception and dismissiveness of coursework also showed in how he approached participating in teaching simulations during coursework, noting that when he was playing a student role, he was more focused on just having fun with it rather than also using it as an opportunity to experience methods from a student perspective and notice the moves used by the “teacher” that day. It didn’t become serious until “[he] was the one at the front of the room.” In this sense, his own mindset about teaching and its perceived lack of complexity seemed to be a barrier to deep and transformative learning during his preparation coursework. The primacy that he saw in contextual factors also played a role as he explained how little value he found in watching others teach simulated lessons because he thought they were non-applicable in different schools and with different kids.

Method difficulty and Trevor’s instructional values and goals played a role in whether and which practices he took up from his preparation. In the follow-up survey, Trevor’s top reasons for not using program methods were that he found them confusing or boring, they didn’t fit with his school’s instructional culture, students resisted when he tried to engage them in more rigorous work, and that program methods were simply difficult to enact (he also was the only participant who cited this as being a significant factor). There also was confusion on Trevor’s part about what constituted certain practices. For example, he described one of the economics classes I observed as based in “whole-class discussion.” Although the lesson and his teaching in general took a more conversational tone, it was more of a semi-interactive lecture where students
responded to teacher prompting. This seemed to be Trevor’s predominant method of instruction, and not what the program had meant by “whole class discussion.” He also indicated in his follow-up survey that his teaching priorities revolved more around relationships with students and wanting to make his class engaging and fun. This misalignment with some program goals, helps to make sense of which practices he took up from preparation: those that were simple, easy to implement, and kept students engaged, often through what he called “game-based learning.”

**Experimenting with Practice.** This is not to say that he did not try to use some of the signature pedagogies from preparation. However, when he did try to move away from traditional methods, they seemed to go poorly, further demoralizing his desire to plan more engaging and rigorous work. One example came from his attempt to incorporate more projects in his classes. In this instance, students turned in very poor-quality work (by copy-pasting from sources online), struggled with being able to work over multiple days independently, or where student grades plummeted because so few completed the project further discouraged him from using this more student-centered practice.

In his second school, the more stable environment supported him using more of the ambitious signature pedagogies. There were many fewer issues with classroom management and students were more compliant and engaged, allowing the teacher to assign things or do activities and spend less time constantly monitoring and redirecting students. He also seemed to have more opportunities for collaboration and mentorship at his second school where he often described the value of having a co-teacher or weekly department meetings in which teachers collaboratively planned and where he simply had people to bounce ideas off of.

In this new and more supportive context, he reported that he was making shifts in his instruction. This included implementing such practices as discussion more often and engaging in what he called “abstract” teaching, which was a method that got kids to make connections between content and pop culture (e.g., video clips, cartoons, songs, etc.). That said, Trevor’s teaching in his second year still heavily emphasized content and rote memorization of information. This was clear in my observations and in Trevor’s descriptions about spending time early in the school year teaching students how to take notes.

Even though Trevor did report that he regularly experimented with practice, he also expressed several instances that suggested him to be more risk-averse than other participants. During his second year, he reported having a philosophy of “the nail that sticks out gets pounded
down,” explaining that teachers should avoid “… stray[ing] too far away from what has been proven to work.” This was aimed explicitly at trying to stay under the radar with administrators but also further suggests that he simply was not very innovative or prone to trying out practices that were unfamiliar to him.

**Models of Instruction.** Trevor generally found little value from his preparation program and attributed his instructional learning to his apprenticeship of observation and student teaching experiences.

In the follow-up survey, he stood out from other participants in rating coursework, work with field instructors, and particular activities and assignments from coursework as much less important in how they influenced his teaching. Correspondingly, he rated clinical work, his cooperating teacher, and his own K-12 teachers as more critical influences on his practice than other participants. Additionally, in the final interview, he summed up his instructional development by explaining that:

> I modeled the majority of my practice based on my mentor teacher from student teaching and teachers that I had in high school because there’s a lot of really, really good practices that I did pick up when it comes to like analyzing documents and using standard lectures.

In an interesting anecdote, Trevor shared with me that one of his current sophomore students had recently moved and attended the middle school where Trevor did his student teaching. He found this out when this student told Trevor that he reminded him of a middle school teacher he had, which happened to be Trevor’s former mentor teacher. For this to have happened, Trevor clearly channeled a lot of his practice from his student teaching mentor teacher.

His mentor teacher and experiences as a high school student seemed only partially aligned with the practices promoted by the preparation program but were also highly influential on Trevor’s practice. One example of this was in Trevor’s second year where he described his curriculum development in his U.S. history class, explaining that his “mentor [also] teaches American history and [that he] basically bases everything off of him.” This was also a teacher that Trevor told me “was the guy who made [him] want to be a teacher” and that he modeled a lot of his teaching style, specifically the more “abstract” methods, from his mentor’s practice.

**Supports for Signature Pedagogies.** In his second year, Trevor told me about a few ways that his school context was supporting him to teach more ambitiously and in ways aligned with his preparation coursework. One key element was a set of premade curricular materials to
base his teaching on and which he had some autonomy to modify. Trevor was grateful for the way that this reduced his workload and allowed him to tinker with lessons, inserting activities and methods here and there rather than trying to plan everything from scratch. He also had a collaborative team of colleagues teaching the same class who met weekly to discuss and make collective revisions to the curricular materials. In this way, Trevor was apprenticed into using the curriculum but also had the opportunity chat with more experienced teachers about his lessons and instruction.

The more important condition that supported Trevor in using more signature pedagogies was the school environment. Having a more stable environment to teach in, one with fewer classroom management challenges and disruptions, laid a foundation upon which he could teach in more student-centered and rigorous ways. Trevor noted that when comparing the two schools that it was a “[n]ight and day difference” and that “[he found] the overall respect [he received from students]…to be significantly higher” at his second school. In this way, the academic and behavioral culture of the school also mattered greatly, with Trevor reporting that student motivation, engagement, and buy-in made the use of rigorous practice much less challenging.

**Final Thoughts.** Trevor was not the most ambitious teacher but once obstacles around workload, classroom management, and student motivation were reduced, he was more able to use signature pedagogies from preparation. That said, he seemed to learn very little from his preparation coursework and instead taught in the mostly traditional ways that paralleled his own K-12 teachers and student teaching mentor.

**Jake**

**Background.** Jake taught World History in a relatively large, rural middle school during his first year. This middle school was predominantly white, with more than half of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and a history of achievement that was consistently below the state average. During his second year, Jake enrolled in a graduate history program and switched schools to work close to the university he was attending. The high school he taught at during his second year was much more diverse, with a student population that was roughly 70% white and about 10% American Indian. The school also had a stronger history of achievement, with test results usually above or around the state averages and had a smaller proportion of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch (less than 40%).
Jake’s background, views, and experiences during his preparation and first two years in the classroom were different from the other participants in this study. He reported having had a traditional schooling background that he enjoyed and he was looking to replicate this approach in his own teaching. He identified as a more “traditional conservative” teacher and pointed out several occasions during his preparation where he stood apart from his classmates due to his views on teaching, where “everyone else was over on the more progressive-liberal side.” In his follow-up survey, he indicated that student learning and having a structured classroom were among his top priorities. He also entered the preparation program “being a little bit more skeptical of the whole experience.”

Overall, Jake was the participant with the least initial alignment between his instructional vision and program signature pedagogies. He was the only teacher in the study who indicated that he was not convinced that he wanted to be like the type of teacher that the program idealized.

**Noticings from Observations.** I observed three days of Jake’s civics class. The students were learning about first amendment rights in school by studying the *Tinker v. Des Moines* case and preparing for a simulation or mock trial that was to take place on the final day of my visit. Each day started with reminders, a quick current events connection, and a review. The three classes followed a similar instructional pattern: a brief lecture, answering questions about a video clip, or completing a worksheet based on a text or online research. Across the three days, Jake constructed lessons to build student background knowledge about first amendment rights in ways that prepared them to engage in different roles during the mock trial (judges, journalists, lawyers, etc.).

Jake’s context was challenging. His classroom was warm, hovering somewhere around 80 degrees. There were many disruptions from outside the classroom, such as students coming as much as 20 minutes tardy, security guards picking kids up and dropping them off, and unsupervised students roaming the hallway and popping their heads into classrooms.

**Taking up Signature Pedagogies.** Despite the concerns that Jake expressed, there were many instances of Jake reporting using signature pedagogies from his preparation. These included extensive use of unit and lesson planning, tying content to student background and interests, use of source analysis techniques, a burgeoning skill at discussion facilitation, and
taking an approach to teacher professionalism that revolved around reflection and continuous improvement.

He regularly used assessment strategies from coursework and methods for image analysis. Jake also strove to make learning relevant to student interest by inserting pop culture references and incorporating student input into lessons. One example was from a lesson about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, something that he noticed students were interested in learning about. He dedicated an entire class period to talking about it, and his students “were very engaged” with “one student [who even] talked to his parents about how that was his absolute most favorite lesson he’s ever had in school.” He also engaged his students in casework or primary source activities, including one that he had made for a simulated lesson during his preparation and from resources extensively used during courses, such as the introductory lessons from the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG).

Jake also reported experimenting with a wide range of more ambitious signature pedagogies during his first two years in the classroom. In one example, Jake developed a lesson about religion that involved using thought-provoking questions and centered around student discussion. Kids loved the lesson. Jake was really proud of it, and he received a “glowing observation review” from an administrator who happened to be visiting his class that day. In another example, Jake created a unit on ancient Rome that was highly differentiated, providing students with multiple ways to engage with content and show what they learned. Again, he was really proud of how it went, reported that he got excellent feedback and engagement from his students, and thought that many of his students learned the content in deep ways.

The two other most significant practices that Jake reported picking up and continuing to use from his preparation program were in his lesson planning skills and developing a professional disposition that led him to crave feedback and improve his instruction. While he acknowledged that lesson planning was a pain during coursework, he continued using the same template that was required in the program and found it useful.

Jake also developed a hunger for feedback and coaching on his instruction. He directly attributed this to the preparation program, noting that the positive experiences in coursework left a “good taste in his mouth” and encouraged him to “continue discussing, reflecting on, and improving” his teaching. At both schools, he had regular observations that he compared to classroom visits from his field supervisor during student teaching that were “really beneficial”
and where he could be “tailored feedback” that he could put into use in his classroom. Jake even took this idea of craving feedback a bit further when he volunteered his classroom to pilot a new observation technology with some administrators.

This improvement orientation continued and developed further during Jake’s second year. With an established curriculum that only needed minor revisions, Jake took advantage of his prep periods and told me about how he was going to observe other teachers in his building. He found working with the student teachers in the building to be particularly helpful because he was able to learn alongside them as they talked about and received coaching from their mentor teachers.

The school organization and schedule seemed to facilitate this collaboration, as Jake told me that his “mentors and teachers [had] the same prep hours,” which allowed them to regularly collaborate. Jake also mentioned getting a new textbook that he would use to support his instruction and generally noted that “with the resources and supports, it [was] significantly better [in his second] year.”

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** Jake described classroom management and the school’s overall student culture to be significant obstacles in his first and second years, noting that he was “constantly writing discipline reports [and] calling parents.” In his first school, there were many issues with student behavior across the school, something Jake identified as a major obstacle to using signature pedagogies when he pointed out that, “if you’re constantly trying to manage misbehavior, then you can’t focus on explaining or eliciting responses from those who are behaving well.” He also regularly ran into issues with students simply refusing to engage in class, such as one student who told him that “we know how to do [the assignment], we just don’t wanna do it because we don’t care” or students who would not even attempt writing assignments, turning in exams with the essay portions left blank.

Jake also expressed concerns about safety that impeded his attempts at rigorous instruction. His first school was implementing a “restorative justice” approach (Augustine et al., 2018; Katic et al., 2020), which, Jake referred to as “an absolutely terrible system for school discipline.” According to Jake, this failed school initiative was aimed at reducing suspensions but ended up creating an unsafe environment where students brought knives and pellet guns to school with minimal consequence. Jake believed that these more restorative justice-oriented policies promoted student misbehavior, such as a “reset room” that students would purposefully
misbehave to get sent. There they filled out a reflection and had ten minutes to “jump on trampolines, go take a nap, [or] play with toys.” According to Jake, the breakdown in creating a safe and orderly learning environment was causing more stress and work for teachers and the school started to shed staff as a result. He didn’t seem to have any faith in school-based discipline systems, noting that sending a kid to the office resulted in no consequences or change in behavior. If anything, this created more work for him, documenting referrals and making phone calls home.

Jake identified several obstacles to enacting practices taught in the teacher preparation program. These included workload demands and the difficulty of enacting the more ambitious practices promoted in coursework. In some cases, Jake believed that methods were too advanced for both him and his students, explaining that more abstract methods were “way over the top of [his students’] heads.” He generally described that more rigorous practices as “tak[ing] a lot of prep and a lot of planning to actually get accomplished.” In this way, an overwhelming workload was a significant factor that discouraged Jake from using signature pedagogies. He explained that lesson planning and curriculum development sucked up much of his time during his first year, and that other administrative school duties made these things even more difficult. In this way, it was difficult to deeply analyze his teaching and engage in extensive curriculum development when he was operating in more of a survival mode, needing to focus on the lesson for the next day’s class.

**Experimenting with Practice.** Still, Jake did regularly try out many of the signature pedagogies in his class to evaluate their effectiveness and decide about their future use. One example from his first two years was his attempts at teaching with concepts, using a method from coursework called “concept formation.” Jake told me that he “tried it [and] it was boring,” “redundant,” and “stretches out a little bit too much,” taking away from his ability to cover more material. After these attempts at teaching with concepts, Jake concluded that “students don’t really care about that. A lot of veteran teachers don’t really care about it. You just hit the facts, hit the standards, [and] you don’t really need to go extra fancy” with your methods.

Jake also told me about his attempts at facilitating discussion in his class and how it was an initial struggle. In his first year, he described some discussions that flopped, explaining that he, “was asking too high level of questions” which resulted in “crickets” from his students with all his students “looking at [him] like, ‘What are you talking about?’” Jake stuck with it, partially
because he really enjoyed the way his professors used discussions in both his teacher preparation and graduate school work. He mentioned several times that his discussion facilitation skills were what he “had to really work on” and that in his graduate school courses, he was paying close attention to what it took from his professors to enact high-quality discussions.

Models of Instruction. In this way, the models of instruction that Jake experienced along his path towards becoming a teacher were highly influential on his practice. In particular, he enjoyed the teaching simulations done in coursework, even if “they were very scary at first,” seeing them as a “really good stepping stone” towards student teaching. He contrasted these with course readings, saying that there is “only so much that you can get from reading about teaching … you’ve just got to watch someone do it, try it yourself, things like that.”

He also reported taking away some significant methods and approaches to teaching from watching faculty in the preparation program. He noted several different examples of this across interviews, pointing out that teacher educators modeling practice and explicitly using methods to teach methods was particularly helpful. This was especially true for ways that program instructors modeled guided discussions, established a class cohort culture that allowed for instructional risk-taking and development, and modeled how to be personable, open, honest, and available for students. Jake continued closely observing professors’ teaching in his graduate program, saying that he was “also more keenly aware of how they’re running classes … I’m picking up on some of those things, and I’ve been trying those out as well.”

Jake did not find his student teaching experiences or his mentor teacher to be a significant model for instruction during his first two years of teaching. His student teaching was completely virtual, and he attributed very little of his instructional development to this experience outside of borrowing a late-homework policy from his mentor teacher. He also pointed out that his student teaching and first-year content areas differed, meaning that reusing suitable materials from prior years was not an option. He was an outlier in this regard, as he was the only teacher in the study who rated his opportunities to engage in practices during clinical work as among his least influential sources of instructional practice.

Supports for Signature Pedagogies. There were a few ways that Jake’s school contexts supported and encouraged his use of signature pedagogies by lowering barriers and through sources of encouragement that spurred more rigorous instruction along the way.
His course schedule during his second year was an important support for his development in terms of lightening his workload and facilitating more rapid instructional development. At his second school, he was assigned to teach one course on a trimester schedule. This meant that, in one school year, he could “teach one class three times,” and the shortened time frame meant that he could “revisit things and revise” his lessons more quickly than if he had to wait until the next school year, something Jake found to be “super helpful.” Jake had his curriculum “mostly done” after the second semester, making minor revisions along the way. This stability in his curriculum and reduced prep time facilitated his ability to spend more time working with other teachers as he now had some free periods to drop into other classes or meet with colleagues.

With each of the signature pedagogies that Jake picked up, there was a corresponding event or factor that encouraged this uptake, provided him with models, or legitimized the method’s utility. This was especially true where positive social interactions with students or colleagues were involved. He mentioned several examples across my interviews with him. In describing his continued use of ambitious practice, he almost always described instances of his students being highly engaged and interested in the lesson.

At his first school, Jake continued to use the templates for unit and lesson planning from the preparation program. He told me that when he showed them to other teachers, they were “amazed and shocked at how detailed and thorough, but also yet simple and easy to use” they were, being really impressed with his work. This continued in his second year and at a new school, telling me that he would “always get really positive feedback from colleagues,” reinforcing the idea that the planning templates were “a really great method.”

He got a rave review from an administrator for using discussion and big questions. He also described a professional development seminar that paralleled some of the reading support methods that were a key part of the literacy methods course, noting that, in this session, they ran simulations where he had the opportunity to “see those in action” and “see that it actually does work pretty well.”

Student reactions to methods also mattered in whether Jake continued to use more progressive approaches. He told me about how he curated his curriculum based on whether or not the lessons went over well in his classroom, keeping the lessons that students had a positive reaction to and “neglect[ing] the stuff that students really didn’t like.” In those cases, Jake would “abandon” and stop using any method that students “weren’t responding to.”
**Final Thoughts.** Jake was reflective, studious, and took his job as a teacher very seriously. He seemed passionate about history and his content area. Across data sources, he demonstrated deep thinking about his teaching, an interest in improving, and a knack for curricular development.

Despite entering the study with the most traditional orientation, in-school supports, experimenting with practice, and a general improvement orientation encouraged and supported Jake to teach in ways that were encouraged during his preparation coursework.

**Kylie**

**Background.** Kylie taught at the same high school during her first couple of years in the profession, mostly a combination of civics, global politics, and world history. The school where she taught is the same school as Albert, allowing for some interesting comparisons between the two participants. Their school was a magnet or selective-enrollement school, drawing top students from across the city based on prerequisites such as grades and test scores. As a result, this school was considered by many to be among the best high schools in this particular Midwestern city, serving a student population that was about 80% Black, with smaller populations of Latino, Asian, and White students. It is a very large school with over 2,000 students, about 60% of whom are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

**Noticings from Observations.** I was able to observe Kylie’s teaching in person for one lesson and watched video recordings of the following two lessons of the same class period. In viewing these lessons, it was clear that Kylie was an ambitious teacher and had taken up many of the practices advocated for by the preparation program.

In her unit about voting and elections, I got to see interactive lessons, including her running stations where students read and analyzed texts about voting rights and the Constitution, a method that many other participants in this study would have said is impossible in their schools, based on classroom management and engagement issues.

During these activities, rather than kicking back and watching kids do the work, she buzzed around the room, redirecting disengaged students, answering questions, and probing students’ thinking more deeply as they completed the tasks at each table. This, along with the use of timers that tracked how many minutes students had left to complete an activity, counting
down for students to rotate stations, and giving “one-minute warnings,” created a sense of urgency for students as well and eliminated most of the downtime in class.

Kylie’s class was different from many that I had seen, especially in terms of classroom management. Her classes had established routines, such as kids coming in and starting a bellringer right away or norms for how to engage in group work. She had a wide range of students participating in class and sharing answers, making the classroom feel like a place where engagement was an expectation and a norm. While Kylie did acknowledge that skill gaps and discipline issues may be less of a problem at a magnet school, she did indicate that it was something that she struggled with during her first year and had improved tremendously with each semester.

She did a lot of the little things to build up her classroom culture. One such example includes how she would give students whole class feedback by “quot[ing] students’ work” to highlight the work she expected while also pointing to areas where the class could improve. It also showed in her planning and stick-to-itiveness when lessons did not go as well as hoped. She gave multiple examples during interviews of how she was reflective on her own practice and improved it (usually with more structures and scaffolds) to make it better the next time.

**Taking up Signature Pedagogies.** Like many of the other participants, Kylie took up some of the more simplistic and easy-to-implement practices and strategies from her preparation. When looking back at her Methods Index assignment, an assignment across courses where novices recorded descriptions and examples of different strategies and practices for future use, she felt that she used about 95% of the ones she listed on a regular basis. Some of these practices included Think-Pair-Shares, graphic organizers, concept mapping, strategies for image analysis, summarizing strategies, checks for comprehension or understanding (like fist-to-five), and bellringers or warm-ups at the start of class.

Like many other participants, Kylie also developed a commitment and skill in connecting with kids and creating a positive classroom culture. This was something that “came very natural to [her]” and was visible in observations through how she interacted with her students. Additionally, she was involved with extracurriculars, including a program that takes high school students to the state capital for several days.

She also engaged in some of the more challenging and ambitious signature practices from her preparation. In her civics class, she described her final unit which was a mock trial. Knowing
that this would be the summative assessment in her course, Kylie used backwards design to purposefully build student knowledge and skills they would need for the activity throughout the semester. She also reported that the mock trial was highly differentiated, using the different roles (judges, lawyer, jurors, etc.) to allow students some flexibility and choice in how they demonstrated their learning during the activity. Kylie created different assignments and packets that were associated with different roles. The activity went so well that students were begging to do another mock trial.

In observations, surveys, and interview data, Kylie also indicated using many of the more difficult and time intensive methods promoted in preparation. She regularly had kids analyzing primary sources and writing historical or disciplinary arguments. Kylie’s courses emphasized the disciplinary literacies of her content area with extensive student voice and critical thinking, something that was evident in the ways that she was able to orient and encourage student thinking in discussions and set norms for productive group work. Kylie also described how nearly all of her summative assessments were project-based and that discussion was a central practice that she tried to use every day in her classes.

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** Teaching this way was not easy for Kylie. She gave many examples about how she struggled initially with rigorous practices but was able to reflect and correct her instruction for the better the next time. When trying out a flipped classroom, where students prepare for in-class discussions with out-of-class assignments, she ran into frustration because these were “supposed to be the best and brightest, and hardest workers” in the school. Yet, they simply “refused to do the work” or could not do it outside of class due to other life obligations.

She loved the idea of teaching with backwards design and big guiding questions or problems. Kylie said that while she enjoyed how these connected lessons forwards and backwards as they were woven throughout a unit, her biggest barrier to using them more was time and workload. For her, it was difficult to have this horizontal view of curriculum when planning demands put her into crisis mode, thinking to herself, “Oh my God, I have to have something for tomorrow, and I have to have something the next day.” In this sense, she noted that guiding questions can fall by the wayside.

Discussions did not always go as well as she had hoped. Sometimes this was because she was torn about the method generally, wanting to “be receptive to the kids that are quiet or shy or
don’t want to talk.” This boiled down to a confidence issue and problem of enactment, expressing that she was not sure how to “bring them into the discussion” or how to scaffold students up into bigger and more in-depth discussions. This is not uncommon for beginning teachers, but she explained an instance where “[she] tried to throw [her] students first semester into a Socratic seminar. Did not go well. Um, it just crashed and burned.” However, like with other practices, she was quick to frame this failed lesson in reflection, looking back at how she set it up, and committing herself to address the issues next time.

Overall, a heavy workload and not having enough time needed for in-depth planning and reflecting was “the biggest barrier to using so many of the practices and methods that [Kylie] want[ed] to.” This seemed to be partially the result of how the school assigned classes. Kylie’s school did not have much turnover, and she explained that veteran teachers got priority in course selection, leading to unmanageable schedules and course loads for beginning teachers. This was reflected in Kylie having to teach a world history class despite having been more oriented towards political science and her feelings that “if [she found herself] at the front of a world history classroom, something went terribly wrong in [her] career.”

Grading policies that were meant to be supportive of students coming out of the pandemic, such as where lower grades would not count against their GPA, accepting all late work, or promoting students who had not actually passed the needed classes, created a school culture of low expectations and where students saw little consequence for academic inaction. Kylie described that this was a school norm that she had to resist in her own practice, specifically with assignments like discussions which are very difficult to make up or accept late work for when students showed up having not completed the homework and prework needed to participate. In this way, school policies for academics undercut Kylie’s ability to get many students meaningfully engaged with some signature pedagogies that require a critical mass of engagement to work, such as discussion or group work.

Generally speaking, Kylie was frustrated with the academic culture in her building, explaining that “we’re expecting so little from them, what are...like, the school is supposed to be the pride of [our city].” This served as an obstacle to teaching ambitiously and occasionally put her into conflict with students, parents, and administrators, especially with pressures about ensuring not too many of her students were failing so she could “stay under the radar.”
Kylie also described a school context that was generally unorganized, with rampant inconsistency and miscommunication. Kylie said that it felt like administration was “building the bike while you ride it,” a phrase that teachers at her school commonly used to describe how school decisions and happenings seemed unplanned, chaotic, and had adverse consequences for teaching and learning. One example that stands out was when Kylie stumbled upon online curricular resources in the middle of her first year, finding an online course guide, pacing charts, lesson plans, and materials on accident when browsing through a district organized online platform. None of the new teachers knew that this existed, and there was no training or onboarding where they learned about using the materials. Kylie also described classes being regularly interrupted by bizarre announcements over the public address system, where the principal would share thoughts in a rambling “stream of consciousness” for several minutes, often ending with a chastising of teachers to “care more about your students.” With so many things falling through the cracks and mismanaged at the school, she was regularly left thinking, “How is this even happening? How is the school still running?”

Overall, Kylie experienced challenges to using signature pedagogies in her school that were based mostly in having a difficult workload and planning demands, school policies and instructional norms that deflated student motivation and created some resistance to rigorous activities, and an unpredictable and disorganized environment that created instability and confusion.

Experimenting with Practice. Kylie regularly tried out practices promoted during her preparation. In her second year, she felt that she was better able and ready to engage students with “more challenging” and more “interactive” methods, stockpiling aligned curricular materials along the way by keeping resources that worked well and pushed student thinking while dumping and replacing those that failed to create an ambitious and student-centered classroom.

One example that Kylie described was an argumentative essay that she assigned to students in a previous semester. She explained,

I don’t love what I got, but I understand, like, I didn’t give [students] enough structure. And so last semester I collaborated with an English teacher and got how she teaches argumentative essay writing and they got better. So, I’m hoping this semester it’s going
get even better … I definitely think the essay last year was a little bit too ambitious for me, but I’m glad I did it because now I can get better at it and they can learn more.

In this example, we see that Kylie was not only willing to take instructional risks by assigning an ambitious essay in her class but that when it did not go well, she looked at it as a learning opportunity for her own instruction rather than as incriminating evidence against using extensive writing in classes. She was reflective, sought additional help and resources in her building, and had the opportunity to try again at the method in the following semesters, making incremental improvements along the way.

Models of Instruction. Kylie faced many challenges similar to the other teachers when it came to trying to use more ambitious approaches learning during coursework. One major difference, however, was that Kylie had models from her own schooling to call upon in her teaching. During our first interview, Kylie mentioned an important source for her practice, her “favorite teacher in high school,” wondering if I had ever heard of him. I had heard of Mr. Lackey, and this had come up several years earlier. Mr. Lackey is a history teacher who has collaborated extensively with the university and teacher education program over the years. He was even a co-author of an article that came out of this work while also serving as one of the two exemplary teachers featured in the article. This was actually one of the assigned texts in the literacy methods course, and I can recall that day in class when Kylie excitedly shared with us, “hey, Mr. Lackey was my AP U.S. history teacher!”

Kylie described Mr. Lackey’s teaching style as similar to what was promoted in the program, incorporating many student-driven methods, discussion, and opportunities for critical thinking. In this way, she sought to “emulate” his instruction in her own teaching. This feeling extended beyond Mr. Lackey, with Kylie looking back at her high school experience as “world-class,” “rigorous,” “student-driven,” and “challenging.”

The alignment between Kylie’s experiences in school and what was being promoted in the preparation program might have served as a buffer when she got into student teaching and started her first teaching position. She described being shocked at the low professional standards and expectations for quality instruction. She also seemingly brought those high standards with her to her new school, noting in the member checking interview that she is a “very self-motivated person. So, it wouldn’t matter if the school doesn’t demand that we have rigorous teaching or anything like that” because she would hold herself to those standards anyway.
Kylie’s mentor teacher for student teaching was highly misaligned with program values and her vision of good history/social studies. He was extremely traditional, relying almost exclusively on lectures, notes, and exams based on content memorization. When Kylie came into this setting and tried using signature pedagogies that she had learned in preparation, her mentor teacher protested over concerns about content coverage. He then clamped down on her autonomy, insisting that she use his slides and severely limiting her opportunities to experiment with non-traditional approaches to teaching.

Needless to say, it was a long semester for Kylie in this placement, something that she is “bitter” about having to go through. Sadly, she has seen similar problems with student-teacher placements continue in her current school. Teachers who were assigned student-teachers tended to be “lazy teachers who don’t want to do any work and just want to push it off onto a student teacher and overwork them.” Looking back over the experience, she found it to be a minimally important factor in her instructional development and that all it “taught [her] was how to bore kids to death and literally make them hate history.”

Kylie’s experiences in coursework were different, and she identified her methods and field instructor as the most important influence on her teaching. The professor’s style felt authentic and resonated with Kylie’s own schooling, something that made the class more “digestible.” When thinking about her teaching, Kylie said that she was constantly thinking back to her field instructor’s advice and wisdom, saying that she was “like the angel and devil on my shoulder, basically all the time.” Kylie was so in-sync with this teacher educator that some of her classmates in the preparation program would tease her about being her “disciple,” she would respond that “[they] could not have paid me a better compliment.”

Kylie also pointed to the courses that were exclusive to the history/social studies cohort as generally being more useful than some other courses in the program, referring to instances where she could take methods or activities and almost directly transplant them straight into her classes. In addition to observing and noting the practices of her teacher educators, Kylie also pointed out that she learned a lot from watching her classmates during their teaching simulations, borrowing moves and strategies that she liked.

Overall, it was clear that Kylie was simultaneously studying teaching and her teachers during her time in the preparation program. In this way, she had models of practice from her own experiences as a student but also was adding to her “arsenal of practice” (Everitt, 2012) as she
watched, analyzed, and appropriated the methods, moves, and strategies used by her course instructors and classmates.

**Supports for Signature Pedagogies.** Kylie’s desire to collaborate with other teachers was a strong theme across her interviews. Her time in the preparation program helped to solidify this hunger for collaboration and feedback, specifically citing the positive experiences in teaching simulations where novices gave and received feedback on their teaching and other assignments where they planned lessons together. She also described that the feedback and wisdom of her field instructor was still in her brain and that she commonly called back in mind to think about what her field instructor would say or notice about a lesson as a guide to her thinking and reflection on her teaching.

However, Kylie told me about how her school was not set up to allow for such collaboration, with teachers rotating classrooms and minimal common times to meet and talk about teaching. Course assignments also made collaboration challenging, with newer teachers often being the only instructor teaching the more niche courses, leaving them more isolated in their planning.

Rather than toil in isolation, Kylie went and found or created collaborative support systems. This tended to be with the newer teachers in the building who had similar ideas and goals which “encourage[d] [her] to try new things” and “to bounce ideas off of.” In other cases, she found resources for teaching ideas and materials. For example, she found a first-day-of-school activity on social media and regularly listened to podcasts about teaching.

Kylie’s personal characteristics as a highly motivated teacher who is an extremely hard worker and reflective about her instruction also was a driving factor in her use of signature pedagogies. This perseverance and grittiness rang through across Kylie’s data and was instrumental in helping her to overcome the obstacles and challenges she faced in her context. In her final interview, she summed it up:

I think the really biggest challenge is *continuing* to be ambitious, because it only takes a couple of times of getting shut down where you’re like, ‘I’m done with it. I’m just going to do what all the other teachers are doing.’ Like they have them read the textbook and whatever. But that’s not rewarding. That would not keep me in the profession. And so, it’s like, you do have to just keep pushing yourself and being like, ‘It’s going to click. We’re going to get it’ because it’s not always easy and that’s okay. It took me a while to
be like, ‘It’s okay that that [lesson] failed. That was bad and that’s fine.’ [laugh], I mean, like you want your kids to get better. It seems like you have an attitude of like, ‘I’m going to get better too …’ If I’m just like kind of sitting back and coasting, that’s not going to be enough for me.

Kylie also benefited from how her schedule came together during her second year of teaching. Although she had multiple preps, her civics class repeated each semester. This allowed her to revise her curriculum and try new methods each semester rather than having to wait until the next school year. She noted, “this is my fourth semester teaching civics, and I haven’t done it the same any semester. I, I mean, I’ve reused a lot, but, um, it’s way different from last year, and it’s different from last semester.” This schedule also seemed to accelerate the time period where teachers develop a stable and reliable curriculum, reduced the workload burden for planning, and freed up mental space and time to be used on reflection, grading, and other teacher duties. Such repetition in her civics course also allowed Kylie to get more opportunities to practice her delivery and execution of signature pedagogies in a shorter period of time than if she was only teaching year-long classes.

Kylie’s positive experiences in using and participating in many of the more ambitious signature pedagogies from preparation further encouraged her to keep using rigorous methods. In interviews, she buttressed many of her descriptions of activities she had done in her classroom with descriptions about how proud she was of it or how much the students enjoyed it. This continued to be true in year two as Kylie noted that “[she] really like[d] when my students are enjoying the class and [she could] see they’re having fun and that they’re engaged … that’s one of the biggest motivators for [her].”

**Final Thoughts.** Kylie was a very energetic and enthusiastic person. She possessed a drive and determination in her instruction that stood out amongst participants. Despite the ways that different contexts of her instructional development misaligned and hindered her use of signature pedagogies, Kylie was able to call back on instructional models and her own tenacity to break norms at her school and teach in rigorous and student-centered way. In particular, her student teaching experience and early-career teaching contexts were very traditionally oriented, and, despite these challenges, Kylie was able to still teach in ways that aligned with her preparation coursework, looking back at her own K-12 experiences and coursework at important models of practice.
Albert

Background. Albert was a beginning teacher who taught just down the hall from Kylie at a large, urban, magnet high school. He had completed his student teaching with this same school, although it was completed entirely online. In his first year of teaching there, the school used a hybrid approach to instruction where classes were split in half, with one half being in-person and the other half being online. Students would then rotate every other day, with each half swapping to be either in-person or online.

I observed his U.S. History class for three consecutive days in October of 2022. Notably, Albert had also taught a U.S. history class during his student teaching and first year, continuity in course load that separated him from other participants.

Noticings from Observations. Despite it being fall, his classroom each day was easily over 80 degrees and packed with about 30 students, making it an especially challenging environment for teaching and learning.

Albert’s lessons tended to include examples of modeling and explicit skill instruction followed by group and independent practice with historical thinking skills. This included an example of image analysis where Albert used a method similar to See-Think-Wonder to elicit student thinking and facilitated small group discussions by combining this with a Think-Pair-Share approach. His students shared ideas and questions by tossing a rubber globe around the room, and Albert was sure to be inclusive and equitable in this practice, recognizing that the physical aspect could be embarrassing for some students when he asked the class “did anyone else have anything to say but didn't want to catch the ball?”

Students continued to engage in historical analysis of images in his second lesson, with Albert consistently pushing their thinking with prompts about maps such as “What’s the difference? What patterns do you notice?” He also made purposeful local history connections by incorporating maps of their state’s railroad development as visuals that students interpreted during this lesson.

In his third lesson, I saw Albert incorporate some of the reading strategies learned about in the literacy methods course. These included variations of read-aloud to support student comprehension with difficult texts, with the teacher re-reading difficult sections, taking volunteers to read aloud, and modeling metacognitive practices of expert readers such as making connections or asking questions as they read together.
Compared to other participants’ teaching, it seemed like Albert’s class didn’t have the urgency or same level of expectations for engagement by all students in the room where Albert was slower, gentler, and even reluctant to intervene when students would disengage. This stemmed from his personality and beliefs about developing positive classroom culture and not wanting to jeopardize or damage relationships with students from being authoritarian in the classroom. Albert took an approach to classroom management centered around the idea that “you catch more flies with honey,” which was reflected in a classroom management style that was less assertive and more tolerant of disengagement. Albert acknowledged this in his follow-up interview telling me that “[he] was a very easygoing teacher last year and at the beginning of this year” and that he has joked with Kylie that his “New Year’s resolution was to get meaner.”

This learning curve for classroom management is likely pronounced in his case due to having a completely online student teaching, a hybrid first year (half the class online, half in person during the same period), and an entirely in-person second year. In no way was Albert’s classroom out of control; instead, it was generally stable with room for improvement.

Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies. Albert identified many of the same challenges and obstacles that Kylie did about their school. Moving classrooms from period to period, lack of time and space for collaboration, a chaotic and incoherent management approach in the school, a professional culture with low expectations for teachers’ instruction, and an instructional culture that mainly used traditional practices.

Even though Albert did use primary sources and more in-depth work with document-based questions, he still was not sold on the method. When he tried it his first year, not all of the kids got it, and he lamented that “going through and grading it took forever.” This is another case where we have seen negative experiences with a method and workload as deterring teachers from using more ambitious signature pedagogies.

However, the most prominent obstacles that Albert ran into were highly personal in terms of skepticism or buy-in with program practices and regarding a sensitivity to normative pressures present in his school environment.

Albert did not take up practices from his preparation without carefully scrutinizing them first for their instructional value. With think-pair-shares, Albert was skeptical at first due to his experiences with the method being used poorly by his teachers in high school, where “most of the time, the person that [he] was paired up with wouldn’t like, do much with it.” Once in the
classroom, he saw their utility for eliciting student thinking and structured them better than his own teachers had to ensure that all students chatted with their partners.

Albert also avoided having students engage with disciplinary writing in his classes. When asked why, he pointed out that it was not a common practice in his department, and he was “following their lead” when it came to using this method. This is important, as Albert seemed to value fitting in at his school, or trying to go, as he described, “totally unnoticed” during his first year. His follow-up survey, completed in the spring of his second year of teaching, further confirms this as he was the only participant who said that among his top teaching priorities included being viewed positively by parents and the community and one of three participants who indicated that being a teacher who is viewed as having a lot of potential or an excellent instructor by colleagues in the school was most important to him. In this way, he perhaps is the type of teacher who is less likely to “teach against the grain” and generally tried to fit in with instructional norms while still also caring about being a high-quality instructor.

**Taking up Signature Pedagogies.** In both interviews and observations, it was clear that Albert took up and regularly used many of the signature pedagogies he learned about in his preparation program.

In particular, Albert took advantage of and frequently used some of the more direct and simplistic practices that were easier to understand and implement. These included using hooks or class openers, think-pair-shares, perch points, see-think-wonders for image analysis, framing lessons with big questions, and frequently checking for student understanding.

Albert’s teaching took things a step further, taking up more rigorous signature pedagogies as well. Like some other participants, Albert reported using the same unit and lesson planning templates that were used in the preparation program despite not being required to submit them at his current school. During observations, he gave his students many opportunities to engage with sources and artifacts, with one another in discussions, and to share their ideas with the class.

Albert found much value in learning to teach specific methods in ways that involved actual practice and social interactions around teaching. In particular, he identified that the teaching simulations were “really important” in his development, not only for the feedback on his teaching but for the opportunity to see and talk about teaching with his classmates. Another example was an assignment in the literacy class that he found helpful because it required him to make a practical connection between different theories (in this case, text complexity, student
background knowledge, scaffolding, and assessment) in ways that he regularly uses in his current class.

The importance of knowing your students was drilled into Albert’s mind during teaching simulations. In these simulations, novices who were not teaching were acting as students. As the instructor, I provided some appropriate “student roles” to these “students” that would likely come up in such a lesson, such as a shy student when the teacher is trying to facilitate a discussion or a student with strong political orientations when discussing controversial topics. This kept Albert and his classmates on their toes and showed how student backgrounds and personalities play a role in instruction.

In another case where teaching simulations played a role in his instructional development, he pointed to a trick he learned from feedback on his simulated lesson. Instead of teachers’ tendency to want to answer student questions, he remembers that being told to try this instead: “If they ask you a question, don’t just give them an answer. Have them talk about it” by throwing the question back to the class. This is one of the tools that he regularly used to get students to discuss and talk more in his classes.

**Experimenting with Practice.** Confidence was a big factor in whether or not Albert tried out new methods. During his second year, he reported that his comfort in the classroom had steadily grown and that, as a result, he described other activities where he took more instructional risks. One such example included activities that involved more student movement, including a time that Albert setup up a gallery walk in the hallways.

He also knew that he needed to be more deliberate about pushing his instruction to be more rigorous and avoid becoming stagnant. Albert described a common cycle or tendency where a teacher says, “Oh, hey! This [method] works, and we’re going to keep doing it” until it becomes their only way of teaching. He acknowledged that he was guilty of this and that he needed to “change things up a bit more often,” “see how they enjoy it,” and potentially incorporate that into his teaching toolbox for later use. Albert did engage in this work in incremental ways, describing how he continued to develop his curricular resources thinking to himself “this lesson was kind of garbage … I can revamp this one” and that with already having a curriculum to start with, “it’s a lot easier to think about how [lessons] fit together as a unit.”

Positive feedback played a big role in whether Albert experimented with and correspondingly took up or abandoned signature pedagogies from his preparation coursework.
Informal conversations with other teachers who were like-minded encouraged him to try
different and more ambitious teaching in his class. They also provided Albert with folks to
reflect with when said methods could have gone better. One example from his first year was a
lesson that Albert worked hard on creating that used silent films. It went so well that another
teacher asked to get a copy of the materials, something that made Albert feel proud and
“special,” but which also encouraged further attempts with more rigorous teaching. Similarly,
Albert told me about a lesson he developed about the Harlem Hell Fighters and how he stayed
late to plan, had some of his colleagues talk to him about the lesson, got some advice and
encouragement, and then the lesson went “really well” the next day. He said that “having that
encouragement from the students and the other teachers makes me a lot more like, ‘Oh, I should
keep doing things like this.’”

Models of Instruction. Seeing competent models of instruction in his field placements,
his own K-12 schooling, and in teacher education coursework were pivotal in whether Albert
took up signature pedagogies as these experiences convinced him or left him skeptical about the
value of certain methods.

Among the most important sources of Albert’s instruction was rooted in his own
experiences in school. He had a favorite AP U.S. History teacher who was his role model. Albert
had known that he wanted to be a teacher since he was in ninth grade, and when he took Mr.
Wood’s class, he paid close attention to his methods. Albert kept Mr. Wood in mind when
making instructional planning decisions, thinking to himself, “What would Mr. Wood do?”
Albert also kept the materials from Mr. Wood’s class and used them as a validation point to
compare what he was learning in coursework with Mr. Wood’s curriculum. It seemed that, in
many cases, the program did align with Mr. Wood’s teaching and was further legitimized in
Albert’s own experimentation with program signature pedagogies.

However, it did seem that Mr. Wood might have been one of Albert’s only teachers as a
student who provided models of teaching that aligned with the preparation program. He pointed
to several examples in interviews where he was generally skeptical of signature pedagogies,
especially if he recalled such methods being used poorly in his own schooling (i.e., Think-Pair-
Shares and See-Think-Wonders). When he had seen them done well and gotten to try them out
for himself and see their utility, he generally revised his thinking about these methods and
decided that they were valuable teaching tools. Further validating this argument is the fact that
Albert was the only participant to strongly agree with the statement *I had a pretty good idea of the type of teacher that I wanted to be when I started the program ... but feel that this vision changed as a result of my experiences in the program* on his follow-up survey.

He also noted that teacher educators’ explicit use of modeling was helpful, such as when faculty in preparation would point out not just the content but the method they chose, as well as the pros and cons of that approach. Albert took some of these practices into his own teaching, regularly soliciting his students for feedback, which he saw modeled in his teacher education. Similarly, Albert reported that teacher educators in the program were models that he called upon in thinking about how to teach inclusively by finding ways to ensure that all voices are heard and having high expectations for engagement and participation.

Similar to other participants, Albert was not simply a teacher but a student of teaching. He was eager to improve his instruction and regularly reflected in and between his lessons to make improvements. Additionally, he also went out of his way to visit some other teachers’ classrooms at his school to get ideas for his own instruction. In his follow-up interview, he summarized that he gained a lot from watching other teachers, including faculty in the preparation program, saying that, “over the course of my high school and college years, and recently teaching now too, I’ve been paying attention to like other teachers and professors do things and like, if it seems like it’s working and it seems like they’re having a great time with it, I’ll try and pull from those experiences into what I’m doing.”

When it came to his student teaching and work with his mentor teacher, Albert did not have much to say about how this impacted his instruction. His student teaching was all online, something that he felt prevented him from trying out or using many of the methods from preparation. So, in the end, he felt that student teaching was only “really good for just getting a feel for the workload” and the time demands of planning lessons and teaching all day. The big lesson he drew from the student teaching experience was that he needs to be “prepared daily.”

**Final Thoughts.** Albert provides another case of a teacher’s developmental journey and pairs nicely with Kylie because they have both been teaching at the same urban magnet high school for the past two years. As we see in his case, Albert was generally a bit more skeptical and hesitant to use program practices. However, he did have one teacher model from his own schooling that he used to verify and understand ideas and methods promoted in the program. Across his developmental path, Albert cautiously, incrementally, and methodically took up
signature pedagogies and was one of the participants who believed that the preparation program had a tremendous impact on his instruction. In this way, Albert is another example of a teacher who learned much from his preparation and could put what he learned into practice despite challenges in school context as well as personal characteristics that served as initial obstacles to uptake.

**Kris**

**Background.** Kris had a very turbulent first two years in the classroom. He started off teaching in a highly dysfunctional urban middle school in his first year, stayed at the same school for the start of his second year but left at the end of the first semester. This first school served mostly Black students with nearly all students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Additionally, the school had a history of placing among the lowest achieving schools in the state on standardized tests with fewer than 5% of students proficient in math or reading.

Kris started at a new school during the second semester of his second year. This was a very different school, one that he described as much more stable, better resourced, and more organized than his first school. It was a relatively diverse school with approximately two-thirds of students being White, about 20% Black, 10% Latino, and a mix of various other races. Only about 1-in-4 students qualified for free and reduced-price lunch and, academically, the school generally performed in the top third of middle schools in the state based on test scores.

**Noticings from Observations.** I was unable to observe Kris’ teaching at his first school due to bureaucratic restrictions in his district about outside research. However, in the spring of his second year, I was able to go and visit his new classroom. During these observations, I watched and recorded the same class for two consecutive lessons, with the third observation cancelled due to a snow day.

During these classroom visits, I noticed that Kris did use some signature pedagogies from his preparation. Some of them were more simple course structures, such as starting class with warm-up questions and using learning objectives to guide instruction. Kris also gave students multiple opportunities to work together on activities and engaged in many different checks for understanding. He elicited student thinking regularly and put a timer up on the projector screen to create urgency and keep kids on task. Kris also valued making connections with his students,
such as through pop culture references or relating content to their real lives, and he seemed to have really strong relationships with his students.

Kris also engaged in more ambitious instruction, such as one slide in his presentation where he gave students collective feedback about their most recent assessment and showing them how that had been incrementally improving from assessment to assessment. In his second lesson, Kris engaged his class in small group discussions in an activity where he asked students to think about and make arguments about what the priorities of a new country should be, asking questions such as “Should a country focus only on domestic (internal) issues or more on global power and foreign relations?” Or other prompts about how a country should approach debt and revising its constitution when new challenges arise.

In Kris’s lessons, I also saw him take up methods to support student reading development. He regularly chunked texts and incorporated comprehension questions along the way. Kris and volunteer students would also read more difficult texts together. Kris anticipated student struggles and inserted vocabulary support for more difficult words such as “domestic,” “ratification,” and “unanimously.”

**Taking up Signature Pedagogies.** Like many of the other participants, Kris utilized many of the more specific and basic strategies from preparation. His classes typically started with a “do-now” or warm-up, and, in my observation of his class, he used many different types of texts, paired these with scaffolded questions, and circulated to the room to monitor student progress.

Kris reported that he continued to lesson and unit plan using simplified templates like those one used in the preparation program. He did this voluntarily, as lesson plans were not required at the schools where he taught. Similar to the experiences of Jake and other participants, Kris noted that other more veteran teachers at his first school were highly impressed with his lesson planning skill.

He reported incorporating some more advanced and ambitious signature pedagogies in his teaching. These included a unit on different types of sources and historical thinking skills, as well as a focus on student feedback, such as the use of rubrics or providing class-wide feedback on assessments. This included the use of the SHEG introductory materials that were used extensively in teaching simulations during coursework.
Sadly, Kris reported that these were generally unsuccessful attempts at using signature pedagogies as the obstacles to such practice proved insurmountable at his first school.

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** In his interviews, there were many moments where Kris expressed feelings of defeat, frustration, and shame about his teaching. In telling me about how he wished he was teaching more ambitiously, he said,

There’s a hundred million percent a guilt thing with [not being able to enact ambitious practice], especially for the younger, newer teachers. We know that we need to be doing better. We joined up because we wanted to do better. But then, we’re falling short of the goals and ambitions that we set for ourselves.

In Kris’s case, he reported facing among the most severe challenges in his first school context, which he struggled to overcome. Obstacles Kris described included a tremendous workload, a toxic professional culture, isolation or lack of collaboration, and a generally chaotic environment.

His first school was so short-staffed due to teachers quitting and a lack of substitute teachers or replacements that, by the end of his time at his first school, Kris was the social studies teacher, the de facto math teacher, reading and math intervention teacher, and was teaching larger combined social studies classes. This left him with no preparation periods and with little “time and energy …[to] use what [he] learned in the program.”

The school’s professional culture was also a significant obstacle for Kris. He told me about a highly demoralizing professional environment where veteran teachers were “winging it” and showing up late each day. His descriptions indicated that there was no oversight, and the school administration and general norms conveyed that nobody cared about what you did in your classroom. Isolation was also a factor as Kris felt alone in his instruction with infrequent opportunities for feedback, limited opportunities to interact with and draw motivation from colleagues, and few supports for classroom management and schoolwide discipline.

One point that makes Kris unique is that, although classroom management and schoolwide discipline problems were clearly an issue and obstacle in his teaching, he rarely blamed students. Instead, he looked inward at his own skills with classroom management and back at the school administration, who seemed indifferent, if not totally oblivious, to the chaos.

There was one story that Kris shared with me about his first school that captured much of the toxicity of the culture and low expectations for instruction. At one point in his first year, Kris
was publicly praised by the school’s principal for his planning and trying out non-traditional methods. This made Kris highly uncomfortable because he felt that he “was being praised for doing what [he] thought was the bare minimum.” Things got worse for Kris, as many of the other teachers in the building were “on [his] back because [he was] making them look bad.” This was “tough” and demoralizing rather than the praise and motivation that the principal thought she was giving to Kris. He was highly disappointed in how more veteran teachers reacted with an attitude of, “Oh! It’s the new guy, you know, he’s not dead yet!” to which Kris thought, “I’m dead inside too, you know, But I also have a job to do.”

The school chaos and culture prevented Kris from implementing ambitious practices even though he did his best to break the traditional norms of teaching and learning in his schools. There was a lot of student resistance when he tried to teach with new and more challenging methods, with students saying, “Oh, we don’t do this in so-and-so’s class. We never did this before,” and refusing to participate.

This happened with discussion and group work. In his attempts at discussion, he told me about his efforts to scaffold and support students, like creating talk-move(sentence-starter) posters and trying to run discussions like his mentor teacher did during student teaching. Even with these efforts, he described how his classes would quickly go off the rails due to student behavior and engagement. He could hardly believe how in the discussion, “kids [were] swearing at each other and telling each other to shut up” and that he felt like he “dropped the ball so many times.” This type of experience was discouraging of more rigorous practice, as Kris explained that “[he] tried one group assignment … and it went horribly … and I just never touched it again.” Kris experienced a similar flop when he tried to engage students with a project about their city. He told me that this ended up being a nightmare and that he “couldn’t keep groups on task very well,” ending up as “basically just [him] moving from desk group to desk group, trying to make them work, forcing them to talk,” or stay on track.

This pushed his instruction towards what Kris called “settling in” to more basic and traditional practices in his class. When faced with failed lesson after failed lesson, he gave into a less ambitious but more manageable instructional routine that took a more traditional turn on instruction. It is easy to understand his abandoning of ambitious practices when “nothing was working.”
In his new school, Kris still faced school and class culture obstacles to ambitious instruction. Kris was taking over a class that had a revolving door of substitute teachers and he found it difficult to establish routines and teach in more student-centered ways based on the existing classroom norms. One example of students struggling to adjust to more ambitious instruction was when Kris described some of his warm-up questions that were opinion or experience-based and where he was looking for “everyone to write their thoughts.” Students seemed used to more rote recitation-based worksheets and were befuddled, resorting to other tactics to try and get the correct answer. When asked about themselves or their own opinions, Kris described that this confusion led some to copy answers from neighbors or look back in their notes, even though there was no such right answer to be had. With some of these persistent challenges, his teaching in his new classroom was “still monotonous,” routine, and not how he wanted his classroom “to really be like and look like.”

Models of Instruction. For Kris, the models of instruction that he brought with him to preparation, gained by watching teacher educators in coursework, and through his work during student teaching with a highly aligned and ambitious mentor teacher were paramount in shaping who he was as a teacher.

As far as his own schooling went, Kris had high school teachers who used some of the program’s methods, such as teaching with concepts of structured academic controversies, but they also shaped his vision of teaching. As he summarized,

There’s a lot of baggage that goes with the Catholic school and all that … the thing was though was the service … there’s a greater purpose … and we owe it to each other … and I saw education as a profession where a lot of people did right by me, but where a lot of people are not having it done well, you know, and I wanted to do it right.

He recalled several impactful moments with secondary teachers such as one who really “held the school together” after the 2016 presidential election and another who charged her science students to be the ones who find cures to diseases after their parent had recently passed away from pneumonia. From his own education, Kris described bringing an understanding to teacher preparation that the profession is a serious calling in which teachers have moral obligations to serve their students and broader society.
Teacher educators in the preparation program also were pivotal in shaping his understanding of teaching and specific practices. Kris found that when his professors modeled signature pedagogies in coursework it was “worth its weight in gold.” He pointed out professors’ explicit use of teaching methods to also get at important content, such as modeling how to facilitate a discussion while also learning about societal debates about using Howard Zinn and the 1619 Project in schools versus public concerns about critical race theory. He also caught on to more implicit modeling by teacher educators, pointing to how teaching simulations were developed and conducted. In this sense, he saw that his teacher educators were walking the walk and not just talking the talk by creating ambitious classroom activities where students actively participated in their own and each other’s learning.

Kris described that these links happened at a pivotal time in the development of his professional identity, looking back and noting,

When you’re in teacher preparation, you haven”t really decided what kind of teacher you are going to be yet. You’re trying to figure that out, and so much of that is based on, like, the instructors … your placement, and what teachers you work with.

This is also supported by his follow-up survey response, where he was the only participant to strongly disagree with: I pretty much knew the type of teacher that I wanted to be when I started the program … (and it did/didn’t change much once I got into the field).

Kris’s experiences add evidence to arguments that teacher candidates are often watching the practices of their teacher educators very closely.

Kris felt that his student teaching was a pivotal experience, something that sets him apart from other participants. An undeniable part of this was Mr. Maddon, his mentor teacher. The school where Mr. Maddon taught at was a partnership school with the university preparation program. This school had worked extensively with faculty on research projects, curriculum development, and professional development settings. In this way, the school was highly aligned with program practices. Mr. Maddon, Kris’s mentor teacher, was particularly aligned with the program, having served as an exemplar teacher, as well as volunteering his classroom to develop and try out student-centered and inquiry-based teaching approaches and curriculum. He had also served as a long-time mentor teacher with the preparation program and was an expert at coaching and developing beginning teachers.
Kris described how his student teaching experience changed his professional vision, telling me that he “feels like [his] teaching attitude is very, very, very similar to what [he] experienced in student teaching.” He pointed to the fact that during the pandemic when many schools were online, he saw many teachers “doing their own thing” and the bare minimum. But this was not the case at his practicum placement, noting that teachers at that school had a collaborative commitment to “do it right” and “try and do the best for [their] kids.” Two mentor teachers, two student teachers, and several support staff worked hard each week to create online lessons for their joint classes that were highly student-centered and inquiry-based. Kris pointed to the curriculum that he developed with his mentor teacher and classmates and how he has reused much of that material in his first couple of years in the classroom. It was an experience that showed him what it takes to teach despite obstacles, hold oneself to high teaching standards, and to take pride in the work that you do as an educator. Even though Kris did not feel that he was at the level of teaching expertise as his mentor, he knew that “it’s possible … I know it’s doable.”

In the final member-checking interview, Kris summed up the sources of his practice as follows, “[e]verything that I do in my classroom has at one point been modeled for me, I’ve done with support, and I’ve been told it went well.” In this sense, Kris identified models of instruction as an important starting point for ambitious practice, but one that required supports as well.

**Supports for Signature Pedagogies.** Kris identified two factors that he felt would have most changed his first-year teaching experience for the better. These were the desire for a curriculum and more feedback and coaching on his teaching. Again, he took an inward-facing approach, thinking about the problems that he could solve and improve on in his own teaching practice rather than focusing on the contextual obstacles he faced.

In terms of curriculum at his first school, Kris told me that the school and district did not provide him with any and that he was developing everything from scratch. In these cases, he called upon and used curricular materials he created during or was familiar with from preparation and student teaching. These included the historical thinking introduction materials from SHEG and reusing the unit plan (about clean water access) that he collaboratively developed with other teachers during practicum.

Kris identified the coaching and reflection process during student teaching with his mentor teacher and field instructor as something that gave him practical methods for improving
but also pushed and motivated him to do better in his instruction. This stood in stark contrast to
his experiences in his first school, where no one seemed to care about what he did in his
classroom, causing a reality shock related to “going from [an] environment of constant feedback”
in preparation and student teaching to almost no feedback in his first year.

Kris indicated that his commitment to students was a driving force in his repeated
attempts at signature pedagogies. In the follow-up survey, he was the only teacher to select
academic achievement as a priority in his instruction. He expressed concerns about care, safety,
and relationships with his students, believing that, with the right teaching, he could help them to
develop the knowledge and skills to be “sassy revolutionaries” who could make the world a
better place.

Though he longed for more opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in his first
year, he did report that his mentorship was useful, if sporadic, and that having an AmeriCorps
volunteer in his classroom was helpful to at least talk about his teaching with someone else. In
his new school, he told me that he had more opportunities to work with other teachers in
productive and motivating ways. For example, Kris described an instance at his new school in
which, with the help of his co-teacher and the school librarian, they found ways to avoid only
relying on “traditional stuff like lectures, notes, and tests.” Together, they put together a series of
lessons incorporating learning stations, source analysis, learning how to design websites, and
students having to “present to the class in a rotating gallery walk.”

The transition to his new school has not been perfect, but, based on what Kris told me
about the differences, there are reasons to believe that Kris’s ambitious instruction might be
revitalized. After about six weeks at the new school, he said that “there’s a lot less stuff in the
way … I feel like I could actually focus on my teaching a little bit more” and that administration
seemed to have a better handle on the operations of the school.

**Final Thoughts.** Kris perhaps represents one of the greatest concerns that teacher
educators have: despite the teacher’s alignment, familiarity with, and commitment to teaching
ambitiously and with the pedagogies learned during coursework, the obstacles and pressures they
face in their first years “wash out” their learning and development, leaving them defeated,
frustrated, and jaded. Kris’s story reflects how difficult it is to build ambitious practices like
those promoted during coursework in a shaky, unstable, and toxic school context. Even with
tremendous personal efforts, courage, and models of practice to call upon as Kris constructed his
practice, the challenges of school contexts can simply be too much for a novice teacher to overcome.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that not all hope is lost with a teacher like Kris. I am hopeful that Kris will find his third year to be a renaissance as he will have the opportunity to better know his school, and its community and to establish the classroom norms and expectations from day one, making it his own classroom and to have the stability and foundation needed to make his teaching more student-centered and rigorous.

**Stella**

**Background.** Stella taught world history and civics at a large, well-funded, rural/suburban high school. It is rated as one of the best high schools in the state in terms of achievement, with standardized test scores regularly above the state averages. The student population is around 90% White, with only about 10% of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

**Noticings from Observations.** I had the chance to visit Stella’s classroom and see three civics classes and three world history classes over three days. The organization, routines, and norms she established in her classroom stood out for how highly developed they were. Her class ran like clockwork and her students seemed to always know what they should be doing with Stella giving clear directions and setting and reinforcing her expectations.

In Stella’s civics classes, I saw lots of examples of ambitious teaching. She used big questions and objectives to drive instruction, such as “What ideas gave birth to the world’s first modern democratic nation?” She also engaged the class in an I-do, We-do, You-do format of learning where she modeled making annotations of a source, in this case, the Declaration of Independence. She gradually gave students more responsibility for the work, prompting them to explain their reasoning (*Why do you say Locke?*) and to provide evidence (*Can anyone show me an example in the text?*).

Stella also anticipated student struggles and built appropriate scaffolds into her teaching. These included using some read aloud strategies for more difficult portions of text, providing students with a reference sheet about different Enlightenment thinkers to use in the activity, and modeling ways to approach difficult vocabulary words, such as *usurpation* and *despotism.*
Each day, her instruction and the activities that she chose built towards more independent student skill in interpreting difficult texts. In the final civics lesson I observed, students translated different parts of the Declaration of Independence with partners, or as Stella said, “summarizing the gist,” by using the annotation and translation strategies that they had learned and practiced in prior lessons.

In Stella’s world history classes, I saw her use a plethora of methods that she confirmed in our conversations after her lessons. This included think-pair-shares, see-think-wonders, perch points, regular checks for understanding, and class discussion. Intertwined with these strategies were more rigorous and ambitious signature pedagogies that promoted students’ critical thinking such as source interpretations, comparing and contrasting various ancient empires with graphic organizers, and subtle moves that called upon anti-racist and culturally responsive teaching practices.

These classes were full of student voice and engagement, with Stella frequently asking student to make connections to what they had previously learned (“What do we already know about Mali?”) or existing student background knowledge (“What do you know or have heard about the Mongols?”). Stella also clearly was engaging in backwards design principles, frequently referring back to previous lessons and activities as well as providing purpose to lessons by foreshadowing how this knowledge or skill would be used later in the unit.

She also took specific moments to make connections to racial misconceptions and took an inclusive approach to teaching history. This included prompting about why it was important to study sub-Saharan African Kingdoms and addressing misconceptions that students had about Africa. In one example, she leveraged a moment in a video clip to elaborate on this point. In the video, they were showing the discovery of ancient African fortresses, with a momentary mention that, initially, the colonial authorities believed that the ruins were evidence that Whites had previously occupied parts of Africa. Stella paused the video and took a minute to ask the class why this might be the case and connected to broader themes of racism and colonialism.

In the final world history lesson, Stella resorted more to interactive lecture and notes, frequently prompting students and being sure to activate prior knowledge and make connections throughout. She expressed some regret that this lesson was not more student-centered but admitted to “feeling pressured with the end of the quarter” and that she “let [coverage demands] affect [her] for this lesson.”
Taking up Signature Pedagogies. As noted with other participants, Stella used and reported extensive use of many of the quick and ready-to-use methods introduced in her preparation coursework. These included bellringers or warm-ups, perch points, see-think-wonders for image analysis, think-pair-shares, and strategies to check for student understanding quickly.

Stella was also very intent on incorporating diverse perspectives and anti-racist teaching into her classroom. This was at the forefront of her mind as she planned lessons and made revisions. However, she explained that the local conservative political climate made this somewhat challenging. Nevertheless, as noted previously, I saw her skillfully weave in activities, texts, and ideas that were not overbearing but challenged students’ previous conceptions and pushed their thinking about race and power in the world and the United States.

She reported that she used methods like modeling and discussion in moderation. In the use of direct and explicit modeling, she noted that she used this mainly at the beginning of the year to develop the skills and procedural knowledge that students would need for the rest of the term. Again, this was evident in seeing her model close reading strategies with her civics class as they translated and decoded the main ideas in the Declaration of Independence.

Stella also described throughout interviews how she was a reflective practitioner who often “competed with [her]self” to improve her teaching practice each day. She regularly collaborated with colleagues, eager for feedback and ideas to improve her instruction.

Student voice and ideas were also hallmarks of her teaching, something that Stella reported using almost every day in her teaching. However, she found facilitating discussions to be difficult and terrifying. She said that facilitating discussions was among the “scariest” methods “in the entirety of teaching” because she was constantly worried about a student saying something ignorant and mean, not wanting to end class thinking “someone got very hurt during that discussion.” She also noted that the cognitive load for leading a discussion was daunting, as she outlined what goes on in her head as the teacher: “I'm thinking in my own head too, while trying to listen to the kids, like what do I say next? And what did they just say?” noting that it is really “complicated.” She also is concerned about equity and inclusion at the same time, where “some voices get lost, and some are heard a little too much” during discussions. That said, when she has used them, discussions had “been fine every time,” but her experiences point towards the difficulty of using such a method for beginning teachers.
Supports for Signature Pedagogies. Stella and her fellow teachers had a curriculum at their disposal, which they collaboratively and individually revised to fit their class needs and which supported her instruction. In this way, Stella could engage in more backwards design than many of the other participants, having to spend less time starting from scratch and more time thinking forwards and back in the curriculum and revising lessons to make them more rigorous or engaging over time.

This curriculum and other school resources aligned with many of the preparation program’s signature pedagogies, including document-based questions and primary source activities. This supported her in regularly incorporating historical thinking activities into her world history class, though less so in her civics class.

Stella was an outlier from other participants in a few other ways. Although she acknowledged the practices promoted in preparation were generally unfamiliar to her when she started the program, her school context’s alignment in several key areas. This, combined with Stella’s extraordinary work ethic and beliefs, pushed her towards increasingly ambitious practices encouraged in her preparation coursework.

In the follow-up survey, Stella was one of the only participants to indicate that her relatively stable teaching context significantly supported her teaching. Additionally, more so than other participants, she reported the practices and values of the program were generally encouraged and valued by her school, further driving her towards rigorous teaching.

Though there were exceptions, she felt that her school valued high-quality teaching and student learning. The baseline curriculum set a minimum standard for instruction and was aligned with signature pedagogies. Stella described making it more ambitious out of her determination, but it served as a tool for her to start with and lessened her workload. Her school also had quarterly testing, which she said that teachers had input in creating, that motivated Stella to take her instruction seriously and rewarded her efforts with feedback that the extra work was worth it in the end with strong results in student learning. Stella described several other elements in her school that had a similar impact, such as regular observations by an administrator who was always looking for critical thinking, the use of a teaching evaluation framework that adopted many aspects of the signature pedagogies, and individual professional development plans that Stella described as pushing her to continue developing her teaching skill in rigorous and student-centered ways.
She explained that collaboration and mentorship could have been better in her school, but Stella found support networks on her own. On her official mentor, Stella said, “he gets paid for it, and he’s nice. And I, and, and, you know what? I can go to him when I need to, but he’s not somebody … he’s not my first call … maybe not even my third call.” So instead, Stella found support from some of the younger teachers in the building, telling me that working with the English department was especially helpful. Stella said that working with these other teachers offered her emotional support and provided an outlet to talk about teaching, get advice, and help her with her argumentative writing instruction during her second year.

Though Stella did feel pressure from outside forces, she indicated that she made the deliberate choice to utilize signature pedagogies. She noted the conservative politics of her school board and felt like “there are people outside telling [her] how to be a teacher when they have no idea what it’s like to be a teacher.” Hearing the word “indoctrination” about history and social studies teaching made her “sick.” In addition, she seemed to be growing weary of feelings of professional disrespect, including expressed frustration about how she was already one of the better and harder-working teachers in her building, yet she was being paid less that more veteran teachers who were coasting.

In this sense, Stella described that her determination and investment in her students and her instruction was the fuel that drove her development. She noted that she was highly competitive, including with herself, and had high expectations for her students as well.

That said, Stella expressed feeling “lucky” for a beginning teacher and that others did not have the stability or support she enjoyed.

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** Stella’s life as a teacher was not without challenges and obstacles. She reported that the workload as a first-year teacher was daunting, but that had greatly diminished in the second year. The same went for classroom management issues. She reported having challenges, but from my observations, this had more to do with her high expectations for student engagement than much actual student misbehavior.

Like other participants, she did report having some challenges with her colleagues. She said this was especially true of the veteran teachers in the school who never wanted to make changes and “let [her] do all the work.” Stella described how more veteran teachers contributed to a stagnant professional culture in the building, resisting potentially positive changes in the school and always “complaining and shutting down good ideas.” Thankfully, Stella described
having had a fair deal of autonomy in her classroom, so she did not have to listen to what veteran teachers said. She said she would regularly “appease them” and then do what she wants to do, justifying it because her “results are so much better” than theirs.

The only signature pedagogies that Stella outright said she does not use is teaching with concepts. She said that she “knows what it is” but does not do it out of deference to coverage demands and the shared curriculum in her school. This was contradicted though in my observations of her teaching where both her civics and world history classes were laden with concepts, basing work with the Declaration of Independence on concepts from the Enlightenment and using different ancient civilizations to form conceptions or what constituted an empire or how nations formed. In this sense, I suspect that she was referring to a specific method (concept formation) rather than a general use of concepts in her teaching.

**Models of Instruction.** Stella was an outlier on the follow-up survey as the only teacher who reported that she did not call much upon the teachers that she had in her all-girls Catholic schooling experiences. Instead, she placed a lot of emphasis on the preparation program for her instructional development.

Stella reported that her student teaching had mixed results in her instructional development. She said that she had many opportunities to try out teaching and refine her instruction in person but did not “get much from student teaching.” Though she personally liked her mentor teacher, she did not like her mentor’s teaching style or methods. Stella said that her mentor showed her “what not to do” regarding how she approached students and teaching, noting that it was helpful to see how that approach “backfired on her” later in the term with student motivation and engagement. During student teaching, she reported learning some classroom management skills. Still, she attributed most of her learning during student teaching to work with her field instructor, who Stella said regularly pushed her to experiment and engage in more rigorous teaching with support and feedback.

Stella also pointed toward the professors in the core social studies courses as a source for her instruction. She attributed her classroom organization and routines to her professors, who she felt set a high bar for what she should do for her students. She also noted that how program instructors modeling of practices was instrumental in proving their classroom value and supported their future use in her own teaching. She said this was true of bellringers and exit tickets, which she was initially skeptical of but came around to when she saw how faculty used
them effectively in coursework. This was also true when professors used signature pedagogies, explicitly and implicitly, to teach courses. Stella described revelatory moments about methods in use during coursework, where she started to think, “Oh, that’s really cool. I did see it in practice. I actually went through it personally. Now we’re looking back at it … oh, that’s really interesting.” Notably, Stella explained that these connections were brought to the fore by teacher educators facilitating conversations, or “looking back,” at the method they just used, revealing their instructional thinking and supporting teacher noticing of signature pedagogies.

**Final Thoughts.** Teacher preparation did have a significant impact on Stella’s teaching despite her not entering the program with ambitious models or visions of instruction. Stella’s experiences in coursework, work with her field instructor during student teaching, her own personal tenacity, and work in a stable and supportive school context came together in ways that resulted in Stella teaching differently than how she was taught. She offered a fascinating case of how factors can overlap in ways that allow many of the more ambitious signature pedagogies to flourish.

**Addison**

**Background.** Addison started her teaching at a rural middle school in a Midwestern resort town, first teaching a seventh-grade world history class in her first year, then moving up to eighth grade with the same group of kids, teaching U.S. history in her second year. Her school was about 90% White and has test results consistently around the state average. The students at the school represented a wide range of backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses, given that the area included a mix of agriculture and tourism industries, with approximately 40% of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

The school was not particularly large, and Addison was one of the only social studies teachers in the building and the only one teaching the course at her grade level. That said, the community and the school were closely knit and generally supportive, making Addison’s experience unique.

**Noticings from Observations.** I had the opportunity to watch Addison teach six different lessons, three recorded and three in person, with her middle school U.S. history class. I saw Addison take up many of the simple and immediately applicable methods that fellow participants
regularly used. These included bellringers and class warm-ups, think-pair-shares, gallery walks, graphic organizers, and quick checks for understanding like “fist-to-five” or “thumb checks.”

She also made explicit and deliberate efforts to connect with her students both during and outside of class time. This was clear from her conversations with kids before and after class and in her instruction. This included a segment of class she called “good news,” in which students shared anything that was going good in their worlds, from getting their first hunting license or building a chicken coop with their dad to being excited about an upcoming birthday party or planned vacation. She genuinely seemed to be having fun with the kids as she had them try and guess her Halloween costume (she was a founding father) or when she took the class to Washington, DC, during her second year.

Addison’s classes moved with urgency and intentionality. Kids buzzed swiftly from activity to activity, and classroom routines were accompanied by constant feedback from the teacher (“I love the way that _____ students have started” or “Let’s go. Fifteen more seconds to have ____ ready to go.”). That is not to say that she was overbearing. Instead, Addison made her expectations clear, followed through on them, and students seemed happy to follow her lead.

Across lessons, I saw her engage with more ambitious signature pedagogies, such as backwards design, small group work, and differentiation. Her classes always had objectives and standards on the first slide of the day, but more than just superficially posted, they lived in the lesson. I could also see how Addison’s lessons connected from day to day, building towards larger goals. This was especially apparent in how she closed out class in several of her lessons, connecting what students did that day to broader themes (such as “tough” topics in history) and what they would be doing in future lessons.

Group work was a staple in her classroom and a routine that she established in her second-year teaching that she felt was going “really well.” Using the cardinal directions as group labels, students had different north, south, east, and west partners, which allowed Addison to switch up whom kids worked with and heard from but also allowed for some purposeful grouping. As she described in conversations after class, Addison used her time circulating to groups purposefully, picking groups to sit with based on needs like students who needed reading support or those who might have trouble with a more abstract assignment (like developing a class constitution).
It’s not like Addison didn’t lecture, either. She did. What made it different from other examples is that the information from lectures directly supported the following activity, such as building background knowledge before students looked at a difficult primary source.

**Taking up Signature Pedagogies.** Interview and survey data further confirmed what I observed in Addison’s classes. Across both years, Addison reported that she regularly used many of the methods she learned about in preparation to promote student engagement, structure her class, and elicit student thinking. In particular, Addison noted standards-based instructions, hooks or warmups to start class, learning objectives, gallery walks, KWL charts, and strategies to support student reading as staples in her classroom.

Though she acknowledged that doing larger whole-class discussions was an instructional goal of hers, Addison’s class was full of student voice and ideas as she reported that turn-and-talks, or think-pair-shares, were a method that she used daily in her classroom.

During her second year, Addison also reported that the biggest “difference with [her] teaching [was] that [she was] able to make this content more relatable for students” by incorporating real life connections and making considerations for how the content might be meaningful to her students’ backgrounds and interests.

Addison also reported taking up some more ambitious signature pedagogies, such as primary source work and explicitly teaching historical thinking skills. Like several other participants, she called upon the SHEG introductory materials and used them in her class, telling me that she “actually used the cafeteria fight at the beginning of the year and it worked out really well.” This “great intro” supported use of those skills throughout the year and was a resource that she said she “will continue to use” with her course.

Addison told me that inclusive teaching was also something that was very important to her, a belief that she described as motivation for trying to differentiate her instruction. She told me that she liked “the idea of having more of like a blended hybrid classroom where there’s a lot of like where students are at different spots,” where she envisioned a unifying activity but where students had choices and could work at different paces and with different teacher support.

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** At the same time, there were signature pedagogies from preparation that Addison did not use much in her first years. One example was teaching concepts, specifically the inductive concept formation method. She said that she sees some value in it but “wasn’t sold on it” during preparation coursework.
Because Addison was planning her curriculum from scratch, her other examples of challenges often had to do with the workload demands of teaching. For example, Addison wanted to give her kids more feedback, and she “relied on the grade being the feedback,” which she felt “kind of takes away from the learning process,” wishing she had more time to give students more “constructive” feedback.

Backward design was also challenging with the workload, as Addison noted that it required knowing the content, looking forward in the curriculum, and looking backward at where the class was, which was “hard to do all at once.” She found that “going week-to-week … was the only way [she] could survive” in that first year. Thankfully, this improved in her second year as “teaching became more fun … because it’s more manageable.”

Addison described her professional isolation as a factor that held her back a bit. She described wishing for more collaboration and feedback on her teaching. She “love[d] talking to people and working together to figure out” lessons and “bounce ideas off” of, something that she felt the preparation program “really did establish” in terms of a collegial environment. She longed for the days when she could get direct feedback from professors and field instructors, which she was not getting at her school.

**Experimenting with Practice.** Although she worked in relative isolation, Addison described having very supportive administrators who encouraged her to try out new practices. During her first year, her principal literally told her that he wanted her to have some bad lessons because that meant she was trying something new. In his mind, “he wanted [Addison] to not be shy” about experimenting with methods, letting her know that this is part of the process and that he supported her in doing so. Addison described that this sort of explicit acknowledgement that struggle, trial-and-error, reflection, and improvement are a name of the game had an impact on her, giving her reassurance that she did not always need to play it safe or try to stay under the radar.

She also described how her students gave her the confidence to try and continue trying new methods. She told me in the follow-up interview, “[k]ids have to tell me if something is good for me to keep it” and that such “praise” kept her going. These positive feedback loops seem especially important for her as a teacher working mostly in isolation.

Addison’s confidence grew in her second year, allowing her to take up more signature pedagogies, including discussing potentially difficult topics. She gave a great example of
political tensions and that some of her student’s parents participated in the January 6th insurrection at the US Capital. With more confidence and because her principal had her back, she could use more “risky” sources. For instance, she told her principal, “Hey, we are reading this thing about slavery, and it talks about like White men being the devil, basically. So, like, you need to know that just in case in case a parent complains …” In these ways, Addison described an environment where she felt safe to experiment and take risks as she developed her instructional practices.

Models of Instruction. Addison reported that she did not come into her coursework with ambitious models of instruction from her own schooling and had experiences that were generally misaligned with signature pedagogies. Her recollection of her past history teachers was about one who was the football coach and another who focused on traditional practices and teaching towards a test that was based on memorizing historical facts. However, she did say that she was “more influenced by [her dad] than [her] own teachers.” He was a teacher with over 30 years of experience, and Addison told me about his passion and how much he cared about his students. She cited him as a type of professional role model that influenced how Addison viewed the profession moving forward.

When reflecting on her student teaching experience, Addison noted that she learned a lot from working with her mentor teacher but mostly about classroom management. His content instruction did not fit Addison’s vision, but she noticed that some of her mentor teacher’s classroom routines and structures mirrored her own during her first year. This changed in the second year as Addison gained more confidence and adopted a style that she felt was more authentic to herself.

Her clinical observations experiences influenced her teaching vision and instructional practices more than student teaching. Addison had two placement rotations at the partnership school where Kris completed his student teaching, one in the history program and one with a second-language endorsement program. In one of those rotations, she got to see and work with Mr. Maddon, noting, “It was such a positive experience, and they did so much … students [were] working together, students [were] talking together.” In the final interview, Addison acknowledged the impact this had on her teaching, telling me that “because I saw it there and I loved that practice, that became part of what I wanted as a teacher. I want kids thinking, talking to each other, and working together. I shouldn’t be the only mode of information.” Clearly, the
impact of placements at this partnership school and with Mr. Maddon is worth noting with these participants.

Regarding the impact of coursework, Addison mentioned several activities or assignments that impacted her practice. She cited her ESL endorsement class as a key to her understanding and desire to differentiate and be inclusive in her classroom. In the core history/social studies courses, Addison pointed to a specific reading that opened her eyes to the importance of literacy instruction in the content area, how she used the SHEG introductory materials in her class, and how the methods index assignment felt like “busy work” at first but ended up being helpful for understanding practices. She also found the teaching simulations to be really important because “observing is good, but trying it out on your own is better.”

Though Addison did not point to teacher educators as models as much as many other participants, she did recall a moment in class where one instructor modeled a discussion and how that shaped her understanding of the practice:

…we had to point out … there was one group that just watched [the discussion] and then one group that was in the discussion with you. And, so I would be like, ‘Oh, he oriented this student to another student here.’ I would write down what I saw and then I was also part of the conversation the next time [for the other group to notice talk moves]

What Addison is talking about here is identifying the talk moves used by a teacher educator who facilitated the discussion with one group. The language used in the preparation program for different types of talk moves in a discussion even stuck with her for three years. In the final interview, she told me, “Orienting students to each other is one of the things that I really want to work on this year.”

So, although Addison entered the program being unfamiliar with ambitious teaching practices and many of the signature pedagogies of coursework, she made tremendous progress toward becoming such a teacher. In her case, her openness to new practices and ideas in preparation coursework were confirmed and validated in her clinical experiences, something which led to deep and sustained changes in her teaching vision. Pairing this with the classroom management skills she learned in student teaching and the stable school context that encouraged her to take instructional risks put her on a trajectory toward becoming a truly ambitious, if not transformational, teacher.
Supports for Signature Pedagogies. Because Addison did not have an extensive teacher network at her school to share resources and talk about practice, she found or created networks with other teachers outside her building. For example, in her second year, she told me about how she connected with a teacher from her clinical placement for curriculum and also shared resources and talked about teaching with another program graduate from a nearby town. As Addison said, “Last year, I felt way more alone. I didn’t really have other teachers to reach out to … This year I do. So, it’s like I already have like stuff to fall back on.” This self-motivation and knowing how to ask for and find help was something she said “is good to learn” for new teachers.

Final Thoughts. Addison offers us another interesting case where a teacher entered the preparation program with limited experiences with the signature pedagogies promoted during coursework. However, have a compassionate and dedicated educator role model in her father combined with picking up ambitious ideas, methods, and practices from her coursework, field experiences, and student teaching and a stable and supportive school context was enough for Addison to take up many of the practices promoted in her preparation.

Jason

Background. Meeting with Jason sometimes felt like being shot out of a cannon. He was an absolute ball of energy who cared passionately about teaching and his students. He was also bold and unincumbered. As a student, he was unafraid to speak up, push back, or voice dissent. This brashness and fierce independence played a key role in his development as an instructor.

He taught in a southern city in an urban high school that was about half Black, one-third White, and 10% Hispanic. The school is a medium to large-sized school with over 1,000 students, has test scores that are typically around the state average, and about half of the kids qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Unfortunately, due to logistical challenges, I did not have the opportunity to visit Jason at the high school where he taught.

Taking up Signature Pedagogies. Though I did not get the chance to see Jason teach, I was his student-teaching field instructor. What I recall from his student teaching, which was completely online, was that Jason was excellent with students, thrived off social interactions, and was always thinking about ways to make content relevant to his kids. He also really loved his
content, and my sense was that he might be a teacher who started off with more traditional practices and then ends up adding more ambitious practices over time, as I recall having to prod him to make space for student voices or to get them to do more of the thinking and talking. In this way, he was very content-centered but engaging with respect to connecting to students and making learning relevant.

Among the various practices that Jason said he frequently used in his first years of teaching were many of the structural aspects of teaching and lessons. During his interviews, he continuously stressed the need for routines and structures in his school. This is because he described that his school was in utter chaos during his first year, something I will elaborate on more later.

Jason reported using the same lesson planning framework that we used in the preparation program, though a slimmed-down version. He said that he always included an opener or warm-up and exit ticket to assess student learning in his lessons. He told me that he had students “crystallize [the lesson] through a 10, 15-minute assignment at the end of the class,” which was “a pattern that [he] repeated over and over again that I learned at [the university].”

He emphasized that he used different types of texts and various methods to maintain student engagement. He described his typical class as some lectures, some text analysis, maybe watching a video clip, and some partner or independent work. Also, given that many of his students struggle with reading, he indicated that he regularly incorporated reading supports such as a vocabulary word of the day.

Jason explained that he was not afraid to have discussions in his class or to talk about controversial issues. He described his approach as follows:

[Once] you've already established a baseline that we respect each other in this classroom. If they're sharing an opinion, you shut up. It's not your turn. Right? You don't get to talk over them. I don't care what it is.

He also was not afraid to push back on kids when they “talked out of pocket,” calling them out for evidence and making sure that “they’re being forced to back up what they say” as a means of supporting their argumentation skills.

He shared an instance in a discussion when a student suggested that the COVID-19 vaccine was killing thousands of teenagers across the country:
And I was like, ‘Stop right there, Google that,’ because they all have their laptops. And she was like, ‘What?’ I was like, ‘I’m not gonna let you say something as, as visceral as that without evidence.’ And she couldn’t find anything. And I was like, I’m not saying you’re stupid. I’m saying you, as a 15-year-old, heard that somewhere and you repeated it. But what I’m charging you with is: Go find that. If you can prove it to me, now, we’ll have a conversation. But if you just say that you can’t do it, basically it’s a whole point of it, when you get into those sensitive topics, I make you logical. I make you have to be critical. I’m not going let you just say what your dad told you. Like, I’m not going to let you do that. So that’s how I stay safe too, because, uh, nobody can be like, ‘Oh, you’re infusing an agenda.’ No, I’m just saying prove it.

Jason’s fierceness, intensity, and confidence seemed to allow him to take up methods that made other teachers uneasy.

Jason felt that his experiences in his school context shaped and changed his views about teaching, especially classroom management, where he often talked about needing a more authoritarian approach and commanding respect in his classroom. In the final interview, he had this to say about how his views had changed:

… this probably wouldn’t go in your paper, but just a lot of my views of how to handle people have changed drastically from college to now. And this idea that I’ve seen from some of the other teachers, ‘Oh, the kids don’t need structure.’… [or] … ‘it’s a student, student-led classroom where they get to decide kind of what we’re learning’ and all this other stuff. I’m like, but that’s not how the world works, though. They’re not mature enough brains to do that … [and] … I have found out kids appreciate [the structure]. They’re like, ‘Oh yeah, you know, you were really hard on me. But that helped me out a lot. Like, I needed that kick in the butt.’ And that helps, you know?

Coming out of the program, Jason had a particular conception of what progressive teaching practices were and what such classrooms looked like. Based on how he talked about these types of teaching he was left with the impressions that progressive and student-centered teaching as needing to look and feel a certain way, with kind and soft-spoken teachers who are guides-on-the-side rather than sages-on-the-stage, those who let kids lead the way at all time, and that inquiry is some sort of unbridled discovery learning exposition. In such classrooms, Jason seemed to believe that there was never a need for explicit instruction or structures that could
constrain student learning. Basically, he pictured a kinder, gentler version of the classroom where student motivation and behavior are intrinsic and a result of such freedom.

Jason described that his school context, especially the behavior challenges, woke him up to the fact that this conception might not be the only version of progressive teaching. A teacher could be authoritarian in the classroom and still center student voices and ideas. There is even a burgeoning research base that suggests that discipline systems and highly structured schools can actually support teachers to enact more progressive teaching practices (Harrison, 2023; Mehta & Fine, 2019; Waychunas; 2022). The teacher can set rules and boundaries, sometimes needing to act as an enforcer, to create a safe space for more progressive practices. Teachers exercising authority in the classroom are not inherently undemocratic or oppressive (Graham, 2018). There is certainly a place for direct instruction, explicit teaching, and content in progressive classrooms as they build students up toward more rigorous learning.

Jason’s experiences with this realization provide an interesting reflection point for thinking about how teachers can establish rigorous and ambitious classrooms given different contextual circumstances and what teacher preparation programs might be able to do to better support this understanding.

**Obstacles to Enacting Signature Pedagogies.** It’s not like Jason didn’t face challenges that other teachers in this study faced. Jason described that he had to develop a curriculum from scratch, dealt with classroom management issues, and operated in an unsupportive school culture. However, he approached these with an almost superhuman, though perhaps gruff, insistence that, eventually, he could make things go his way. Jason noted that when student resistance to more rigorous methods was a challenge in his classroom, he just did not let that stop him, instead telling kids, “tough brick.” In instance after instance, it was clear that he was in command of his classroom and that he demanded excellence. It seemed to work too. Kids enjoyed his class, and he reported that they were learning. However, this approach was undercut by elements within the school context.

He felt that some methods are good with “well-disciplined school environments,” which he did not have in his first year. Jason gave me examples of problems with school discipline and how, when things got out of hand, and students were fighting, he “wasn’t dealing with scaffolding and crystallization right now.”
In particular, he reluctantly pointed to restorative justice policies as the root of the issue, saying, “I believe in equity. I believe in justice and all that, but how it’s being implemented is just terrible.” He continued by giving examples of student violence in classrooms and in the hallways that made the entire school unsafe and how there was little consequence for those involved. He even talked about students punching teachers or faking school shootings, only facing a minimal suspension, quickly reentered the classroom, and how this created an environment where students felt few consequences for their actions and there was little remediation. He summed up his thoughts on it by saying, “I’m progressive and like, let’s modernize our educational values and what we’re going for, but also let’s not lose our brains” when thinking about how schoolwide discipline impacted his classroom.

Additionally, Jason explained how several of the veteran teachers at his school did not like the ways that he was teaching, especially, as he described, because of the positive response he was getting from his students. This almost made Jason quit, especially after a student awards ceremony incident. Jason told me that at the event, the students leading the ceremony got on the microphone and started to go around the room and say to the audience, “Let’s hear it for this teacher,” and “Let’s hear it for that teacher.” When it got to Jason, “the place went nuts” with cheering and applause. He said that this didn’t go over well with some teachers, with a few of them even confronted him after school in his classroom, hassling him and saying things like, “You think you’re something now, huh?” and engaging in a form of professional bullying.

Sources of Instruction. Jason did not have much to say about the origins of his practice aside from giving a metaphor of a pantry or spice cabinet with all the ingredients for his teaching recipe. He does not always use them, but they are there if he needs them. He looked towards his former teachers and courses as a plethora of models to choose from at the right moment. However, he seemed to be especially drawn to teachers who were firm yet charismatic, strict and yet pleasant.

In his follow-up interview, he summarized his experience in the program by saying, “What college taught me is how to structure it, like how to take methods and put them into a structure that works.” He also noted that he didn’t need his “hand held” along the way as much as other folks once he had a framework or “roadmap” with some methods at his disposal. Again, we see his fierce independence show through.
However, his college experience shaped how he approached using primary sources in his classes. In interviews, he indicated that this was among the only practices that he had not used at some point, believing it inappropriate for the age group. This was tied to an experience that he had in a college history course where he struggled to engage with historical research for a final project and got a grade that was less than he deserved. In this sense, the negative experience he had as an adult was dictating whether or not he thought his kids could handle it.

As for follow-up questions about student teaching, Jason brushed them aside. It did not seem valuable to him because it was done online.

He also indicated in his follow-up survey that signature pedagogies from the program were very unfamiliar to his experiences as a student and he never referred to looking back at past teachers as inspiration. Although he did point out that his aunt and uncle, who were both teachers, are what inspired him to go into the profession.

Yes, this is a scattershot summary of why and how Jason seemed to take up signature pedagogies. His college courses and instructor were among the main sources for instructional inspiration, but Jason may have been a scavenger of sorts, willing to consider and try out any method or practice if it served his needs at the moment and regardless of its origin.

**Supports for Signature Pedagogies.** Despite these challenges Jason faced in his first year, the principal at the school asked him to come back for a second year, promising that they were making some changes. And they did. The biggest change came in retooling and structuring an escalating discipline system that the administration held fast to, allowing teachers to “let the system work for [them] and tapping into that” as a resource. He acknowledged that he was doing better with classroom management, too, even creating a house system across his classes based on the Harry Potter series. He tied points into a behavior system but also created “side quests” that linked to content, like researching an extension question related to a class topic, to get house bonus points.

The stability allowed him to do better work with ambitious teaching, noting that he could have kids do projects in his second year or that discussions were better. He even won teacher of the quarter at his school, even as one of the youngest teachers in the building.

Jason is the type of person that has no quit in him, something that he believed was key to his success in comparison to other teachers in his school who struggled. One of my favorite quotes from his interviews was about his mentality when students would resist and try to avoid
engaging in activities: “Kid, if you think you’re gonna beat me in this, it’s not going to work.”

Even in his follow-up interview, he told me that in teaching and in life, “there are no obstacles that can’t be overcome” and that he thinks that new teachers “need a strong sense of self because you have to be bulletproof in a sense” in the face of the challenges that you face in the classroom.

He also talked a lot about encouragement. It seemed like Jason drew a lot of his motivation from his students and his overall obligation toward education. In his second year, he drew much validation in what he does from returning students who came back to visit him and even encouraged his ninth graders to “get with the program … it’s actually fun if you do.”

**Final Thoughts.** In many ways, Jason represents an extreme case of lone wolf teacher who was willing to go it alone on the sheer force of his personality and effort. Was Jason a beacon of ambitious practice? Maybe not. Did he teach more ambitiously than most others would have in his given context? It seems so. As such he offers another unique case showing how person, program, and school context collided in interesting ways to shape teachers’ instructional practices.

He was the only participant who truly relished “teaching against the grain” and challenging the status quo, something that he indicated as an important instructional goal of his in the follow-up survey. And, while interviewing him was like trying to catch a greased pig, Jason presents us another interesting case of how teachers call on personal tools in the face of contextual challenges to enact more rigorous teaching practices.

**Cross-Case Findings**

In Table 7 below, you will find a chart that summarizes the cases of each participant in the study based on their school context, personal factors that seemed especially important in their development, obstacles and challenges they faced in their teaching, critical supports or resources, and an estimate of where their practice might fall on a spectrum of ambitious teaching and the extent to which they took up signature pedagogies from their preparation. This chart may be useful for reference but also aids in understanding my interpretations and cross case findings.
Figure 9: Overview of Participant Case Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Teaching Context</th>
<th>Personal Factors</th>
<th>Major Obstacles</th>
<th>Significant Supports</th>
<th>Origins of Practice</th>
<th>Use of Signature Pedagogies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Trevor     | 1st Year: Urban Charter Middle School  
2nd Year: Suburban High School | Deeply skeptical of value in coursework  
Sense that teaching was easy  
Mostly traditional background | 1st Year: Classroom Management & Student Apathy  
2nd Year: Provided curriculum and highly collaborative dept. | His own K12 teachers  
Student Teaching Mentor | Minimal use of signature pedagogies                                                |
| Jake       | 1st Year: Rural Middle School  
2nd Year: Rural High School | Very traditional background  
Improvement-Oriented | Curricular Demands  
Classroom Management  
Student Apathy | Course the Repeats each Trimester  
Encouragement from Colleagues and Admin | His own K12 teachers  
Trying out practices in simulations  
Faculty and Teacher Educators as Models | Moderate levels of signature pedagogies;  
Much more than expected |
| Dexter     | Urban K-8 school          | Content-oriented, not teaching- or student-oriented  
Teaching was a backup plan  
Mostly traditional background | Classroom Management  
Non-collaborative environment | Inquiry aligned curriculum | Clinical placements  
Trying out practices in simulations | No use of signature pedagogies |
| Kylie      | Urban magnet high school  | Extremely reflective and hardworking  
Experiences in K12 with ambitious practice | Low-academic expectations in school  
Disorganized school environment | Informal network of likeminded teachers  
Some curricular supports | Teacher educators as instructional models  
Her own K12 teachers  
Teaching simulations | Very high use of signature pedagogies |
| Albert     | Urban magnet high school  | Initially skeptical of prep program value  
Concerned with public perception | Moderate classroom management challenges  
Workload  
Disorganized school environment | Informal network of likeminded teachers | Teaching simulations  
Models from field experiences  
Practical assignments  
Feedback on teaching  
His own K12 experiences  
Teacher educators as instructional role models | Moderate levels of signature pedagogies |
| Kris       | 1st Year and a Half: Urban middle school | Somewhat aligned K12 experiences  
Reflective and thoughtful | At first school:  
Extreme workload  
Little oversight or collaboration | AmeriCorps volunteer  
Some mentorship | Clinical work and Practicum in Partnership School | Minimal to moderate levels of signature pedagogies |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Workload</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Teacher Educators</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Half of year two: Suburban middle school</td>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>Disorganized school environment</td>
<td>Had a curriculum to start with</td>
<td>Teacher educators as instructional role models</td>
<td>Potentially improving at new school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>Rural/Suburban High School</td>
<td>Traditional K12 experiences (but very rigorous)</td>
<td>Political tensions with community. School board concerned with indoctrination</td>
<td>Had a curriculum to start with</td>
<td>Teacher educators as instructional models</td>
<td>High levels of signature pedagogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addison</td>
<td>Rural “resort town” middle school</td>
<td>Traditional K12 experiences, ESL Endorsement</td>
<td>Relearning Content as she taught (first year)</td>
<td>Stable school environment</td>
<td>Dad as role model teacher (passionate and committed to kids)</td>
<td>High levels of signature pedagogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Urban high school</td>
<td>Traditional K12 experiences</td>
<td>Clashed with other teachers, professional bullying</td>
<td>Increased school discipline and stability in second year</td>
<td>No singular source stands out aside from warm-strict college faculty</td>
<td>Moderate levels of signature pedagogies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which Practices Are and Are Not Taken up by Novice Teachers?

Generally, practices that were simplest, required the least amount of planning, and depended least on student motivation or engagement were the most likely to be taken up and used by novice history and social studies teachers. These practices were almost prepackaged and ready-to-use for novices and often helped them to structure their lessons.

Many participants mentioned the Methods Index assignment in interviews, an assignment that spanned core social studies and history courses. In the Methods Index, novices identified a certain number of practices, large and small, that they could use in their future classrooms. It was set up as a table, asking for the name of the method, a short description or example, the benefits or uses of the practice, as well as any downsides or considerations to make when putting the practice into use. It seems that, although participants did not indicate referring to this document during their teaching, it was a useful way for them to collect and internalize a number of useful methods and signature pedagogies that stuck with them as they entered their first years in the classroom.

Among the methods that stand out in this way, and which were mentioned and/or observed across number of participants include:

- Think-pair-share or Turn-and-Talks (small-group discussion strategy)
- See-think-wonder (visual analysis method)
- Lesson openers (warm-ups, bellringers, do-now’s)
- Lesson planning templates (many using the same or similar version as used in preparation)
- Checks for Understanding (fist-to-five, thumb-check, pairing questions with text/video)
- Perch points (places in a classroom where teachers can observe the whole class)
- Graphic organizers (to scaffold comprehension, writing, or conceptual understanding)
- Gallery walks (similar to stations but short tasks placed around the room)
- Formative and summative assessment (using various types to track student learning)
- Reading supports (chunking, read aloud, summarizing strategies such as rephrasing or summaries)
Nearly all participants reported that developing positive relationships with students, creating a safe and welcoming classroom environment, and that connecting to student backgrounds and interests were important to them. However, the visibility or manifestations of this in their practice varied greatly among participants. Some seemed to believe that this meant making pop culture connections during lessons and making sure that lessons were fun, such as by incorporating games. Others purposefully built opportunities in class for students to share about themselves in activities that were distinct from content. Some of these history and social studies teachers made it clear that class time was about academics and left relationship building for times outside of class, like passing periods. In a few cases, teachers wove content and personal connections together in ways that allowed students to share their ideas and experiences. In some instances, participants indicated beliefs that relationships with kids meant simply that the students didn’t hate them. Taken together, this finding suggests that developing relationships is a rather nebulous term that was promoted in coursework as a signature pedagogy but meant different things to different teachers in terms of what it looks like in the classroom and what purpose it serves.

One signature pedagogy that stood out for most participants was a professional disposition where teachers had become skilled at reflection, improvement-oriented, and had a desire for feedback and to collaborate with other teachers. There is no question that many of the participants entered the program with the foundations of these dispositions as part of their personality. However, as indicated in interviews, the positive experiences that these teachers had with observation, coaching, feedback, and discussing teaching made them hungry for more. Activities in preparation which formed the basis for the development of these dispositions included experiences in teaching simulations where they formed “little families” (Stella) in their microclassrooms discussing and talking about teaching, and well as coaching and mentorship they received in the field from university supervisors and cooperating teachers. In this sense, teachers who may not have entered the program with reflective personalities or characteristics had these traits cultivated and refined through the positive experiences they had with coaching and feedback.

There were also trends in the signature pedagogies that participants did not use or take up in their first year of teaching. When it came to extensive unit planning, teachers simply did not have the time, mental capacity, or, in a few cases, the desire to engage in backwards design and
long-term planning. Such planning took not only a lot of time, a scarce commodity for new teachers, but they also pointed out the sheer difficulty and deep thought needed to think forward and backward in a course when they were so focused their day-to-day survival and what they were going to teach the next day.

Discussion was also a signature pedagogy that novice teachers did not seem to engage in regularly at the start of their careers teaching history and social studies. For many of them, they saw it as a method that was not possible to enact in chaotic environments and where students were unfamiliar with having discussions in class, even though many of them did indeed try. Other teachers who did not use much discussion in class expressed concerns about the difficulty of the practice. It is, after all, difficult to prepare students, launch, and facilitate a productive discussion since it requires a lot of planning and in-the-moment decision making based on student ideas and contributions. Given the challenge of leading discussions, many teachers did not feel confident in their ability to facilitate effectively and correspondingly, abandoned the practice.

There were a few other examples across participants about signature pedagogies that they did not use that had a common connection: teachers did not use methods which they had experienced negatively in their past. For some teachers this was concept formation, leaving the program unconvinced of its value. For others, it was group projects, having been burned in the past by group members not pulling their weight. Whatever the practice was, this is an interesting consideration to make as teacher educators may have to overcome this mental obstacle established by past teachers using practices poorly.

Novice Teachers’ Perspectives on How They Learn to Enact Signature Pedagogies

In Table 8 (below) you will find the results of the follow up questionnaire which asked the beginning teachers: “Thinking about your collective experiences, what factors and supports do you feel have been most important to your development as a teacher? (said another way, which of these has most greatly shaped your practice or the way that you teach?).” The possible responses were based both on existing literature about teachers’ sources of practice (e.g., models from you own K-12 experience) as well as those which arose from the initial interviews (e.g., professor/field instructor role models from preparation coursework). I use the data from this
table, supplemented by data from interviews to further illuminate how teachers described the origins and supports that they attributed to their instructional development.

Table 3: Participants Reported Sources of Practice Ranked Most to Least Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Practice</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your own ambition and personal standards</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher role models from your own K12 experience</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending/Cooperating/Mentor Teacher role model from student teaching</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying out practices in Clinical/Field Experiences</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor/Field Instructor role models from preparation coursework</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Environment and Culture (physical space, student behavior/motivation, parents, stability)</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and other instructional resources (i.e. technology, library, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Resources at Current School (collaboration, coaching/mentoring, expectations)</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific courses during preparation</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular assignments or activities from preparation coursework</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Responses were quantified in the follow way: Major/Most Important Factor = 2; Moderately Important Factor = 1; Minor/Least Important Factor = 0*

In looking at the results, there are a few clear takeaways, but also some conclusions that I would warn against drawing simply based on the numbers. For starters, the prompt asks simply about their development as teachers, *not* about their development with use of signature pedagogies (if I were to do this study over, I would ask these as separate questions). As we saw, many of the participants never even reached moderate levels of signature pedagogy use during their second year. I will tease out what separated who did and did not engage with signature pedagogies in a section to come.

Looking at the most influential factors in that these history and social studies teachers felt impacted their instructional development, one clear conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that teaching is very difficult work, requiring a personal ambition and drive to be successful. The apprenticeship of observation and calling back upon images and models from one’s own schooling is still a dominant factor in novice teachers’ instruction, one that I will further nuance below.
Towards the middle of the table, we see a number of factors being rated above a 1.00, meaning that participants found these to be somewhere between moderately important and most important in shaping their teaching. These included mentor teacher role models, trying out practices in the field, teacher educators and field instructors as instructional models, and the school culture as being critical factors that shape teacher instruction. However, we also see that these factors had the most variation amongst participants, suggesting that there is more going on beneath the surface when considering which of these helps support the uptake of signature pedagogies from their preparation.

Looking towards the bottom of the table, we see elements of coursework, including specific classes and particular assignments or activities from preparation. I caution readers not to interpret this as “preparation doesn’t matter,” because interview data and my observation of teachers’ practice indicated that it does impact how teachers teach.

**Impacts of Clinical Work.** Although there is a substantial amount of research out there about the importance of student teaching, the findings of this study shed some light on what that importance might be, at least for secondary history/social studies teachers. First, it should be noted that none of these participants had a “typical” student teaching experience due to the pandemic. Some of them taught entirely online, but many of them also had opportunities to teach in person.

Out of nine participants, only two had truly impactful student teaching experiences where they attributed learning practices and wanting to emulate their mentor teacher’s instruction. For Trevor, this was a more traditional approach that incorporated abstract connections to pop culture, something which aligned with the type of teacher he enjoyed as a student and which he had already wanted to become. For Kris, his time working with Mr. Maddon took his practice in another direction, one that was more aligned with the signature pedagogies of the program, learning how to engage students in inquiry, discussion, and create a student-centered classroom.

For other participants, their student teaching was often an experience in “what not to do,” resulting from being paired with a misaligned mentor teacher. In these cases, like with Kylie, they looked at student teaching as “checking a box” to get their certification. For the rest of the participants, student teaching was a wash because it was entirely online, helped them learn classroom management skills, got them accustomed to the daily grind and workload demands of
being a teacher, or simply served as a place for them to get in front of kids and gain some confidence in their teaching.

Looking at student teaching through the experiences of these participants, it seems that the practicum experience is less likely to be a transformative learning opportunity that shapes their practice in tremendous ways. Instead, it simply seems like a setting for them to get some practice with what they already know and get used to the life of a teacher.

**Teacher Educators as Models of Practice.** Many participants noted the teaching practices of professors in their preparation coursework was an influential source of their own instruction, modeling their own teaching off of what their instructors did in these courses. This was especially true of the ways that signature pedagogies were used in coursework rather than simply discussed.

It seems that having made the decision to become teachers and enrolling in the preparation program may have influenced how they paid attention to their professors’ instruction. Most of the participants reported that when sitting in a college course, they were not only students of the classes content but that they were also noticing and analyzing the professor’s instruction. This included noticing teacher moves and methods that course instructors employed and how we put them into practice to support student learning. This was especially true for “breaking the 4th wall” or “cracking open our teacher head” moments where instructors *explicitly* opened up conversations about their own instructional thinking and decision making for students, pointing out aspects of their teaching that might otherwise be invisible if left implicit.

Several participants also pointed to the importance of seeing teacher educators explicitly model the use of signature pedagogies. These seemed to be watershed moments that convinced novice teachers that such methods were possible, enjoyable as a student, and impactful on learning or, in some cases, furthered their skepticism and buy-in around the utility of a certain signature pedagogies. These moments could also revise teachers’ experiences as K-12 students, such as Albert’s skepticism with pair-shares after experiencing them used poorly as a student himself, but being convinced by their use in coursework as well as in his own teaching.

More implicit practices were also being promoted through teacher educators’ instruction, with the notion that “practicing-what-we-preach” was especially important as these moments as they could serve as additional convincing models for preservice teachers. In this study,
participants pointed to the ways in which their core history/SS course instructors developed classroom community, held high expectations while also being responsive to student needs, facilitation of discussion, and committed to practices that demanded students’ active participation and engagement with content as those methods that stood out to them and were correspondingly taken up into their own teaching. This also seemed to be especially true for teachers who were familiar with and enjoyed these types of teaching approaches from their previous classroom experiences, making them predisposed or primed for learning in this way.

This was not true in all cases. Some teachers who came in with particularly strong visions for teaching history/social studies valued different priorities and picked and chose practices from their professors that fit their visions. Some participants also indicated that they simply were not paying much attention at all to their professor’s practices, focusing more on what they needed to do as a pupil. Some teachers who were more content-centric disregarded more conceptual or abstract methods in favor of those that might help make their lectures more interactive instead. There also seemed to be a group of teachers who came into coursework skeptical and “tuned-out,” believing that there was little that could be learned about teaching in the university classroom. In these cases, teachers may have been “going through the motions” to get their certification with the intention of abandoning those ideas and methods once they had their own classrooms.

**Impacts of Coursework.** The impacts of the actual content, texts, assignments, and activities done in coursework was very mixed with few trends across participants.

Occasionally, a participant would point to a specific reading that shaped their thinking or an activity that they still think about when enacting a method. Even rarer were mentions of major assignments, outside of the unit planning assignments, having much of an impact on their thinking or teaching. The one trend that did arise across participants was their acknowledgement that the extensive teaching simulations done in coursework were a key component of their development. Many teachers pointed to these rehearsals as a nice stepping stone into real teaching and as a welcome opportunity to try their hand at signature pedagogies in a safer environment.

As mentioned earlier, some participants were more tuned into the learning opportunities present in teaching simulations than others. In some cases, the teachers in this study acknowledged that they were more focused on having fun than on learning about a practice when
it was their turn to act out a student role. For these teachers, the simulations only became real once it was their turn to teach. However, the majority of participants took advantage of playing out the roles of students to experience what methods are like and notice the great moves and missteps that their classmates made during their lessons. The debriefing sessions that they had in these simulated lessons seemed especially important for some as an opportunity to more deeply understand a signature pedagogies or method and have the chance to talk about teaching in a community of practice.

**Learning in School Contexts.** The teachers in this study also did not have much to say about learning practices in their school contexts. This was somewhat surprising given scholarship and reforms that would suggest that teachers in today’s schools would be likely to encounter many different systems and educational infrastructures in attempts to create schoolwide instructional coherence. In many ways, teachers did encounter some educational infrastructures such as testing, observations, professional development, and collaboration time. However, across cases, teachers indicated that these were piecemeal, disconnected, and not very robust. When they did encounter these different efforts at the school level, many participants described situations where they were able to ceremoniously comply or simply disregard these pressures in their own classroom. Based on participant’s stories, the learning that did seem to happen in school contexts seemed to be the result of participants reflecting on and tinkering with their own instruction to make it better.

Like Coburn’s work (2004) suggests, teachers who did encounter reform efforts at the school level that were harmonious with their existing views and beliefs about instruction were encouraged to keep up with using said methods or practices. This however was infrequent in participant experiences and seemed to happen almost by coincidence rather than through purposeful school organization. Scattered across the data were a few examples of how certain practices or approaches to teaching were reinforced or encouraged within the school context. These included situations, encounters, or instances where teachers were encouraged to push their practice to new levels or try out practices. This included explicit encouragement to experiment and fail (Addison) or informal collaboration with like-minded colleagues to bounce ideas off, get advice, and hear reassurance that such risks were worth a try (Kylie and Albert). There were several other examples across the data, but it seems like, at least in the first two years of
teaching, learning in context may be more about improving their use of practices more so than learning any new methods or practices.

What Conditions Did Beginning Teachers Say Supported Uptake of Practice?

A Manageable Workload. The number one obstacle to enacting signature pedagogies cited by participants was the workload they experienced early in their teaching career. Because of the planning and grading demands of practices such as source investigations, argumentative writing, and discussions, many teachers felt overwhelmed and defaulted to more familiar and simplistic traditional methods.

However, in a few cases, once concerns about workload were relieved, the planning and reflecting time needed to develop and execute signature pedagogies became viable, and teachers began to really hit their developmental stride. In some cases, this was about having only one or two classes to prepare for that repeated in the second year, as opposed to having three classes to prepare for or changing courses in the second year and having to start all over. Jake and Kylie had ideal schedules in my mind for novice history/social studies teachers, with courses that they taught in the first semester or trimester repeating with a new group of kids the next term. This seemed to accelerate the timeline of crafting and revising their curriculum and got them to a manageable point faster than other teachers. More than any other factor, the workload factor for teachers is what pushed them into survival mode, and, with survival mode, they fell back on what was easiest and simplest to plan: traditional methods.

Curricular Materials and Resources. Curricular materials also played a role in whether novice teachers enacted more challenging practices. Starting from scratch with curriculum is still surprisingly common in secondary social studies and was completely overwhelming for novices, something that compounded if they were prepping for multiple different courses. Providing novices with at least something to start off with gives them some guidance and frees them up to revise and improve rather than act as curriculum developers, a tall task for any teacher let alone first- and second-year teachers.

Notably, the materials that seemed to enable teachers to enact practices such as discussion, source analysis, historical thinking skills, and inquiry-based units, usually met two criteria. First, they were already made, either by the teachers themselves or from a trusted outside source. Second, these materials were familiar, meaning the teachers had used them before or
seen them in use, thus validating their value and giving teachers confidence in being able to put them into action.

When it came to historical thinking or conducting source analysis, many teachers mentioned using premade document-based questions (DBQs) that they found online or that were part of a school-provided curriculum. Nearly all participants who were teaching history courses mentioned using resources from the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), especially the introductory series of lessons that teach historical thinking skills through a scenario of a principal investigating a fight that happened in the school cafeteria.

Teachers were introduced to SHEG in the literacy methods course, however, what is particularly important to point out is that this series of Cafeteria Fight lessons was used extensively in the teaching simulations. Over a four-week unit about historical thinking, the “teachers” each week in our simulations ran their “students” through each of the four lessons of the cafeteria fight, modeling and guiding students in how to use historical thinking skills such as sourcing, corroborating, and contextualizing. So, all teachers in this cohort had either taught or been a “student” in this full sequence of lessons during the teaching simulations. Similarly, several participants noted that they had reused the lesson plans and materials from teaching simulations or a unit planning assignment during their first two years of teaching. Here we see the potential of teaching simulations to serve as another model of instruction that interrupts previously held conceptions of history teaching. It seems to happen with how simulations serve to introduce, familiarize, and the vet or legitimize these ready-to-use curricular materials.

Additionally, autonomy was reported by teachers as an important consideration with curriculum, as providing a curriculum is different than mandating one. It seemed that an arrangement where teachers have a collaborative curriculum that they can also make their own, as was Stella’s situation, is an ideal way to approach this dilemma. It allowed for guided support of novices without stifling their autonomy, motivation, and creativity.

**A Stable Teaching Context.** Much can be said that complicates the relationship between student misbehavior, teacher perception, and issues of race. It is possible, and likely, that teachers in this study, especially given the racial and culture mismatches that many of them had with their students, over-pronounced struggles with classroom management that were more about misunderstandings and misinterpretations than actual misbehavior. However, even with teachers misreading their classroom and students as a possibility, these cases paint a clear picture that
there is a minimum level of stability needed in a school and classroom for teachers to be able to enact many of the more ambitious teaching practices promoted during their preparation.

Classroom management and school discipline were central elements that disrupted teacher efforts to enact many of the signature pedagogies. Classroom management goes hand-in-hand with school discipline policies and the academic culture of the school since a teacher trying to establish rules and routines in their classroom can be quickly undermined by an administrator who brushes concerns aside and sends a student right back to class. Similarly, trying to teach rigorously, or even to get kids to put their phones away, is a Sisyphean struggle if you are the only teacher in the building with those expectations.

In some cases, teachers in this study were able to overcome such challenges with incredible effort and determination. Other teachers were simply crushed by the instability and challenges of classroom management and discipline to the extent that may become burned out and jaded teachers as early as in their first or second years. In general, when looking across the cases, teachers who faced minimal or moderate challenges in these areas were able to be more successful with signature pedagogies. Those in the most extreme environments, those characterized by school-wide dysfunction and apathy, seemed to have been doomed from the start.

I cannot go without noting that this cohort faced a few challenges that are unique to other groups of student teachers. It is undeniable that the student teaching experience of this group put them behind when it comes to setting up a classroom community and establishing routines, because few of them had actual classrooms full of real, live students during the pandemic. Additionally, when they did get their own classrooms and were in-person again, they were tasked with onboarding students back into the classroom who had, in many cases, not been in a school building in a year or more. Though I believe that the challenges that these participants faced was greater than other new teachers faced, I don’t believe that the challenges were that different. Novice teachers have always faced challenges of apathetic or distractible students. Late work is not an enigma that began with COVID-19. Tardy students, bullying, administrative miscommunication, broken school boilers, colleagues who don’t follow through on what they say, and parents challenging teachers about their students’ grades were issues when I was a teacher and probably for decades and decades before that.
**Personal Characteristics and Resiliency.** Given some of the obstacles identified by beginning teachers, such as challenges with classroom management, teacher and student unfamiliarity with methods, professional isolation, and workload demands, it should be no surprise that a teacher’s own ambition and personal standards played a tremendous role in their development and whether or not they took up some of the more rigorous signature pedagogies. The importance of teacher work ethic, determination, and expectations for self and students was a finding that emerged from interviews and observations but was further verified with responses on this questionnaire. I feel that this is an especially important finding as it suggests that even in school contexts that are supportive of teachers, there still exists a personal element or decision that must be made by teachers to teach ambitiously.

The cases outlined previously are littered with examples where teacher’s personal courage and determination played a key role in whether teachers took up, or even tried to enact, many of the signature pedagogies. Looking across cases, it seemed that several characteristics seemed to be key in terms of novices being able to make the leap and take the first step towards more rigorous teaching. These included:

- A reflective and improvement-oriented personality
- Not shying away from the difficult work of ambitious teaching
- Independence, confidence, or willingness to teach differently than others
- High expectations for self and students
- Open-mindedness to learning new ways to teach and revising one’s approaches
- Seeking help and guidance when obstacles and barriers are encountered

However, teachers do not need all of these characteristics to be able to teach ambitiously or to use signature pedagogies. In an ideal world, the teaching that preparation programs often promote wouldn’t be “teaching against the grain,” it would just be the expectation of practice. Until we do reach that ideal world, these seem to be the skills and personality traits can best facilitate a novice teacher’s ability to truly enact rigorous and ambitious practice such as those encourages in the preparation coursework from this study.

**Multiple Models of Practice.** As many of these cases have shown, many teacher candidates do enter programs with progressive, ambitious, and student-centered teacher models from their secondary experience. These past teachers, who are potentially aligned with program signature pedagogies, served as the central reason that many of these novices decided to go into
teaching in the first place. Rather than in the past where teachers came with only models of teachers who were more traditional, the participants in this student suggest that secondary history/social studies teacher education programs face a new reality where there are ambitious and progressive teachers out there who our teacher candidates can observe and student teach under their mentorship.

The cases in this study highlight the potential of realizing Feiman-Nemser’s ideas about creating an education continuum as a real possibility. Participants in this study who had models of instruction that they could call upon, whether from their own K-12 experiences, from their education coursework, their student teaching, or through encouragement and support within their early-career school contexts do indeed show extraordinary potential to teach in different and transformative ways.

Providing teacher candidates with more than one model of ambitious teaching seemed to amplify their understanding, buy-in, and resilience in enacting those signature pedagogies once in the field. For example, Kylie came from a progressive teaching background, absorbed her coursework like a sponge, but had a terrible student teaching placement, and was still able to become an ambitious teacher who regularly used signature pedagogies from her preparation. Stella and Addison had traditional schooling backgrounds but were able to call upon models and supports from their clinical placements, coursework, and ended up in supportive school contexts that encouraged teaching in ways similar to the signature pedagogies from preparation. Ta-dah! They went out there and are teaching rigorously every day in their classrooms. Having these multiple models to call upon seemed to deepen teacher understanding, trust, and competence with more rigorous methods, meaning they are more likely to use signature pedagogies once they have their own classroom.
Chapter 5 Conclusions and Discussion

Hopefully, the cases that I presented were provocative and struck a chord with you as a reader. As I conducted this study, I found the first year of data collection to be emotionally difficult in hearing about the many struggles of participants. Though the second year was markedly better in many cases, there were still many times that in writing this dissertation that I felt my heart break for these history/social studies teachers and their students. They all deserve better.

In final interviews, one of the things that I stressed when expressing my gratitude to the participants was that I would make sure that their vulnerability and struggles would not go unheard. I promised that their developmental journeys were worthwhile to share and for the field of teacher education and anyone who works with new teachers, especially in history/social studies, to hear.

Based on their stories, there are several important conclusions that I would like to highlight in this final chapter. Although I am not making claims of generalizability, I believe that many of these conclusions will resonate with faculty who work with teacher candidates and any member of a school or district that works with new teachers. It is my hope that their stories, the conclusions that I draw, and the discussion points that I raise will help stir more conversation about how we might better support the next generation of new teachers.

Conclusions

Evidence to support the continuum theory of teacher development

Feiman-Nemser’s seminal piece (2001) has been an instrumental part of this study but has also impacted the wider field of teacher education in how programs have focused on building connections across different parts of the continuum. However, her conception of the continuum continues to be more of a theory that is assumed to be true rather than a proven path toward better preparing teachers. As I have argued, the scholarship that investigates the validity of the
assumption behind the continuum is limited and I ask: does better alignment across contexts of
teacher development result in changes in teacher thinking, beliefs, and practice?

The results of this study do contribute to understanding and answering this question and
the answer is, yes. Better alignments between various contexts and elements in the
developmental journeys of the teachers in this study did impact their ability and the likelihood
that they would take up preparation coursework’s signature pedagogies and teaching practices by
their second years.

In the following two sections, I explicate findings that I believe substantially add to the
field’s understanding of how the continuum might operate in ways that support history/social
studies teacher development, as well as unforeseen obstacles, that can inform the broader work
of anyone involved in the development of beginning teachers.

**Convergence leads to uptake of practice.** The beginning teachers in this study were
more likely to take up program signature pedagogies when they had multiple reference points for
practice (own experience, teaching simulations, clinical placements, or in-school models) with
supports (curriculum, coaching, collaborative colleagues, stable teaching environment) and
encouragement (self-motivation, school-based accountability, positive praise from colleagues,
administrators, and students). Practices that were reinforced across contexts in ways that allowed
teachers to see, experience, and analyze practices encouraged their further use. This included
instances within their own apprenticeship of observation, teacher education courses, experiences
with practice-based teacher education methods (e.g., teaching simulations and modeling of
practice), clinical placements, or within their early-career school contexts that helped them to
understand practices, legitimize their instructional value, and which encouraged them to try out
and stick with practices in their own teaching. The overlap of these factors seemed to have a
compounding effect that increased the likelihood of these teachers experimenting with signature
pedagogies, reflecting on the lessons, and moving forward with more informed and effective
practice. As more elements that supported signature pedagogies overlapped, teachers
increasingly took up such practices.

For example, having a manageable course load combined with time to collaborate with
like-minded and ambitious teachers seem to promote participants’ uptake of more signature
pedagogies. As reported in the findings, teachers indicated that planning time and the ability to
bounce ideas off colleagues worked in tandem to both validate and motivate teachers to get out
of their comfort zone and use more rigorous methods. They also described how instructional momentum would build if students had a positive reaction to their use of new methods (engagement, excitement, learning) or if they had other validation from administrators or teachers, such as a positive evaluation or asking to borrow lesson plans.

The same can be said for alignment across contexts of teacher development. Kylie serves as a great example for this as she came from a highly ambitious K-12 background and was highly receptive to the ideas and practices of coursework as a result. Even though her student teaching and early-career school context were not aligned with her preparation program’s signature pedagogies, the convergence of these two elements combined with the autonomy, personal conviction, and small network of like-minded colleagues in her new school, was enough convergence for her to emerge from obstacles and challenges as a highly ambitious instructor who frequently used the pedagogies encourages in preparation coursework.

**Divergence and misalignment = Lost opportunities.** In the same sense, overlapping obstacles, challenges, and misalignment across the various contexts of teacher development pushed teachers in this study away from using the more ambitious and student-centered practices promoted during preparation. These obstacles were often experienced by participants as misalignment across contexts or negative reinforcement that discouraged uptake of signature pedagogies (methods unlike their own K-12 experiences, resistance from students, personal dislike of a practice, etc.). Like the previous findings about convergence, these factors can compound the difficulty of enacting practice. While a novice teacher may be able to overcome a singular obstacle (such as lacking any curricular materials or professional isolation) on their own, it seems exceedingly difficult for them to take up practices when faced with an escalating pile of challenges.

For example, participants who had an overwhelming workload (such as teaching multiple courses and/or having to create curriculum from scratch) and struggled with classroom management in a school where the instructional culture was more traditional, reported that enacting signature pedagogies seemed beyond their capabilities and efforts. As we saw in instances where teachers in this study persisted with attempts at ambitious practice in these settings, only to experience failure after failure, it resulted in a potentially devastating and demoralizing impact on a teachers’ outlook and future practice.
For other participants, practices from preparation never “washed in.” Their initial skepticism of practice promoted in the preparation program were confirmed when they encountered challenges, cultures, and socializing factors in school contexts that pushed them to dismiss more rigorous signature pedagogies as unrealistic. For example, cases showed that teachers come into preparation with intentions of enacting more traditional or content-centered practices, who are placed with a more traditional and skeptical mentor teacher during student teaching do not seem to enact signature pedagogies from coursework once they have their own classrooms. Participants, such as Dexter and Trevor, suggest that aspirations for ambitious practice aligned with their preparation programs vision can be further negated in their early school context if they teach in an environment with low standards for teaching and work in professional isolation. In cases of such misalignment, we can see the “discontinuity” described by Denscombe (1981) but with more nuance in how such factors act as a barrage against teaching in ways promoted during preparation.

**Beginner’s Entry Point Methods**

Related to my point about the how teacher preparation programs scaffold practices and set expectations for beginning teachers’ practice is a concept that I’m calling entry point methods which seemed to give novices a concrete place to start when dipping their toes into more rigorous teaching encouraged by their preparation program. Based on participant experiences, it seems that methods that were clearly structured with discrete steps, took minimal time to plan or grade, allowed for more teacher control of the pace of class, and that were more predictable (requiring less teacher anticipation or reacting to students’ contributions), were more likely to be used in their early years of teaching. Similarly, these entry point practices also seemed to help teachers implement them with explicit steps and which were familiar and commonly used in preparation coursework.

Across cases, it seemed particularly important for teachers to have tools and resources so they “…know where to start” (Addison) with more ambitious signature pedagogies. With the challenges that many participants faced with enacting signature pedagogies in their first years, cases where they did engage students with rigorous methods stood out for several reasons. The first had to do with curricular materials, as introductory content seemed key to participants being able to continue using ambitious pedagogies from preparation, such as historical thinking with
their students. When looking across the cases, this seemed especially true for the lesson plans, materials, and activities from the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) that teachers used, were familiarized with, and engaged with during simulations done during coursework. In coursework, the first several teaching simulations lessons were based around the introductory lessons created by SHEG where students first learn about historical thinking skills by applying them to an administrator’s investigation into a fight in the cafeteria. Several participants taught these lessons in the simulations, but all participants at least experienced them in playing the “student roles” during said lessons. In this way, the experiences of the teachers in this study suggest that a combination of practice with, experiences, and access to high-quality introductory resources in an important step that teacher need to take on more rigorous practices and can resolve some of the issues of enactment. These findings also suggest that practice-based teacher education methods, such as rehearsals and teacher educator modeling have the potential override teachers’ experience in their K-12 schooling by providing them with alternative models of instruction that have been experienced and validated, thus promoting their uptake in future teaching.

In the descriptions and observations of these teachers’ practice, these entry point methods that acted as stepping stones into more student-centered instruction, included methods such as think-pair-shares, see-think-wonders, and gallery walks. Depending on how these practices were used, they allowed teachers to, at a minimum, elicit student thinking, but also served as beginners versions of discussions, source analysis, and more interactive teaching. Additionally, these methods required less need for teacher anticipation of student thinking, provided structure to their lessons, and may have helped with classroom management concerns as they allowed the teacher to control how and when the class advanced to the next step of the activity.

There was an assignment, the Methods Index, that many of the teachers referred to during interviews that facilitated understanding and retention of said methods once teachers found themselves in the classrooms. In the assignment, instructors across the core social studies courses asked teachers to collect details about specific methods (steps, benefit, challenges or considerations to make) across the semester. Even though many teachers did not refer back to this document during their teaching, many reported that it was a useful tool that seemed to solidify their understanding of different methods that they then reported using regularly in their
teaching. The methods that teachers recorded in these methods indexes, as they reported, were often the entry-point methods described.

In general, these beginner or entry point methods contained the following similarities. First and foremost, these commonly used signature pedagogies provided novice teachers with structure (discrete steps, outline of lesson or activity components) and emphasized teacher control (stability with teacher controlling the pace and tasks). These methods were also generally predictable with teachers mostly knowing what to expect from students in the form of correct answers or activities were there was no wrong answer (e.g., what do you wonder about this image? in a See-Think-Wonder). Lastly, beginner’s entry point practices tended to minimize teacher workload, with ready-made materials, easy-to-establish routines that could be reused regularly in class, and that required little grading or feedback from the teacher.

**Progressing from Beginner to Advanced Practices**

While it was not true for all participants, many of the teachers in this study became more skilled instructors and took up some of the more challenging and rigorous of the signature pedagogies during their second year.

When going through the list of preparation programs signature pedagogies in the initial interview, there was a group of practices that participants consistently mentioned that they did not use but wanted to use more or that they had used but struggled with. These included full-blown unit planning and backwards design, facilitating discussions, differentiating instruction, source investigations, use of writing, and providing students with extensive feedback. These more advanced signature pedagogies seemed to differ from the beginner’s entry point methods in important ways.

First, these methods generally place more emphasis on student thinking and learning. In this way, methods like discussions and source investigations are more student-centered and less about traditional conceptions of content coverage or teacher control of the class. In the case of more extensive unit planning, teachers in their second year were planning less with survival in mind and more focused on how their lesson activities connected within the lesson and how lessons across the term related to one another in ways that purposefully emphasized the end goal of student learning. In cases where teachers never did advance to using advance methods focused on student thinking and learning, the major obstacles or rationale often included a lack of
perceived student skill or ability to engage with these more difficult tasks, concerns that the time spent on writing or ramping up to a discussion was excessive when they were under coverage pressures, and a desire or comfort in keeping things simple in their class to avoid student resistance and other issues.

Next, we see that these more advanced methods can be more fluid or open-ended, requiring more teacher anticipation of student needs, thinking, and misunderstandings. Discussions, investigations, and even writing require more in-the-moment thinking from the teacher in how they respond to students and guide the lesson. These methods also require the teacher to hand the keys over to the students a bit more with more time spent working together, digging into materials, writing or reading independently, and have students working on different tasks at the same time. For many participants, the complete autonomy they had over curriculum meant that unit planning was extremely open-ended with them having to put lots of thought into what they were going to teach and how. Challenges and rationale for avoiding these more open-ended pedagogies were multiple, including major concerns about classroom management and keeping students on task, the potential for activities to veer off into unexpected and in ways that could damage classroom culture, and concerns that students did not have the buy-in and motivation required for completing such activities. These pedagogies also required much more teacher thinking, anticipation, reaction, and reflection, a burden that was potentially and overwhelming cognitive load.

Lastly, these more advance of the signature pedagogies were all time consuming. Differentiating instruction often requires creating different activities, rubrics, and materials. Discussions, disciplinary writing, and source investigations all require significant use of class time, not only to complete the activities themselves, but often in laying the groundwork skills needed for students to engage. This could be modeling historical thinking skills, giving students feedback on their writing, and building students up towards having more robust discussions over time. They also tend to take more time to prepare as curricular materials in textbooks are generally not aligned with such practices. In this sense, teachers who moved their instruction into more advanced levels had to dedicate significant time and effort into developing unit plans, finding and creating materials, and grading or giving students feedback. Workload demands were another key obstacle in taking up the more advanced signature pedagogies, as those teachers with multiple preps or who switched classes from year to year found it difficult to ever exit the
survival mode phase of teaching to find the time to engage in such efforts. Additionally, for some participants, content coverage demands and holding general beliefs that history/social studies was more about the content and less about critical thinking skills was another obstacle to enacting these more advanced signature pedagogies.

Similar to other findings about novice history teachers’ development with core practices over their first few years in the classroom (Monte-Sano et al., 2020), the participants in this study who did move into using more rigorous signature pedagogies seemed to take up these methods in progressions that were similar across cases. These progressions did not happen for all participants and the speed or regularity at which they move up to more advanced versions of signature pedagogies was uneven. In some cases, teachers advanced to levels where they felt satisfied and plateaued, while others continued to push forward to more complete levels of practice mastery.

Take backwards design within lesson and unit planning for example. Based on teacher interviews and interviews, planning was one of the more consistent areas that nearly all participants made progress with during their first two years in the classrooms. Generally, teachers began with lower levels of mastery and started with entry point methods that helped them to understand how to structure a lesson. These included the lesson planning template from preparation, bell ringers and or warm-ups to kick off the class, assessments, and a variety of other activities that could be used during a lesson such as interactive lectures, modeling, using video clips, and supports for reading (e.g., graphic organizers, read alouds). However, knowing different potential components of a lesson does not make a good lesson in and of itself. In the next levels of mastery, teachers became more skilled at creating coherence in their planning and day-to-day lessons. This began with single-lesson coherence where they clearly linked different activities in ways that built on one another. Next, nearly all teachers were able to create coherence across a series of lessons, typically a single week, as they did their planning over the weekend. In this phase, lessons built on one another and ended with some sort of assessment at the end of the week that related to the previous lessons. This is where many participants development was at the point that data collection ended.

However, in some cases, teachers advanced further in being able to develop cohesive units where they engaged in more principles of backwards design by purposefully integrating content and skills that built from week-to-week, checked for student understanding and skill with
formative assessments, and built towards larger summative performance-based assessments such as projects, essays, or debates. An important factor that teachers indicated as important for advancing to this stage in their second year was their improved horizontal knowledge of the curriculum (Ball, 1993; Ball et al., 2008), or knowing where the class was coming from and heading over the course of the term. This generally made it easier for teachers to plan and keep in mind where their lessons were going, giving increased purpose or intentionality to each lesson, week, and unit.

Only in one case (Kylie) did any of the participants advance to the next level and begin to develop coherence across here course. Starting with the end in mind, Kylie built one of her courses in a way that prepared students with the skills that they needed to participant in the large mock trial activity at the end of the term. She understood the knowledge and skills that students needed and incorporated these into her unit assessments and week-to-week instruction. Even though Kylie was the only one to reach this level, this example of incremental progression may be helpful in future research to think about how history and social studies teachers advance to more masterful levels of other practices and methods.

Discussion

Next, I turn to taking some of the findings and conclusions a step further to engage with some theory building. Though this study examined only a small number of history and social studies teachers, I believe that the diversity and commonalities within the group allow for surfacing some useful tensions and generalities about how teachers take up signature pedagogies from their preparation courses.

I first use these cases to think about how current conceptions of teacher development might be revised to reflect the experiences on these teachers. Next, I consider differences among teachers, as suggested by the findings of this study, in terms of how they enter preparation programs ready to learn, or not. Towards the end of the section, I then take the journeys of these teachers and arrange them into typical paths or trajectories of development that other novice history and social studies teachers might follow as well. This is somewhat speculative work, but I believe that these generalizations speak not only to the experiences of my participants but will also resonate with many teacher educators and the “wisdom of practice” that they bring with them in working with beginning history/social studies teachers.
**Personal Resources: Revising the Practical versus Conceptual Tools Conception of Teacher Development**

Past research about the development of novice teachers suggests that preparation often provides novice teachers with the *conceptual tools* (e.g., theories, ideas, and goals) but not the *practical tools* (methods, practices, and materials) needed to be able to engage in more ambitious teaching that is encouraged by teacher preparation programs (Grossman et al., 1999). Martell’s longitudinal work with beginning history teachers (2013, 2014, 2020) is especially poignant in showing that teachers often *know better* and want to *do better* in their classrooms but simply don’t *know how* to do better, lacking the practical knowledge and skills needed to put ideas and theories from preparation into practice.

As shown by the cases in this study, having both conceptual and practical tools for teaching in ambitious ways is not enough to for teachers to actually enact said practice. In Kris’ case, we saw how a teacher with an exceptional preparation experience in the ideas and practices of student-centered and inquiry-focused instruction was squashed by turbulent context of his first school. Similarly, though Albert had the personal background with signature pedagogies from preparation and had developed a repertoire of practices to put those into action, he sometimes lacked the confidence needed to pull the trigger, mostly based in concerns about not wanting to rock the boat too much at his school and to stay under the radar of administration. Kylie, Stella, and Jason did not have these issues with confidence or courage and demonstrated that their personal characteristics of tenacity and perseverance was key to their use of more ambitious of the signature pedagogies. Therefore, these cases suggest that a more individual or personal consideration is at play in how teachers take up practices.

Other research aligns with this idea and suggests that a more personal factor intervenes on how teachers teach and use practical and conceptual tools. Due to this element, Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003) called for revising previous logics about resources and tools, breaking down assumptions that fair access and allocation of conventional resources, such as money, books, science labs, and technology, could be assumed to improve the quality of education that students received. They pointed out that “resources depend on both access and use” because such resources “are not self-acting” (p. 122), meaning that factors at the individual teacher level are important considerations for how resources or tools actually impact teaching and learning. They suggest that teachers must call on the “will, skill, and knowledge” (p. 127)
needed to aim high and teach in more ambitious ways. Therefore, this study suggests several revisions and nuances to this conception of teacher learning and instructional development, incorporating personal resources as a necessary consideration for investigating history/social studies teacher development.

The cases of my participants suggest that these personal resources go beyond skill, will, and knowledge to include other domains. Teacher content knowledge and understandings of pedagogy, students, and their context play a role in shaping their instruction, but so do other elements related to their own histories and views. In my understanding of personal resources, I am referring to resources unique to an individual that a teacher calls upon or draws upon as they enact instruction. These can include models of instruction from their past, such as their own K-12 teachers, mentor teachers, and college professors. These might also include networks and support systems that teachers can look to for guidance and advice. Though not exactly character traits or personality, personal resources could also include teacher values, beliefs, motivations, and dispositions. For example, a teacher crafting lessons for the week might call back to lessons they experienced as students, channeling a former favorite teaching or thinking about the teacher moves or routines needed to use a particular method. At the same time, they also might make choices about curricular topics based on their value of being a culturally responsive teacher or wanting to include more critical thinking and student voice incorporated into class. In these cases, if teachers lack the practical tools, such as curriculum that supports these values, they needed to call upon their own ambition and skill in developing or finding such materials.

It could be argued that what I am calling personal resources are really just practical tools that are being replicated or put to use by novice teachers. However, I believe that they are distinct for how they are unique to individual teachers. For example, knowing how (practical tool) and why think-pair-shares might be a useful method for eliciting student thinking (conceptual tool) still requires personal factors for enactment. These could include a sense of trust that think-pair-shares are indeed useful, calling back to one’s own experiences as a student or past teaching, as well as a values judgement that student voice and ideas are indeed worth hearing. Confidence or courage could also be a personal resource called upon if a teacher found themselves in a school where history/social studies teaching was more traditional and the use of such methods might be viewed as strange or risk student resistance. This is why I separate personal resources into a category of their own because they are not simply tools, like a methods
or curriculum, but something more personal that teachers believe in and trust in a more personal way.

The history and social studies teachers in this study demonstrated that such rigorous and student-centered teaching required that they regularly drew upon personal resources. These characteristics were necessary for teachers to attempt, stick-with, improve, and continue using more challenging and, arguably, risky practices. Confidence and courage to experiment and try out more ambitious practices was the place where many of these teachers started with using ambitious practice. Next, participants indicated that a certain level of industriousness and a strong work ethic was essential in enacting ambitious practices as they indicated teaching with such methods required more planning, preparation, and grading on their part as the teacher. In this way, teachers in this study showed that a certain level of tenacity and high expectations for self were needed to sustain motivation and avoid the tempting and more simplistic approaches of more traditional teaching. When participants ran into student resistance or confusion with ambitious practices or they attempted a lesson or activity that flopped, the teachers who continued to teach ambitiously had a reflective aspect to their personality that allowed them to step back and think about what went wrong and where they could do better. Again, they also needed a tenacity or gumption to “get back on the horse” and try ambitious practices again.

Similarly, these cases suggest that we consider the social capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015) that exists within teachers’ networks and school contexts that can support or hinder their use of signature practices. As described by the participants in this study, these varied significantly from individual to individual and ranged from formal mentors or instructional coaches to other teachers, friends, program graduates, and even through social media. As we can see, there were many different personal resources that participants called up to inform and develop their instruction towards more ambitious teaching that aligned with the program’s signature pedagogies.

Research about characteristics of individual teachers has shown growing interest and supports these conclusions about personal resources and teachers’ instructional. Self-efficacy plays an important role in teacher well-being, especially in motivation and dealing with stresses related to burnout and retention (Bardach et al., 2022), but has also been found to impact observed classroom teaching (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Teacher reflectiveness and being a strategic planner have shown to be predictive of how beginning teachers cope with the stresses and
challenges of teaching (Samfira & Palos, 2021), perhaps helping them sustain and improve efforts at more ambitious practices from their preparation. A teacher’s beliefs and how they attribute cause for happenings in their classroom, including looking introspectively or blaming students and context factors when things go awry in a lesson, is also a factor in whether they might take up, try out, or persist with practices (Bardach et al., 2022; Weiner, 2000). Similarly, teacher expectations and beliefs about the extent to which their students can learn has shown to impact how teachers teach, especially in their interactions with students or beliefs about the levels of rigor that students can handle (Gentrup et al., 2020). Taken together, research generally supports the conclusion that these personal resources are an important consideration when studying teachers’ practice.

It should be noted that when it comes to teacher beliefs and expectations for students, there is a potential for teacher bias, especially beliefs regarding race and poverty, that likely impacted whether or not participants attempted or persisted with some of the more ambitious signature pedagogies. Having high or low expectations for students can impact the will and ability of teacher to connect and relate to students and to anticipate and understand how student backgrounds and cultures influence learning. All of these could affect their instruction in ways that may go unnoticed by the teachers themselves, something that seems especially true for teachers in this study who had different races, cultures, and came from different backgrounds than their students. There was some evidence in this study that suggests this mismatch was a factor impacting whether and how teachers took up signature pedagogies from their preparation, specifically in thinking about how teachers had trouble anticipating and reacting to the views and experiences that students brought with them to the classroom. However, I did not ask specific questions in interviews to fully investigate this potential factor, something which should be address in future similar studies.

It may also be the case that the need for such personal resources is greater for history and social studies teachers than teachers in different content areas given some unique features of the disciplines. Content knowledge needed for certification and teaching history/social studies is expansive, with teachers needing to be able to teach courses ranging from World History to Economics and Geography, meaning that personal knowledge and understandings needed by teachers may be more demanding. Additionally, the nature of topics that might be controversial in a World or US history course, or perhaps political tensions and divisions that arise in a
government or civics class, require teachers to have courage to overcome fears about student or parent push-back and resistance more so than might be present in a science or math class. Lastly, history and social studies generally lacks a progression of knowledge like many other content areas, where curriculum and skill development follow more predictable stages and steps. This means that teachers in this study, and other history/social studies teachers, may have to call on personal resources more often when planning and thinking about how their course and units should be put together. For example, given that many participants were given little more than a textbook for curriculum, history and social studies teachers might generally face high demands with curriculum development, leaving them with decisions to make about what to cover in their classes and in what order. In this sense, it is possible history and social studies is a unique content area where teachers must call on their knowledge, skill, and will more often than in other content areas.

An important takeaway is that current conceptions of teacher development under examine the role that personal resources play in the instructional development of novice teachers. These findings suggest that personal resources should be foregrounded in future work about teacher development as the teachers in this study showed that these are critical reference points for teachers’ practice and can serve as pivotal resources to call upon once teachers enter the field on their own.

*Primed for Learning: Teacher Readiness for Ambitious Practice*

In the following sections, I describe four broad orientations of teachers that participants in this study suggest as somewhat typical in terms of how primed they were to learn about and take up signature pedagogies in their own teaching. The main differences between types are in their own background experiences with signature pedagogies in their own schooling, the corresponding teaching visions that they bring, and how openminded they are to revising said visions, and understandings of practice as they engage in preparation coursework. Though this is only based on the participants in this study, I argue that these characterizations might be useful for other teacher educators to better understand their students and for teacher candidates to recognize some qualities in themselves that can help guide thinking and actions across their early phases of development. Awareness of how ready teacher candidates to take up and use signature
pedagogies could be a useful tool for how programs and teacher educators approach the preparation of individual students.

It is important to note that I do not believe any of the participants in this study fit perfectly into any of the four categories, or that any given teacher candidate would either. It also is not a type or prescribed destiny for teacher candidates as it seems likely that they might shift towards or away from one of these characterizations as their preparation progresses and they gain new insights and encounter potentially transformative experiences. I also don’t believe that this is a perfected list and am open to believing that there are other orientations of teachers that may also exist out there, something that would could be further verified and refined with more expansive research.

With that said, I will outline the four orientations of readiness for signature pedagogies that the teachers in this study demonstrates as they entered and experienced their preparation program: the Predisposed, the Persuaded, the Selective, and the Performers.

**The predisposed.** The first type of teacher that I propose experiences alignment across some of their contexts for development in ways that emboldened them to stick with student-centered practices in the face of moderate challenges. In general, the cases of Kylie and Kris inform my distinction of this type of beginning teacher as they both entered preparation with experiences and ideas about teaching that jived with the overall practices promoted within coursework.

The predisposed teacher serves as what I believe to be an essential revision to Denscombe’s work (1981) and the overall narrative that suggest all or most teacher candidates enter preparation programs with backgrounds in traditional classrooms. As was the case with many participants, but especially Kylie, some teachers likely enter programs already equipped with visions and experiences in more progressive or student-centered teaching that can align with the signature pedagogies encouraged in coursework. In this way, they might still be replicating practice, to some extent, but these teachers are already familiar and attuned to the practices of the preparation program in ways that make them eager to learn how to put these into action in their future classrooms. This is the “dream” student for teacher educators. They get it and they’re eager for more.

As we saw with Kris, aligned field placements can help crystallize this vision of teaching with signature pedagogies. However, as we also saw with Kris, coming in as a predisposed
teacher is not a guarantee that they will be able to enact those rigorous and student-centered practices when faced with overwhelming obstacles in their early career school contexts.

The persuaded. The next type of teacher that teacher educators might encounter in their coursework is a group of teachers that I call the *Persuaded*. The teachers in this study who fit into this category entered preparation initially misaligned with program practices, to greater or lesser extents, coming from somewhat or very traditional schooling backgrounds. Some were even highly skeptical about what they can actually learn from coursework and were eager to get into student teaching. However, these teachers also are more open-minded about revising their instructional vision and experienced a transformation during preparation that persuaded, or even converted, them into believing strongly in ambitious and progressive teaching practices that were a part of the program’s signature pedagogies. These were the teachers that “took up the torch” of student-centered approaches despite having initially having more traditional views when they started preparation. In this category, I see similarities to the journeys of Jake, Stella, and Addison, who all entered preparation somewhat skeptical of teacher education but who had experiences that convinced them to take up signature pedagogies to varying extents.

These cases differ however in whether teachers had very traditional educations, like Jake, and in their levels of open-mindedness to new approaches, such as with Stella and Addison. The beginning teachers in this category had a wide range of starting points in terms of their own experiences as K-12 students but ended up having experiences during their preparation and early career that pushed their instruction towards aligning more so with the practices promoted by their preparation. What unifies these three teachers though are the moments and transformative experiences in courses, fieldwork, student teaching, or in their early career that *incrementally validated* program signature pedagogies and resulted in more uptake of program practices as a result.

These *transformative moments* often overlapped across different contexts and reinforced one another over time. In some instances, practices in coursework which were modeled effectively by teacher educators justified to students that such approaches were worthwhile and enjoyable for students, replacing their initial skepticism of the program signature pedagogies. Other teachers in this study showed how these experiences occurred or were reinforced in seeing signature pedagogies used well in clinical placements or having success with them in their own classrooms. For some participants, these resulted from student teaching placements that gave
them autonomy and feedback to try out practices from the program with support and the chance to improve practices in ways that convinced them of their continued usefulness. In their first schools, these teachers also benefited from contexts where they had a baseline curriculum to work with, administrators and fellow teachers who congratulated them on and encouraged ambitious signature pedagogies over more traditional teaching, stable teaching environments where they felt they could safely experiment, and similarly minded colleagues to collaborate with in their buildings.

Though some of these teachers came in primed more or less to take up program practices, the overlapping and multiple instances of support and encouragement to try out and continue using signature pedagogies seemed to transform their visions of good teaching as well as their day-to-day instructional practices.

The selective. The following group is like the Persuaded in some ways, as they do adopt some program practices, however, they are not wholeheartedly swept up with these signature pedagogies. Instead, some participants took a more selective approach to teacher preparation, picking and choosing different methods and practices that fit with their preexisting vision of teaching. In this way that do not experience the extent of transformation that the persuaded do, but, depending on how progressive their existing vision is or the extent to which their school contexts promoted rigorous teaching, they may become more ambitious as a result. The cases that I feel most closely fit this type of teacher included Albert, Jason, and Trevor.

In their cases, I saw examples of where they approached teacher education coursework like a buffet, grabbing some methods or practices that they thought looked tasty, and either going for seconds if they seemed to work well and fit with their vision or pushing them to the side and sticking with methods that were safer and more familiar. For Trevor, this seemed be in the ways that he took up technology that he learned about in preparation that helped to gamify his classroom or that could make his lectures more interactive. In Albert’s case, we saw that he carefully scrutinized practices promoted in the program, only taking them up if his was convinced by teacher educator modeling and by comparing them to the materials that he had saved from his high school history teacher. With Jason, we saw that his selections were based less on models from his own schooling experiences and more so on his own instructional goals.

Again, the selective teachers in this student were more or less aligned with using signature pedagogies depending on their individual instructional visions. Based on other
longitudinal studies of teacher development, this selectively and incremental changes to practices seems to be very common in teacher education (Cohen, 1991; Cuban, 2016; Everitt, 2012; Scales et al., 2017).

**The performers.** The final type of teacher candidate that I encountered with the participants in this study is what I call the *Performers*. These teachers seemed to be, more or less, “going through the motions” in preparation by saying and doing what they needed during coursework, only to ditch those espoused ideals for their original instructional intentions once in the field. This made their preparation a simple blip on the radar and something that they needed to do to get their license. They entered preparation with strong conceptions of the teacher that they want to become and, when it did not match what was being promoted in coursework, they put up a facade or did just enough to make it through coursework, leaving their teaching vision unaltered and intact. They knew how they were going to teach when they entered preparation, and little was going to change that.

Although not perfect examples of such a teacher, parts of the cases of Dexter and Trevor fit in with this conception of being performers. They both came from mostly traditional teaching backgrounds that they enjoyed and were looking to mostly replicate. Their experiences in coursework and the signature pedagogies were mostly rejected based on this skepticism, with cases explaining that they were barely “conscious” during coursework, looked at class activities (such as teaching simulations) as opportunities to have fun rather than learn about teaching, and to disregard course readings (if they even did them in the first place). You could say that teachers in this type are simply completing coursework as a formality or hoops to jump through to get certified.

It seemed that experiences outside of coursework played an important role in substantiating the skepticism of such teachers. For Trevor, his suspicions were reinforced by a mentor teacher who was highly critical of the program. In both Trevor and Dexter’s cases, the experiences that they had in challenging school contexts further verified that program signature pedagogies were not “viable” and something of a sham.

In this trajectory, the teacher preparation program serves as the discontinuity described by Denscombe (1981) where programs stand out as the only minor interruption on their journey that advocates for progressive or student-centered approaches to teaching. Though they might pick up a practice or method here and there from the program if it aligns or supports their
preconceived conception of good teaching, folks in this trajectory add fuel to the argument that teacher preparation is a weak intervention in changing or influencing teacher practice.

As a result, these teachers end up being replicators, taking up the more traditional teaching practices that they were socialized into during their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and which continued through their socialization during their induction period (Hoy & Rees, 1977). This group bucks the conceptualization of teacher education “wash-out” (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) since the practices, beliefs, and dispositions of teacher education never actually “washed in.”

Pathways of Development for Novice Teachers

As mentioned previously, these cases suggest that a teacher’s starting point upon entry to their preparation program is not indicative of their instructional destiny. The cases that I’ve outlined have shown the ways that history/social studies teacher preparation can have an impact on novice teachers’ instruction when paired with interlocking factors, resources, and experiences in their clinical work and the school contexts where they start their careers.

Similar to the previous section, I see several different trajectories of teacher development within this set of participants that pushed them towards or away from more progressive and student-centered practices in their early years. These are idealistic configurations, meaning I do not believe that teachers, including those in this study, fit cleanly into a single category, but they do help to understand general paths of experience and instructional development that other secondary history and social studies teachers might also experience. Teachers also seemed to move across these different configurations at different points in their development based on specific context and personal factors. Though I based these configurations off of the experiences of the teachers in this study, more research could confirm that these paths of development might speak to the broader experiences of beginning history/social studies teachers and other content areas, helping to better understand novice teacher needs and corresponding considerations for their induction into more ambitious teaching.

Across participants, there were five distinct trajectories of development. There are those that end up returning to their traditional instructional roots, those who are resisting the tide of traditional teaching, those who are riding the wave and being pushed and pulled towards and away from signature pedagogies, some who are being cultivated in using ambitious signature
pedagogies within their schools, and those who sadly are being *victimized* by their school context.

**Returning to their traditional roots.** This first type of path was one that fits with a common narrative of teacher education: Teachers teach the way that they were taught, typically replicating the traditional and teacher-centered methods from their own schooling (Lortie, 1975). I believe that the cases of Dexter and Trevor were most similar to this trajectory, as they entered the program with more traditional orientations and ended up teaching in mostly traditional ways during their first two years in the classroom.

To some extent, these teachers were *performers* during their preparation programs who never had any intentions of teaching with progressive methods contained in the signature pedagogies in the first place. This might be the case for many teachers who fall into this category, but data suggested there are likely many teachers who started in the *persuaded* or *selective* categories but who also end up on this developmental path and *returning* to more traditional teaching.

For example, I do believe that Dexter was, at least partially, a *selective* teacher who did want to use some more signature pedagogies in his classroom, especially more interactive activities and discussion. However, the obstacles in his context and his lack of ambitious instructional models to fall back on was too great a challenge to overcome, and he returned to his familiar and predictable roots of traditional practice. Though there were no examples in this study, it is understandable that there are also some teachers who left their preparation as *persuaded* teachers who were eager to teach differently than they were taught and take up more student-centered practices yet fell into similar fates. They could understandably face similar challenges as Dexter, not knowing how to enact those ideas in the face of challenges in their schools and with minimal reference points for such instruction to guide their teaching.

It is in this sense, that I suspect many other teachers’ developmental journeys might fall into this category, returning to traditional instructional roots regardless of what they goal or intentions were when they left preparation.

**Resisting the tide.** The next type of developmental trajectory that I saw in my participant cases was those who are *resisting the tide* of traditional practices that they faced in their own K-12 experiences as well as in the field. With challenges such as heavy workloads, isolation, and instructional school cultures that are more traditional, these teachers found a way to *resist* and
“teach against the grain” (Cochran-Smith, 1991) in ways that are more ambitious, rigorous, and aligned with signature pedagogies. The two teachers in this study who most remind me of this trajectory are Kylie and Jason.

They came from various backgrounds, either being predisposed to signature pedagogies because they grew up with ambitious teachers who used similar approaches, or those who were persuaded or selectively took up signature pedagogies during their coursework. In Kylie’s case, we see how her own experiences in school and the eagerness with which she took up ideas and methods in coursework may have inoculated her from having a student teaching placement and early career schools that might otherwise have pushed her to teach in more traditional ways. With Jason, we saw a teacher who did not have ambitious instructional models in his own schooling who were aligned with signature pedagogies, yet he was selective, perhaps even persuaded, to teach in more student-centered and ambitious ways despite teaching in one of the most challenging school contexts of any of the participants. Their two cases show that regardless of teacher background, resisting traditional practices is possible. That said, I would suspect that teachers with experiences in their schooling background that were more aligned with program signature pedagogies would find such resilience more sustainable with confidence in knowing that such methods work, are possible, and having models from which to base their instruction.

However, the personal resources employed by these resisters cannot be understated. Both Kylie and Jason demonstrated incredible resilience and determination to teach in these ways. They needed confidence to teach differently than their colleagues and the courage to take instructional risks with more difficult practices. They needed assertiveness and moral fortitude when students pushed back on more rigorous methods that they were not used to. When things did not go well, these teachers also need a level of reflectiveness, introspection, and a tenaciousness to dust themselves off, seek help from others, get feedback, adjust, and try again.

These teachers were unique. When a path didn’t exist, they made one. When others said that such rigorous teaching wasn’t possible, they found a way.

Riding the wave. The third type of beginning teacher journey that was common amongst my participants is what I call teachers who were riding the wave between traditional practices and those contained by the signature pedagogies. These teachers were highly influenced by the ebbs and flows of daily classroom life, being especially sensitive to feedback and messages they receive in their school contexts about their instruction. Their practice seemed to fluctuate in ways
that are either more aligned with signature pedagogies or traditional instruction based on factors such as workload, student reactions to methods, and other encouragement or discouragement that teachers receive from their environment. These could be teachers or administrators promoting practices or looking upon ambitious methods from preparation skeptically, both of which could sway whether teachers decide to use signature pedagogies or not.

In her final interview, Addison described the feeling and instructional impact that teachers in this trajectory feel:

- I think it also comes down to…it’s like it's a rollercoaster ride. All of life is, but also in teaching, there's so many times when you're on top of the world and this is the best career you could ever have. And then, there are times where you're like, ‘what did I do? <laugh>, what did I do?!?’ And I think it kind of depends on where you are on that rollercoaster ride because, if I'm at the top, I'm ambitious, like, ‘Let's go! Let's try new things!’ And then if I'm at the bottom it's like, <laugh>, ‘Ugh, we're going to watch a movie tomorrow.’

- Although most participants indicating these feelings at one point or another during their first two years, I feel that the cases of Jake and Albert fit most closely in this path because both were highly sensitive to social cues and feedback within their contexts that either encouraged or dissuaded them from using ambitious practices. These included whether students responded well to more rigorous methods, comments and admiration from colleagues or administrators, and general instructional norms at the school. In some cases, these encouraged them to take up more signature pedagogies because of praise, a positive evaluation, or a great reaction from students. In other cases, this was a sense to stay-under-the-radar of administrators, working with other teachers who rolled their eyes at progressive practice, or classroom management and student engagement challenges that led to failed lessons.

- Additionally, these teachers are different from the resisting teachers as they were more likely to go with flow in their contexts rather than purposefully teach in ways that bucked their school’s instructional norms. In this sense, those riding the wave could be swept by the tide in different directions, towards or away from signature pedagogies, with context experiences serving as a key determining factor in which direction their instruction trends.

Cultivated in context. The next type of teacher developmental trajectory is one that all teacher educators hope for their teacher candidates and that was present in a couple of cases in
this study. These teachers landed positions in schools that continue cultivating their practice as ambitious teachers and use of signature pedagogies. Cases suggested that, when surrounded by support and a culture that encourages ambitious teaching, these teachers can take what they’ve learned in their preparation and put it into practice. The two teachers from this study who best fit this trajectory are Stella and Addison.

In many ways, these teachers ended up in school contexts that are very similar to what Johnson (2019) described as environments where teachers can “thrive.” They have the instructional resources and support needed for enacting signature pedagogies, including curriculum and assessment tools, a stable learning environment without too many disruptions or overwhelming discipline issues. They tended not to work in isolation, instead having the opportunity to share resources, plan alongside, and generally discuss teaching with likeminded colleagues who help further their instructional skill and repertoire. Importantly, sometimes those social resources and supports came from within their school and sometimes that came from extended networks existing beyond their school. Although it was not the case for Addison and Stella, other participants indicated that high quality instructional coaching and mentoring would be another support to help cultivate ambitious practice in beginning history and social studies teachers.

The school where these teachers worked seem to have a vision of what counted as good teaching and conveyed the message to teachers that good teaching mattered through moderate and un-intrusive accountability measures. These beginning teachers also thrived in environments where they had bounded autonomy (Burkhauser & Lesaux, 2017), as Stella did with curriculum, and where they are encouraged to take instructional risks, as was the case with Addison.

However, these teachers do not exist in a blissful teacher utopia. They still faced many of the obstacles that nearly all participants faced, such as challenges with classroom management and workload concerns. However, what made their experiences different was that these challenges are minimized in context, allowing their use of signature pedagogies to flourish.

Victimized in context. This next type of teacher developmental trajectory followed what has been a common and troubling narrative about the journeys of beginning teachers: they enter programs and their first years of teaching eager and ready to enact program signature pedagogies, only to be crushed by the obstacles they encounter in schools, resorting back to more traditional methods. I refer to these experiences as teachers who are victimized in context.
Although I saw flashes of this type of teacher at various moments across many of the interviews and classroom observations, this case most reminds me of the experiences of Kris.

In general, these teachers experienced a high level of alignment across the early parts of their preparation by entering with similar values and experiences in their own schooling, eagerly taking up the knowledge and ideas of coursework. They are then placed with a highly aligned and supportive mentor teacher for student teaching who is an exemplar of program signature pedagogies. Like the resistant teachers described above, these teachers are exactly the type of novices that teacher educators love to work with and are excited by their prospects. Everything seems to be going right. If you were to bet which teachers from your courses or program would go on to become the type of teachers that you hoped, you would likely pick these teachers. One would think that this combination of aligned experiences and personal resources would make them an ideal candidate to go into the field as an exemplary novice teacher who would continue using signature pedagogies from their preparation.

However, this doesn’t always work out, and not for lack of trying on the part of the teacher.

Teachers like Kris entered his first years with an idealistic zeal and are looking to teach differently from the norm, only to be stifled by school cultures that are rigidly traditional, chaotic, and unsupportive of teaching and learning. Despite the best intentions and efforts of both the preparation program and the teacher, the tsunami of obstacles they face in their first schools is too much of a force to overcome. Not only does this result in wash-out of program practices, but can leave teachers completely disheartened and disillusioned by the sheer force of overlapping challenges they face in the field, something which could incapacitate them from ever enacting rigorous teaching practices. In the long-term, these may be the jaded teachers who perpetuate traditional practices by apprenticing new teachers into school cultures steeped in skepticism and negativity about teaching in more ambitious ways that are advocated for in preparation coursework.

The challenges and obstacles these teachers faced in the field are multiple, relentless, and compounding. For example, some of the teachers in this study suggested that they wanted to use a more rigorous and student-centered approaches such as using discussion or disciplinary writing in their classroom. First, they faced the challenges of planning from scratch and daunting course loads. They may be assigned to teach three different social studies and history classes and have
been given no curricular materials. Being expected to find or create materials and plan such lessons on their own forces these teachers into a bind where they must choose which course gets their extra attention while also requiring that they sacrifice their personal time and health in trying to develop high quality and rigorous materials for their students that align with program signature pedagogies.

For example, let’s say that they’ve decided to do a source investigation that involves group discussion and a written final product with their class, as several participants indicated in this study. In such cases, teachers faced challenges of enactment in an unsupportive space. They might face obstacles in the physical space, such as a broken copy machine, a day where the air conditioning was not working, or constant interruptions over the PA system. On top of these, they faced challenges of school culture and norms, such as rampant student tardiness and absenteeism that hindered continuity or a schoolwide grading policy where students were reluctant to complete work in class because they can turn in late work up until the end of the term. Classroom management also was a challenge to taking up signature pedagogies in these cases, something that we know continues to be common struggle for beginning teachers (Doran, 2020; Livers et al., 2021), but seemingly more so for teachers in this study who commonly cited a lack of consequences or school-wide discipline systems in their schools.

Another common challenge for these teachers seemed to be student unfamiliarity and resistance to more rigorous methods, such as having never done a source investigation before. Teachers in this study regularly reported that when they used activities that required students to engage in reading, annotating, and writing, they got pushback and complaints about the work and that students “don’t do this sort of stuff in the other classes.” The teachers started to feel like salmon trying to pull other salmon upstream. Some students simply refused to do the reading and played on their phones. Discussion fell flat because students were not used to talking with one another in any of their classes. In other cases, students searched for “correct” answers to questions that asked them about their own experiences or opinions. Having the lesson not go as expected, these teachers faced the challenge of what to do next. Isolation was common in these cases with the teacher feeling that they were left to figure things out for themselves.

Teachers described how these different obstacles had a compounding effect where, despite consistent and concerted efforts, they were foiled at every turn by seemingly insurmountable obstacles and constant challenges. More frustrating was that more rigorous
lessons that aligned with program signature pedagogies, which require more of their time and effort, seemed to go just as poorly or worse than the easy-to-plan and execute traditional methods, making the teachers wonder if it was even worth the effort in the first place. Low standards for instruction and learning in their school context seemed to further this slide as these teachers abandoned hope for rigorous instruction and became disenchanted and jaded instructors.

These were the heartbreaking journeys that were especially difficult to revisit and write about as a researcher and someone who cares deeply about the teachers I helped prepare. However, it’s important for teacher educators to acknowledge these realities and familiarize our teachers with these potential challenges.

**Questioning the Role of Student Teaching**

These participant experiences and descriptions of their practica raise some interesting questions about student teaching. The collective “shoulder shrug” from the teachers in this study about student teaching surprised me during the first round of interviews. Because so few of them reported learning much in terms of practices or methods from student teaching, I doubled back to probe further during the follow-up interviews, adding a question that specifically asked about student teaching experiences and how it shaped their practice. Again, very few participants indicated that they gained any practices or methods from their student teaching, a finding that runs counter to common assumptions that student teaching is a pivotal for apprenticing novices into the profession. Instead, the teachers in this study reported that student teaching was often experienced as tutorial in what not to do or as a chance to sharpen their teaching skill in methods and practices that they already knew or wanted to try out. Instead of experimenting and getting lots of feedback from mentor teachers, several teachers reported that they looked at student teaching as an experience that exposed them to the daily workload demands of teaching and what it means to prepare lessons each day, grade assignments, gain confidence in front of kids, work on some classroom management skills, and keep up with other administrative duties.

How could this be? Was it just an anomaly of COVID19 and the pandemic or is there something else happening here that explains these bizarre findings? It’s true that some participants completed their student teaching completely online, but most at spent some of their practicum in real classrooms and with students there in person.
While there is little doubt that remote teaching and the pandemic impacted their student teaching experiences, I am still left to wonder *is the current conception of student teaching really as important as we think it is in shaping teachers’ instruction? And what is it about student teaching that makes it seem so important for novices?*

Perhaps these cases underscore the importance of finding high quality mentor teachers and placement schools for our teacher candidates to see and get to try out signature pedagogies in real classroom. It is possible that the general sense of apathy from participants about student teaching could be that mentor teachers for this group were not particularly strong instructors or instructional coaches. As Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) pointed out, not all student teaching experiences are educative in the ways that teacher preparation programs might hope. They showed that student teachers do not always receive the mentorship needed to be apprenticed into the nuances of ambitious instruction that aligns with signature pedagogies, and when this is the case, “other factors (e.g., persons, setting) will dominate” (p. 232). In some cases, this meant looking at student teaching as another hoop to jump through and doing just enough to get a passing score and subsequent certification. This did not however seem to be the case as many participants reported discussing practice and getting feedback from their mentor teachers.

This has led me to consider the underlying factors that have made student teaching such an important and pivotal moment in the first place: For many teachers, including those in this study, student teaching is their *first* opportunity to try their hand at using certain practices in an authentic setting. In this sense, I argue that student teaching is viewed as “important” as a general reflection of how poor a job teacher education does in scaffolding teacher candidates into authentic practice. Though we may be concerned about mentor teachers handing off *too much* of their workload *too early* onto a student teacher in the “baptism by fire” approach, perhaps teacher education should take a look at how we might be the ones dropping teacher candidates into a “sink or swim” student teaching experience that coursework and prior clinical work did not adequately prepare them for. This is the encapsulated in the “sacred story” (Clandinin, 1995; Zeichner et al., 2015) of teacher education, where the ideas, theories and methods learned in coursework are to be put into practice by teachers at a later time and place. Too often, coursework has an underlying message and structure that suggests teacher candidate hold onto ideas and methods until they’re student teaching, so of course the opportunity to try them out for
the first time would be a crucial moment in their development. It seems that the multiple scaffolded opportunities within coursework to enact practices in various teaching simulations were not enough.

The experiences of these teachers suggest that student teaching be better scaffolded as teacher candidates progress through their preparation programs. For example, it seems that a commonplace assignment in teacher preparation coursework is a “field task” assignment or performance assessment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005) where teacher candidates are asked to plan a lesson in coursework, teach it one day in their field placement, and submit a video recording to be graded by the course instructor. The chasm that exists between teaching a single lesson for a field task assignment and being expected to take on half of a mentor teacher’s course load is gigantic. What are teacher preparation programs doing to bridge that gap?

It seems that restructuring the way that field placements work to provide teacher candidates increasingly challenging and more extensive opportunities to teach could help alleviate this issue. Perhaps instead of teaching single lessons, methods courses could pause for a week and allow teacher candidates to instead plan and enact a series of lessons coupled with extensive coaching and feedback from mentor teachers, professors, and field supervisors. Summer school courses seem like another opportunity for teacher candidates to gain some experiences that are more extensive than simple observations and which would allow teacher candidates the opportunity to see how lessons connect over time, how to establish expectations and set routines, and further develop their beginner’s repertoire with lots of targeted feedback and coaching.

In many ways, what I’m calling for is for the development of a continuum of clinical experiences where programs and schools are aligned and organized in ways that allow for future teachers to gain deliberately structured opportunities for enactment that are tied directly to the signature pedagogies that are being learned about in coursework. Taking this a step further, a truly robust and highly scaffolded continuum could incorporate elements of practice-based teacher education into coursework, constantly providing learning activities focused on representing and learning about pedagogy and then practicing or rehearsing these pedagogies in simulated environments before enacting them in clinical placements. In a sense, a program built around a set of core practices or signature pedagogies that operates under a learning cycle approach to develop such as the one mentioned previously (TEDD, 2014). Such work would take
a tremendous effort from teacher preparation programs and the clinical placement schools that they work with, including a transformation of schedules, roles, organization, and responsibilities from various different stakeholders. Such aspirations are not impossible as recent work in teacher residency programs sheds light on how such programs build teacher candidates up in ways that bridge theory and practice in scaffolded ways (e.g., Chu, 2021; Guha et al., 2017; Mourlam et al., 2019).

Potential Implications for Teacher Education and School Leaders

Importance of Clinical Placements

If programs were looking to make more incremental change that can have a big impact on the ways that teachers learn to enact signature pedagogies, the cases in this study suggest that focusing on alignment between coursework and clinical placements might be a good place to start. Teacher preparation programs should double-down on efforts at recruiting, screening, training, and coordinating with excellent mentor teachers for observation and student teaching. Additionally, programs should prioritize sending teacher candidates to schools that have healthy and aligned professional and academic cultures, such as those where teachers collaborate across departments and disciplines and where they take their teaching and student learning very seriously.

That said, it’s certainly challenging to find these teachers and schools, especially for preparation programs that might find high-quality field placements to be scarce. In these cases, it seems especially important that preparation programs build bridges and partnerships with local schools and teachers to develop the environments where we want to send our teacher candidates. Finding ways to cross existing boundaries to collaborate with mentor teachers and partnership schools through professional development, research, and coteaching is one promising avenue to develop relationships between preparation programs and schools in ways that strengthens teacher education across settings (Zeichner et al., 2015).

In situations where this isn’t possible or is under-development, it might be helpful to engage in some match-making between student teachers and current mentor teachers. As these participants journeys have suggested, it may be worthwhile to pair those teachers who enter programs with more traditional K-12 experiences and visions of teaching with the very best and mentor teachers as a way for them to more closely see and experiences the program’s signature
pedagogies firsthand. This has the potential to move-the-needle in their instruction as they can, with proper supports, revise and refine their visions of instruction towards more program-aligned approaches rather than risk having coursework washed out by a traditional mentor teacher or school site that reinforces their early notions of teaching. Correspondingly, it might be beneficial to place some of the more initially aligned teacher candidates with some of our less-aligned mentor teachers. In these cases, such as with Kylie, having alignment between their own K-12 experiences and coursework, paired with close and more intensive supervision and coaching from a field instructor, may be enough to ensure that student teaching with a more traditional mentor does not take them off track from rigorous instruction and using signature pedagogies once they start their careers.

Doing such work would require that preparation programs have ways of understanding and assessing a teacher’s visions of teaching, skepticism of coursework, and open-mindedness as they enter their coursework. Designing assignments and assessments that can get to the root of teacher understandings about teaching and learning seems like an important next step if taking this approach to strategic clinical placements.

It might also be beneficial to rethink our current approaches to clinical observations hours, where teachers individually go to the same classroom on certain days of the week or for a certain number of hours over the semester. Sending teacher candidates into classrooms where they simply sit in the back and are “bored to tears” (Kris) from traditional teaching methods or watching the same lesson over and over is a waste of valuable time. Justifying that these experiences provide opportunities for “what not to do” also seems lazy and papers over a significant opportunity for powerful learning that is being lost.

Getting creative with schedules and placements has some potential to address these challenges. For example, grouping teacher candidates in placement reduces the need for mentor teachers and can allow for a stronger pool of classrooms to visit (Bain, 2012; Bain & Moje, 2012; Kamens, 2007). The use of immersion experiences seems to also have the potential to remedy some of these challenges (Lee, 2018; Whipp, 2013). Taking students to communities, schools, and classrooms for extended periods with facilitated discussions and supports for learning would require schedule coordination in many university-based programs. However, the value of showcasing classes and schools where program methods are used successfully and where teacher educators can observe lessons alongside teacher candidates and facilitate their
interpretations and noticing’s in the classroom could provide for robust opportunities to discuss practice and create shared experiences while avoiding the potential for miseducation through typical structures for observation.

**Emphasizing Classroom Management**

Unsurprisingly, the participants in this study suggested a continued need to help novice teachers learn to establish classroom norms and routines in ways that create environments that are conducive to teaching and learning. In general, this study suggests that there is a minimum level of classroom and schoolwide stability that was needed for teachers to feel comfortable in trying out signature pedagogies from their preparation.

Clearly, preparation programs can do more to prepare teacher candidates better in setting routines and expectations in their classrooms. This cohort may have also been especially disadvantaged in their classroom management skills having completed student teaching in the middle of the pandemic. Additionally, the preparation program under study did not have a classroom management course as a part of the required sequence, something which may have further accentuated this issue.

However, the cases also suggested that classroom management struggles were intimately connected to the discipline policies and cultures of the schools where they taught. As several teachers indicated, especially Kris and Jason, restorative discipline practices that were poorly implemented created chaos in their schools and undermined their ability to manage their classrooms. In other cases where participants indicated not much of any discipline system or supports within schools, such as Trevor and Dexter’s schools, teachers also struggled to maintain order and resorted to traditional practices. In fact, looking across cases, the only teachers that were able to engage in any sort of ambitious or student-centered teaching had a school culture that minimized behavior challenges.

Taking this into account, school leaders should make special considerations for their novice teachers in supporting their classroom management needs. Mentors, coaching, and trainings could be one answer. Establishing a clear behavior system, and evaluating such systems with input from teachers about what is and is not working, also seems to be an important step to take. Lastly, finding ways to reduce novice teacher workloads and planning demands is another way that schools can provide beginning teachers with the time needed to do the small things that
contribute to a well-managed classroom, such as observing other teachers’ classrooms, finding times to meet with students, and communicating with parents.

**Need for Collaboration with Like-Minded Colleagues**

The ability to find likeminded colleagues within the first years in the classroom seemed to be a unifying thread across cases promoting teacher uptake of signature practices and more ambitious instruction. Although in some cases, these like-minded and supportive colleagues were veterans or mentors, in most cases, participants indicated that it was most helpful to work with other early-career teachers, typically those within their first couple of years in the classroom. Collaboration with such colleagues provided participants with the motivation, encouragement, high professional standards, and advice-networks that helped them to grow as instructors and take up more rigorous signature pedagogies.

Conversely, too many teachers cited induction programs where they were assigned mentors-in-name-only and suffered from professional isolation, with a corresponding demotivation and lowering of their teaching rigor. School administrators and teachers need to step up in the ways that bring novice teachers into the profession, being especially cognizant of structured opportunities for teachers to meet and work with one another in meaningful ways. I argue that teacher educators and programs can also step up and offer continued support to program graduates through continued mentorship and coaching or by helping to facilitate connections and networks that novices can turn to if they enter a minimally collaborative or isolating school environment.

**Reducing Novice Teacher Workloads**

It seems criminal to me that so many of the participants in this study were saddled with workloads that were more befitting of a seasoned veteran than a first- or second-year teacher. I’m shocked that the profession still allows for the “professional hazing” of our newest members by giving them multiple different classes to prepare for in year one, offering minimal resources, and placing the most difficult students in their classrooms. The teachers in this study who only taught one or two courses and who had classes that repeated each semester or trimester reported that this tremendously accelerated their growth and seemed to be at a developmental advantage compared to other participants. In these cases, they were able to start fresh quickly with a new class each term, develop a curriculum faster, and make more immediate improvement to their
teaching. They reported that this type of schedule more quickly reduced their workloads as well because, as they had more chances to develop their units and lessons, they didn’t need to spend as much time planning each day.

Though there might be some downsides to this approach, such as less time being able to develop relationships with students, it seems like a logical and manageable step that can help to further scaffold novice teachers into the profession. As mentioned previously, lighter workloads also provide teachers with more time for visiting other teachers’ classrooms, attending instructional coaching sessions, finding time to meet with students and parents, and reflect on and refine their lessons.

Much can be done in this area at a school level, but it seems that adjusting laws and union contracts could have more widespread impacts. Further work would be needed to validate the potential for such changes, but one potential policy change could require that first-year secondary teachers only have to prepare a single lesson each day. Based on this study, it seems that this could go a long way in reducing novice burnout and help more difficult and rigorous teaching to emerge as a result.

**Supportive School Cultures and Policies.**

Though the pandemic has been difficult on many fronts, the stories of the teachers in this study has me seriously concerned about diminishing standards that exist in today’s schools and their impact on novice teachers. Expectations for students at the school level, both behaviorally and academically, seem to have dissipated in many places, at the expense of safety and learning. Sadly, according to participants, many of these school policies that sapped student motivation, eroded academic standards, and undermined stability were framed by schools, districts, and administrators as equity and inclusion measures. Schools need to reexamine policies that undercut teachers’ abilities to teach in rigorous ways and that create a culture of *simultaneous* academic achievement, equity, and inclusion.

Schools should also be aware of the ways that allowing or tolerating teachers whose instructional practices are subpar (e.g., showing movies every day, exclusively lecturing, or fostering harmful classroom cultures) brings down other teachers and creates a toxic work environment for those who are trying to teach ambitiously. Many participants describe that it is hard to stay motivated to teach in ambitious ways when others around you are simply “mailing it
in” and no one else in the school seems to notice or care. In this way, everyone involved in education should be concerned about the environments where our new teachers are being brought into the profession. If we raise the next generation of teachers in dysfunctional and chaotic school contexts with low expectations for teaching and learning, what type of teachers do we expect them to become?

Additionally, some of the experiences of participants contrasts with existing literature about school organization and educational infrastructures. Very few participants indicated teaching in schools which had a schoolwide educational vision for its teachers and students that was reinforced or supported through coordinated and aligned curriculum, assessment, coaching, and professional development. When these efforts did exist, participants found them to be generally helpful but such supportive school policies, cultures, and systems were sporadic and inconsistent.

One possible reason that this was the case may have to do with history/social studies as a content area. It seems that much of the research about school organization focuses on reform efforts and school organization around different content areas, such as math, literacy, and science, likely because many testing and accountability measures have specifically focused on these areas. With history/social studies being an untested content area in many states, this could mean that school organization efforts, and the accompanying supports, may have not yet reached the classrooms of the participants of this study and perhaps in the field generally. It may also be the case that the lack of school context influences on participants resulted from teaching at the secondary level and that elementary schools, where there are often several teachers teaching the same grade levels, have been more of a focus for school organization efforts. Conducting a similar study in a state that does have standardized testing in history/social studies or with elementary school teachers would serve as a logical and interesting comparison point to verify or disprove this phenomenon.

**Determining Signature Practices and Managing Expectations.**

The final implication that I would like to put forward regards how preparation programs determine their core practices, and a reconceptualization of which practices might be more appropriate for beginning teachers to learn. With the differing difficulty of certain methods, how
teacher educators scaffold, organize, and package methods for beginning teachers in their courses seems to be critically important.

For example, it seemed particularly difficult for novice teachers in this study to put more challenging methods into their day-to-day instruction, such as extensive unit planning, disciplinary writing, and facilitating discussion. While it is certainly likely that these practices could have been better taught during coursework or that induction supports could have used improvement, it is worth thinking about which practices we start with during preparation and how novices are scaffolded into more complex practices in overlapping ways. For example, discussion might be impossible for novices to truly master if they struggle with eliciting and interpreting student thinking, don’t know how to establish norms and routines in their classroom, and if they haven’t developed trusting relationships with their students. In a similar vein, it might not be fair to expect beginning teachers to engage students with historical inquiry and source investigations if they aren’t able to effectively model, scaffold, and assess the historical thinking skills that their students need to effectively participate in such activities.

This seems to align with Monte-Sano, Bordonaro, and Aumen’s (2020) study that tracked novice history teachers use of core practices for secondary history teaching (Fogo, 2014). They found that some of the core practices, such as facilitating discussions, teaching historical writing, and making personal and cultural connections, were among the least used and most challenging for beginning teachers. However, with some of the other core practices, the researchers noticed learning progressions for teaching historical thinking that novice teachers became more skilled at over time. These included how teachers might initially use sources only to convey concepts or content before advancing to using sources to make claims or interrogating multiple perspectives. The findings in my study about entry-point practices and how they serve as stepping stones into more rigorous practice suggests that there is something here that is potentially useful and to be learned about how novices learn to use more rigorous practices. Further research about the progressions that novice history and social studies teachers make towards using methods such as modeling, facilitating discussions, and using historical sources as well as examples of model practices that support development through such progressions would be valuable to the field to better support the development of beginning teachers.

This would not necessarily have to happen all during coursework either as preparation programs are often strapped for time and covering all core practices seems like a daunting, if not
impossible, task. In a sense, it seems possible that designing a program where novice teachers master a introductory set of basic practices in preparation, paired with later interventions and professional development about more complex and advanced methods, would be appropriate.

With these considerations, we find ourselves back to thinking about the continuum of teacher education and development. Not only does creating more coherence, alignment, and support across different settings and elements of preparation matter for cultivating ambitious teachers, but this study suggests that we, as a field and society, have a lot of work to do.
Appendix A: Follow-Up Questionnaire

Familiarity and Skepticism of Program Practices

Thinking back to when you started the teacher preparation program, which of the following most closely describes you? (Most like me/Somewhat like me/Least like me)

- I pretty much knew the type of teacher that I wanted to be when I started the program at Michigan (and it did/didn't change much once I got into the field)
- Though I came to the program with some idea of the teacher I wanted to be, I came to the program eager to learn new and different ways to teach history/SS
- I had a pretty good idea of the type of teacher that I wanted to be when I started the program at Michigan but feel that this vision changed as a result of my experiences in the program
- I was skeptical of how much I could learn in coursework and was eager to get into the field and student teaching.
- I felt like I really wanted to be the type of teacher that the program was promoting
- Though some of the practices promoted by the program were great, there were others that I had my doubts about how they might work in an actual classroom

To what extent do the following statements describe your experiences with methods promoted in the teacher preparation program? (Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

- The practices and methods promoted by the program were mostly new or foreign to me
- The practices and methods promoted by the program were familiar and similar to my experiences as a student
- The practices and methods promoted in the program are commonly used and valued in my current school
- The practices and methods promoted in the program are rarely used or are discouraged in my current school

Approach to Teaching

Which TWO-THREE of the following MOST ACCURATELY describe your teaching:
Which TWO-THREE of the following LEAST ACCURATELY describe your teaching:

- I spend a lot of time thinking about how to improve my instructional practice from class-to-class, day-to-day, and week-to-week
- I’m satisfied with my teaching and don’t spend a ton of time thinking about ways to change my instruction or lessons for the better
- Having well planned lessons is important to me
I can rely on my charisma, personality, relationships with kids, and ability to improv in the classroom to wing it and get by in class when I need to.

Though I take some “days off” with easy-to-teach lessons, I try to incorporate and use different and more challenging methods when I can.

I look at teaching as a calling that comes with many moral, ethical, and professional obligations.

I look at teaching as a stable profession where I get to do some good by society.

**Values and Beliefs: Being what type of teacher is most appealing to you?**

Which of the following descriptions (PICK 3-4) are your **MOST** important priorities or goals as a teacher?

Which of the following descriptions (PICK 3-4) are your **LOWEST** priorities or goals as a teacher? (this doesn't mean that you don't care about them, they're just not as important in comparison to the others)

- A teacher who kids trust and feel cared for by
- A teacher whose class kids say is challenging
- A teacher whose class is organized and under control
- A teacher whose classes focus on learning
- A teacher that kids describe as the fun teacher
- A teacher whose classes students find interesting
- A teacher who is passionate and knowledgeable about their subject area
- A teacher who is viewed positively by parents and the community
- A teacher who is viewed as having a lot of potential or an excellent instructor by colleagues in the school
- A teacher who gets achievement results in their classes
- A teacher who really knows how to connect with their students
- A teacher who reaches all of their students
- A teacher who “teaches against the grain” and challenges the status quo
- A teacher whose classes are more structured
- A teacher whose style is more laid back

**Supports: How do teachers learn practices?**

Thinking about your collective experiences, what factors and supports do you feel have been most important to your development as a teacher? (said another way, which of these has most greatly shaped your practice or the way that you teach?) (Most Important/Somewhat Important/Least Important)

- Teacher role models from your own K12 experience
- Trying out practices in Clinical/Field Experiences
- Specific courses during preparation
- Professor/Field Instructor role models from preparation coursework
- Attending/Cooperating/Mentor Teacher role model from student teaching
- Particular assignments or activities from preparation coursework
• Curriculum and other instructional resources (i.e. technology, library, etc.)
• Professional Resources at Current School (collaboration, coaching/mentoring, expectations)
• School Environment and Culture (physical space, student behavior/motivation, parents, stability)
• Your own ambition and personal standards

**Obstacles and Challenges**

*What factors do you feel have been most important in preventing you from putting the methods learned about in the preparation program into practice? (Major/Most Important Factor, Moderately Important Factor, Minor/Least Important Factor)*

- I’m not sure what program methods look like in action (lack of experiences/models)
- Confusion or boredom experienced with certain practices
- Skepticism: I’m not sure that I wanted to use program practices in the first place
- Methods from the program don’t really align with my own experiences as a student
- Insufficient opportunities to try out practices in Clinical Placements (e.g. - remote student teaching)
- Mentor/Cooperating Teacher during Student Teaching was critical and/or misaligned with program practices
- Concerns of failure or that methods will flop
- Lack of Instructional Materials (curriculum, technology, assessments, etc.)
- Overload: I honestly can’t remember a lot from the program. It was too much!
- Difficulty or challenge of using rigorous methods from the program
- Methods from the program don’t align with my current school’s values, norms, or instructional vision
- Students lacking the skill and ability to engage in more rigorous activities
- Resistance from students when trying out more ambitious practices
- Lack of Professional Resources (quality collaboration, coaching/mentoring, or school-wide instructional expectations)
- Time/Workload
- Methods from the program don’t always work in the content area that I’m teaching
- School Discipline Policies
- Struggles with Classroom Management
- Resistance or difficulty with Parents
- School Policies about Grading
- Instability or unpredictability of school environment
- Challenges in Physical Space (HVAC, Classroom Setup, Rotating Classrooms)
- Being discouraged from using different methods by fellow teachers
- Being discouraged from using different methods by administrators or staff
- Isolation: Lack of collaboration, feedback, and support

**Support Experiences**
Which of the following describe supports or positive developmental experiences that you've had during your first two years of teaching? (Very true of my experience, Somewhat true of my experience, Very untrue of my experience)

- Having a manageable workload
- Collaboration with likeminded or ambitious colleagues
- Stable teaching environment with lack of disruptions
- Encouragement from administrators
- Encouragement from other teachers or staff
- Success when trying a new method (positive student reaction)
- Assessments or Standards that structured your teaching
- Curricular materials that you were able to modify to some extent
- Accountability that you found motivating
- School culture that had high standards for teaching
- Ability to experiment or try out methods
- School culture focused on learning and development
- High quality instructional coaching or mentoring
- Professional development sessions or workshops
  Personal courage to teach differently than others at your school
Appendix B: Example of Field Notes (Addison, Lesson #1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clips and Student Engagement Rating:</th>
<th>Time Stamps</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Notes and Comments</th>
<th>Core Practice Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vast majority of students seem to be engaged in the independent work, between 50-75% sharing during the classwide portions</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Directions/Instructions</td>
<td>Slide - Agenda, Reminders, Bell Work, Learning Target Bell Work: What is liberty? What is popular sovereignty? What is the pursuit of happiness? Learning Target: SWBAT analyze passages found in the Declaration of Independence</td>
<td>Backwards Design: Objectives/Learning Targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Independent Work</td>
<td>Students have about 2 minutes to work independently</td>
<td>Bellringer/WarmUp/Hook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 - 6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reviewing Answers</td>
<td>Teacher takes volunteers - connects back to a previous lesson and terms from the last class Has students listen and repeat the phrase &quot;sovereignty&quot; - oral language and vocabulary support Makes an individual connection with a student -</td>
<td>Scaffolded Reading Instruction Activating Background Knowledge Building Community Relationships Informal Assessment (CFU) Classroom Management Technique - Countdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Community Building</td>
<td>Good news - plugs pajama day for donations towards a student undergoing a procedure About 10 students shared responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 - 11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Administrative (Housekeeping)</td>
<td>Reminders about Penny Wars and assignments</td>
<td>CFU - Thumbs up/down about assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bellringer/WarmUp/Hook</td>
<td>Gif from National Treasure - Nicholas Cage and stealing the Dec of Ind. Introduces an Activity by talking about her first boyfriend - this is both a personal connection as well as a hook.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Bellringer/WarmUp/Hook</td>
<td>Breakup letter that the teacher wrote to her first boyfriend (this is going to connect to the declaration of independence) Why did I break up with Dakota? (student responses - volunteers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 - 7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lecture/Notes (little student input)</td>
<td>Introduction lecture about Dec of Independence (connecting it to the break up letter) Show a painting Overviews who John Hancock and large signature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 - 9.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Directions/Instructions</td>
<td>Directions and instructions for the source activity Write it in a language that makes sense to you - questions from students Teacher indicated that they are going to pick partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5 - 11:5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>Modeling (there is a trip that I'm going to show you) Has a student read the first sentence, teacher repeats and does some &quot;think aloud&quot; (what the heck does self evident mean?&quot; &quot;So I'm going to google self evident&quot; --&gt; but that doesn't help me as much...shows them some helpful words (synonyms that students are more familiar with)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5 - 12.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Directions/Instructions</td>
<td>Some clarifying points, takes questions,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.5 - 13</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Materials Management</td>
<td>Students getting with their partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - 14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Partner/Small Group Work</td>
<td>Students are working with preset partners, teacher is circulating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clip 2: HI - High It seems like more students are paying attention. The engagement increases with the breakup letter and the partner work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clip 3: VHI - Very High</th>
<th>Partner/Small Group Work</th>
<th>Teacher circulates between groups, giving one-on-one tips and instruction. You can tell that the teacher is giving one on one help with the audio (clarifying, checking student answers, and pushing student thinking, reading some parts aloud) - there seemed to be some confusion about the &quot;god&quot; parts of the declaration (is it saying that all people are created by god? you're saying that the gov't gets its power from god?)</th>
<th>Technique - Circulating the Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clip 4: MED - Medium</td>
<td>Partner/Small Group Work</td>
<td>Follow Through - &quot;you're supposed to raise your hand if you finish so I can check your work&quot; Sends students to the back at 1.30 in this clip to get scissors, glue, etc. to put their work into their social studies journal</td>
<td>1-on-1 Instruction Classroom Management Technique - Checkpoints Informal Assessment - CFUs Providing Students with Feedback - Immediate Checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/Small Group Work</td>
<td>Materials Management</td>
<td>Teacher grabs a clipboard and starts verbally listing off which students work she has already checked, setting a clear expectation that students don't slip through the cracks in this classroom</td>
<td>Classroom Management Technique - Being Seen Looking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/Small Group Work</td>
<td>Waiting (Downtime/Deadtime)</td>
<td>At 4:30 - it seems like a significant number of students are finished, teacher gives redirections to be in seats while she checks work. Some are clearly still finishing up, but this seems like a point in the lesson where most students are just waiting for the teacher (it also seems like I can hear students starting to play/toss things around in the audio)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/Small Group Work</td>
<td>Materials Management</td>
<td>Clean up - Spraying down tables and putting chairs up Teacher continues to give students individual feedback Teacher does a visible scan from the front of the room, then points out areas that still need to be cleaned up</td>
<td>Classroom Management Technique - Perch Point/Scanning the Room then Being Seen Looking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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