A Case Study of Co-Teaching in an Inclusive Secondary High-Stakes World History I Classroom

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A Case Study of Co-Teaching in an Inclusive Secondary High-Stakes World History I Classroom

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Abstract: In order to provide increasing support for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms in high-stakes testing contexts, some schools have implemented co-teaching models. This qualitative case study explores how 1 special education teacher (Anna) and 1 general education history teacher (John) make sense of working together in an inclusive World History I course in a high-stakes testing context (Virginia). Data collected included observations, interviews, curricular materials, and reflective memos. Analysis of these data indicate that John and Anna were “ambitious” collaborators—they offer an exemplary case of a special education teacher and a general education teacher developing a positive and productive working relationship, especially in coordinating their pedagogical performance within the classroom. However, in terms of how they made sense of instruction, it appeared as though Anna, the special educator, elucidated a slightly more ambitious vision in terms of her ability to think about how to connect history to students and how to teach beyond the test. John, on the other hand, appeared to be aware of, and concerned with, the high-stakes testing context. His concerns about behavior management and his narrow focus on his students’ test scores appeared to influence every aspect of his thinking about history instruction. Implications for teacher education are discussed.

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Within the current educational landscape of standards and high-stakes accountability, goals for student learning are becoming increasingly ambitious (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). Standards and testing affect all students, including those identified with disabilities. Under the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2000), students with disabilities represent an identified subgroup that impact school/division/state Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the national calculation of student progress. At least 95% of students in a subgroup must be tested in order to meet the requirements of the law (Hess & Petrilli, 2006/2007). Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997 emphasize inclusion, that is, serving “students with disabilities in general education settings whenever possible” (Murawski & Swanson, 2001, p. 258). As a result of these policies, as Murawski (2009) notes, “a complete paradigm shift in the way students with disabilities are educated” (p. xi) has taken place. The default placement for students with disabilities is in general education settings, and schools are held accountable for the content learning of those students.

In order to provide increasing support for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms in high-stakes testing contexts, schools have implemented co-teaching models (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). These co-teaching models involve a special educator and a general educator working together in some form for the instruction of all students the classroom (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; L. Cook & Friend, 1995); variations of this partnership include one teach/one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, or team teaching (Scruggs et al., 2007). A large body of special education literature explores the co-teaching relationship (see B. G. Cook, McDuffie, Oshita, & Cook, 2011; Knackendoffel, 2007; Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008; Weiss & Brigham, 2000) and social studies instruction in an inclusive setting (see Fontana, 2004; Passe & Beattie, 1994). However, co-teaching in an inclusive secondary history classroom in a high-stakes testing context remains a topic requiring further exploration. And, while a growing body of research explores different aspects of the impact of high-stakes testing on educators generally (see Au, 2007; Comber & Nixon, 2009; Craig, 2004; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Valli & Buese, 2007), and social studies specifically (see Au, 2009; Grant, 2003, 2006; Grant & Gradwell, 2010; Grant & Salinas, 2008; van Hover, 2006; van Hover, Hicks, & Irwin, 2007; van Hover, Hicks, & Washington, 2011; Yeager & Davis, 2005;) we know very little about how secondary history teachers (particularly those with a collaborative teacher) negotiate teaching students identified with disabilities in a high-stakes testing context. As Len Barton (1998), scholar of disability studies, states: “inclusive education is about the
participation of all children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practices” (pp. 84–85). This important insight reveals the democratic potential of social studies classrooms to bring diverse learners into one space to interact and to “equip them to take advantage of their citizenship” (Parker, 1996, p. 2).

Additionally, while the literature suggests that “teachers’ instructional practices have been altered by the pressures associated with high-stakes testing” (Au, 2009, p. 46), there remains a need for studies that move beyond debates about the tests themselves and explore deeply, at a classroom level, how history and social science educators make sense of and negotiate state accountability systems (see Craig, 2004, p. 1230; Rex & Nelson, 2004). Thus, this study explores how one special education teacher and one general education teacher negotiate working together as collaborative curricular gatekeepers in an inclusive World History I course in a high-stakes testing context (Virginia).

INCLUSION AND CO-TEACHING

B. G. Cook et al. (2011) define co-teaching as “two professionals, often a special education teacher and a general education teacher, delivering instruction to students with and without disabilities in a single physical space” (p. 2). The special education literature typically identifies four common models or approaches to co-teaching (e.g., Friend & Cook, 2003). One teach/one assist involves one teacher, usually the general education teacher, assuming the instructional lead while the other teacher assists by monitoring students or providing individual attention to struggling learners. Station teaching is where different learning stations are created, students rotate through the stations, and the co-teachers provide instructional support at two of the stations. In a parallel teaching model, the class is divided into two groups. The co-teachers simultaneously teach the same or similar content. Alternative teaching involves grouping students by individual needs so they can receive specialized instruction. Finally, team teaching involves co-teachers dividing teaching responsibilities equally and leading instructional activities together (B. G. Cook et al., 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007).

A large body of special education research explores co-teaching (see B. G. Cook et al., 2011). Scruggs et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of 32 qualitative special education research studies on co-teaching. They identified themes from their review of the research that fell into four categories: (a) benefits, (b) expressed needs, (c) teacher roles, and (d) instructional delivery. Co-teachers often cited specific benefits to co-teaching. Special educators noted that they learned new content, while general educators reported learning new strategies. Additionally, participants in the studies reported that students (both with and without disabilities) received additional attention. Specific needs to support successful collaboration were also identified by co-teachers.
In order for co-teaching to be successful, co-teachers stated that they needed administrative support, the opportunity to volunteer and choose a collaborator, shared planning time, teacher training, and personal compatibility. In multiple studies, co-teachers compared their relationship to a “marriage” requiring “effort, flexibility, and compromise” for success (Scruggs et al., 2007, p. 405). In terms of instructional delivery, the dominant co-teaching model across levels (elementary and secondary) was “one teach, one assist.” This model, however, raised some “turf” issues; in many studies, the special educator reported being in the subordinate role in terms of their content knowledge and general “ownership” of the class by the general educator. Scruggs et al. (2007) called for future research on collaboration that explores the implementation of co-teaching, perceptions of collaborating teachers, problems encountered, and perceived benefits (p. 394).

AMBITIOUS TEACHING AND LEARNING

The literature on teaching history to students with disabilities in an inclusive setting and on general secondary history instruction both elucidate visions of wise, or “ambitious” practice; these views, however, differ in how they conceptualize the nature and purpose of history. The special education research focuses on teaching skills and supporting students in learning in order to give them access to the factual content of a discipline (e.g., Boon, Burke, Fore, & Spencer, 2006; Fontana, 2004; Hudson, 1997). Research on “best practices” for students identified with disabilities included in the general social studies classroom describes strategies that are intended to create independent learners and to help students to access, organize, process, and remember information (Fontana, 2004). Examples include providing a careful structure to the lesson (review, introduce new content, practice, assess, closure) as well as specific instructional approaches, including peer-tutoring, advance organizers, graphic organizers, matrices, mnemonic strategies, defining key words/vocabulary, and more (Fontana, 2004). There is, however, a small but growing body of literature that moves beyond these general strategies and identifies and evaluates “domain-specific instructional approaches” designed to support conceptual thinking, historical reasoning, and critical thinking within inclusive inquiry-based history classrooms (see De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & MacArthur, 2003; De La Paz, Morales, & Winston, 2007).

While the special education literature focuses more on strategy instruction, notions of effective history teaching typically involve attention to historical content knowledge and the disciplinary structure of history (e.g., VanSledright, 2011; Wineburg, 1991). Research on high-quality history teaching emphasizes the role of inquiry and promotes attention to the disciplinary nature of history, the “doing of history” (e.g., Ashby, Lee, & Shemilt, 2005; Bain, 2005; Grant, 2003; VanSledright, 2011). The literature recognizes the fluid,
contested, and constructed nature of history and advocates teaching students to think historically through engaging in historical inquiry and to develop the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary for active, informed, deliberative citizenship (e.g., K. C. Barton & Levstik, 2004; Lee, 2005).

Grant’s (2003) conception of “ambitious teaching and learning” extends the conversation about the content and nature of history to include attention to the context surrounding history teaching. He argues that ambitious teaching and learning develops when teachers:

know well their subject matter and see within it the potential to enrich their students’ lives; when teachers know their students well, which includes understanding the kind of lives they lead, how they think about and perceive the world, and that they are capable of far more than they and most others believe; and when teachers know how to create the necessary space for themselves and their students in environments that may not appreciate the efforts of either. (p. xi)

He emphasizes the importance of knowing students and possessing a willingness to engage in and create opportunities for powerful teaching and learning despite contextual factors.

Most conceptions of effective or ambitious history teaching implicitly assume that one teacher will be involved in the curricular gate-keeping, the “day-to-day decisions concerning both subject matter and the experiences to which students have access and the nature of that subject matter and those experiences” (Thornton, 2001, p. 237). But, what happens when two teachers, from different disciplinary backgrounds, are expected to share the same classroom space and co-design instruction to support the needs of children with special needs in a high-stakes standardized setting? The research in social studies highlights the vital role teachers’ beliefs, educational background, purpose, and knowledge play in how individual history teachers make instructional decisions (see K. C. Barton & Levstik, 2004; Grant, 2003; Pajares, 1992; van Hover, 2008; van Hover & Yeager, 2008), however, no research has explored what happens when two teachers are working together. Lingard (2007) states: “teachers and their practices (pedagogies and assessment) are the most significant element of schooling in respect of student outcomes and schooling as a positional good; indeed, it is through pedagogies that education gets done” (p. 246). And, in light of ongoing educational policies at both state and national levels that stress the discourse on teacher performance and accountability (as determined by student scores on an end-of-course test), the task facing our participants can be seen as a universal challenge facing many public schools and teachers. We suggest that instructional activities—in terms of how they are shaped by the ongoing interactions of the co-teachers within the context of an “inclusive” setting—must be foregrounded, especially if we are to begin to understand, unpack, and flesh out the concept of ambitious teaching in
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different contexts. This study, then, explores how two teachers, one history
general educator and one special educator, developed their collaborative teach-
ing relationship, described their experiences collaborating, and planned and
“implemented” the World History I curriculum in a high-stakes testing context
(Virginia).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to gain insight into the complicated work of educational pol-
icy initiatives, we ground our conceptual framework in policy sociology
(e.g., S. J. Ball, 1994, 2003, 2008) and the notion of teachers as “curricu-
lum gatekeepers” (Thornton, 1991) within institutional settings. Policies such
as inclusion, co-teaching, and high-stakes testing are not one-sided affairs
pushed down, accepted, and implemented by schools or teachers in a spe-
cific or uniform way. Rather, as S. J. Ball (2008) notes, policy realization
is a contingent, localized, and messy process that is “ongoing, interactional,
and unstable” (p. 7) and dependent on context. Policy realization recognizes
the limited degree of opportunity teachers have as “curriculum gatekeepers”
(Thornton, 1991) to make sense of, negotiate, and tinker with how policies
will be operationalized and performed on a daily basis within their class-
rooms. That is, when making day-to-day decisions concerning subject matter
and instructional experiences for students, teachers (whether implicitly or
explicitly) examine, make sense of, interpret, and implement the rhetoric
of educational policies texts and initiatives. Teachers with different back-
grounds, perceptions, and understandings work in different local conditions,
with different resources, histories, and commitments—and thus, “policy real-
izations will differ accordingly” (S. J. Ball, 1997, p. 265). This does not
mean, however, that teachers are simply free to interpret and implement or
ignore policies as they deem fit. S. J. Ball (1997) makes clear that within
institutions,

Policies do not normally tell you what to do; they create circumstances in
which the range of options available in deciding what to do is narrowed or
changed or particular goals or outcomes are set. A response must still be
put together, constructed in context, offset against or balanced by other
expectations. All of this involves creative social action of some kind.
(p. 270)

METHODS

Because this research centered on sense-making and meaning perspec-
tives, we used case study methodology (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995)
to study one pair of co-teachers, John Logan and Anna Grey, teaching an inclusive World History I class in a high-stakes testing context. A case study allows richness and complexity of teaching to emerge from the data (Stake, 1995) and provides the opportunity to explore, in depth, the ways teachers make sense of and use policy artifacts to co-teach World History I on a daily basis. Our interest is not the accountability system itself, but rather, in how the participants understand and negotiate such policy artifacts in the context of their work with diverse learners. Thus, this study explores the following research questions:

1. How did John and Anna develop and negotiate their collaborative relationship?
2. How did they plan and implement the World History I curriculum in a high-stakes testing context (Virginia)? That is, how did they negotiate collaborative curricular gate-keeping?

PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXT

John and Anna teach at Rutherford High School, located in central Virginia. In Virginia, the accountability system includes three main components: content standards, high-stakes testing, and rigorous standards for school accreditation (Duke & Reck, 2003). The Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning (SOL) provide a curriculum framework for instruction across the state. The accompanying SOL high-stakes tests are 70-item multiple-choice exams that largely emphasize the recall of factual content. Tests impact school accreditation. At the high school level, students have to pass three social studies SOL tests in order to graduate.

Approximately 1,200 students are enrolled at Rutherford (45% Black, 45% White, 10% Other); 12% of the students have been identified with specific learning disabilities. Rutherford did not make Adequate Yearly Progress in 2009 and is in year 4 of systematic schoolwide improvement. Prior to 2009, Rutherford provided four levels of instruction for the major subject areas (standard, advanced, honors, and Advanced Placement/AP). The current “de-leveled” system divides instruction into two levels—“academic” and “honors/AP”—only. John, in his third year of teaching, double majored in history and anthropology and completed a Masters/licensure teacher education program in secondary social studies at a large public university in Virginia. Anna, also in her third year of teaching, graduated from the same university but majored in sociology and completed her Masters/licensure program in special education. John and Anna co-teach four sections of academic-level World History I (“Dawn of Man” to the Renaissance) and one section of Concepts of World History. This study focused on one section of 9th grade World History I, a class that met every other day for 90 minutes. The class size
and student population fluctuated over the course of the study (new students enrolled, a few students left, a few students changed sections). The average class size was 21 students. Division policy prevented the researchers from interviewing or gathering “official” demographic data on the students, but it appeared that the majority of students were African-American with a few Caucasian and Hispanic students. At least one student was born outside the United States (Iraq). Four of the students in the class had been identified with learning disabilities and have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

**DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS**

Data sources include 20 90-minute classroom observations, 2 90-minute semi-structured interviews with John and Anna, classroom documents, email correspondence, and a reflective research journal. The first author conducted the 20 90-minute observations during units on the Mongols, Meso-America, Greece, Rome, the Byzantine Empire, Islam, Middle Ages, Dark Ages, Rise of Nation States, Renaissance, and SOL Review. The observer did not use a specific protocol, but took ethnographic field notes that attempted to capture the words and actions of the co-teachers as well as documenting instructional strategies, the content covered, and other pertinent information. The first researcher, using protocols (see Appendix) developed collaboratively by the three authors, conducted the two semi-structured interviews (the first at the beginning of the school year, the second at the end). Each interview lasted about 90 minutes and was audi-taped and transcribed. The teachers, by their request, were interviewed together. All email correspondence (which included follow-up questions/clarifications) was added to the data corpus. Additionally, extensive curricular materials were collected—over 400 pages for the entire school year. These materials included the Virginia Standards of Learning, the school pacing guide, and teacher-created curricular materials. The reflective research journal, kept by the first author, included personal reflections and notations about side conversations with the teachers or students and any information that might influence data analysis.

Data analysis was conducted in multiple stages. First, the three researchers independently read through the interviews, observations, and curricular materials to identify themes and patterns emerging from the data: e.g., the nature of the collaborative relationship, the role of the test in instruction (Stake, 1995). Next, we developed a list of codes (e.g., co-teaching, one-teach one-assist, mention of SOL test) and collaboratively coded the interview and observation transcripts by hand, line-by-line (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which led to the generation of an outline of the major themes and issues emerging from the data. Finally, the researchers triangulated the data by searching through the data to confirm or disconfirm these themes and patterns (Stake, 1995).
JOHN AND ANNA: A TYPICAL DAY

Analysis of data revealed interesting insights into (a) how John and Anna negotiated their collaborative relationship, and (b) how they engaged in collaborative instructional gate-keeping. John and Anna were “ambitious” collaborators—they offer an exemplary case of a special education teacher and a general education teacher developing a positive and productive working relationship, especially in coordinating their pedagogical performance within the classroom. However, in terms of how they made sense of instruction, it appeared as though Anna, the special educator, elucidated a more ambitious vision in terms of her ability to think about how to connect history to students and how to teach beyond the test. John, on the other hand, was very aware of, and concerned with, the high-stakes testing context. His concerns about behavior management and his narrow focus on his students’ test scores appeared to influence every aspect of his thinking about history instruction. We begin with a snapshot of John and Anna’s teaching in order to frame a discussion of their co-teaching relationship and how they make sense of their collaborative instructional planning within the context of high-stakes testing.

In the classroom, John and Anna are both outgoing teachers who exhibited a relaxed, comfortable rapport with their students. The students gave every indication of enjoying the class and their teachers. Their classroom instruction follows a similar pattern each day, with Anna and John taking responsibility, equally, for different aspects of the lesson. The lessons are very structured and include a great deal of pre-packaged and consumable content as well as explicit strategy instruction designed to help students comprehend and remember the content. Anna and John distribute a “packet” of teacher-created handouts for each quarter consisting of K-W-Ls (what you know, what you want to know, what you learned), fill-in-the blank notes to accompany PowerPoint® slide presentations, brief readings written by the teachers, reading comprehension activities, map work, extension activities, charts and tables to help students synthesize information and other worksheets. The packets remain in the classroom. Students enter the classroom, pick up their packets, and begin a Do-Now (opening activity that reviews material or activates prior knowledge) projected on the Smartboard. John typically reads the Do-Now aloud, and Anna offers students with strategies for responding to the Do-Now. Then, John and Anna go over the Do-Now with the students. Next, John lectures using a PowerPoint slide while Anna provides note-taking cues and/or mnemonic strategies. Then, Anna leads students through a reading about the day’s topic; she provides strategies for underlining and emphasizing key information. Finally, the students complete an extension/processing activity, facilitated by both teachers.

For example, in an introductory lesson on Ancient Greece, students entered the classroom, picked up their content packets and started the
“Do-Now” activity projected on the Smartboard. The two-part Do-Now asked students, “a) What kind of land is easiest to farm?; b) What kind of land would be hard to farm?; and c) What kinds of geography would be best for keeping people apart from one another?” On this day, Anna read through the questions, and reminded the students that, “There are three parts to this Do-Now, so make sure there are three answers on your paper.” Both teachers circulated to monitor student progress, and a discussion of the Do-Now, led by John, followed. After prompting students to share their Do-Now responses, John connected their answers to their new unit on Ancient Greece, noting that the geography of Greece will play a huge role in how the civilization developed and the history of the different city-states. He then provided students with an overview of the day’s agenda, introduced the new unit, and (as with every new unit) asked students to take out their packet, open to the first page and complete a K-W-L on Ancient Greece. While John led the Do-Now, Anna took attendance, circulated the room, prompted students to respond to the Do-Now, checked to make sure all students were on the correct page, collected their second quarter packets, and distributed third quarter packets.

John and Anna collaboratively facilitated the K-W-L discussion on Ancient Greece; they talked about what students already knew (language, myths, togas), addressed misconceptions (that Greeks did not make togas out of bed sheets, that strappy sandals on men was a product of that time/place and was not a fashion faux pas), how they knew it (elementary school), and what they wanted to learn (food, music, animals, culture). John then gave an “Introduction to Ancient Greece” lecture, using a PowerPoint filled with content and related visuals (pictures of Greece, map of city-states, etc.). He talked through the content (geography of Greece), asked questions, and told stories. John emphasized that the physical divisions created by geography prompted people in Greece to create affiliations called city-states. Anna added details or chimed in with explanations (for example, that city-states are like gangs in the city, affiliations divided by geography). She also prompted the students to fill in the guided notes section in their packets (fill-in the blank/short response). After the lecture, the students worked independently on a map activity in which they labeled the Greek city-states, bodies of water, and nearby Civilizations. John went over the map activity while Anna suggested mnemonics to help students remember. For example, to help them remember how to find Greece on a map, she pointed out that “the bottom of Greece looks like a hand with four fingers.” John added that “[Ms. Grey] hates this, but I think [Greece] looks like Europe ate something bad and threw up into the Mediterranean Sea.” Anna laughed, while John told the students, “whatever helps you remember.” Other mnemonics included thinking about the Dardanelles as the “tollbooth from the Black Sea to the Aegean” or that Crete is “like a chewed up piece of gum that someone spit out.”

After the map activity, Anna walked the students through their daily reading (students volunteered to read sections out loud), projected on the
Smartboard. The daily reading, included in students’ packets, consisted of a series of paragraphs summarizing key content about Greece. The reading for this lesson included basic information about the geography of Greece, city-states/polis, acropolis, oracle, colonization/spreading Hellenic culture, and bartering/money economies. She distributed highlighters and modeled what sections of the reading to highlight, using the Smartboard. Finally, students worked independently on the processing/extension section of their packet. On this day, students responded to fact recall (What is an Acropolis?) and critical thinking questions (Does our city have an acropolis? Why or why not?) related to their reading and analyzed a map. They studied a map and filled in a graphic organizer that asked them to make observations about the map and then brainstorm the significance/so what of each observation. The two teachers went through responses with students until interrupted by the afternoon announcements.

This lesson on the geography of Ancient Greece highlights themes that emerged from analysis of observation data and curricular materials. In terms of their observable pedagogical performance it was clear that John and Anna had developed a shared pedagogical presence in the classroom. The students in the class clearly viewed both as “the teacher,” interacting with and asking questions of John and Anna, equally. The class structure followed an identical pattern day-to-day (do-now, lecture, reading, extension activity) and focused on content that would appear on the end-of-course examination. John and Anna explicitly taught a number of learning strategies and scaffolds that would help students remember testable content (note-taking sheets, map work, readings, mnemonic strategies, repeated interaction with key events/people/terms). Instruction never veered away from the packet; it served as a road map for and record of what students were doing on a daily basis. Rarely, if ever, did students work in partners or groups. Very few historical sources were used in classroom instruction.

In summary, observations revealed a co-teaching partnership, a partnership in which John and Anna implemented a consistent, structured daily routine that focused on teaching testable World History I content. Interview data indicate that a complex confluence of interacting factors influenced how John and Anna developed their co-teaching partnership and directly impacted how the two made sense of the World History I curriculum within the high-stakes testing context. The interactions of educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, professional development experiences, perceptions of their students’ abilities, and teaching philosophies of the two teachers within a “policy-driven institutional culture” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 2522) all informed how they worked together as collaborative gate-keepers. The findings section first explores how John and Anna established and experienced their co-teaching relationship, then how they planned and implemented the World History I curriculum.
FINDINGS

Co-Teaching: A Journey

It became very apparent that Anna and John had established an “ambitious” partnership—a balanced co-teaching relationship, not the “one teach-one assist” model that is the norm in many classrooms and described so often in the special education literature. They described themselves as a “success story” in terms of developing a professional relationship based on respect and trust. They attributed this to similar backgrounds, compatible personalities and teaching styles, and a basic mantra of “let’s just respect each other as professionals.” Anna, for example, stated that they worked well together because: “I knew John from [university], he’s young, we have the same background knowledge, he didn’t seem like a jerk, we teach the same [academic level] kids . . . and the biggest thing at the beginning, and this was John’s idea, is that we should respect each other.” John added, “that’s the biggest part, respect. It’s easy kindergarten stuff, kind of play nice.” He also posited that perhaps their relative lack of teaching experience had something to do with their willingness to collaborate, that “maybe older teachers get used to being by themselves and then having someone else in your room, that could be really hard, you know?” The interview data added layers to their explanation, however, indicating that their experiences in teacher education field experiences, their first years of teaching, mentoring relationships, and professional development sessions all contributed to their desire and ability to want to make this a successful partnership.

Anna and John shared very similar educational backgrounds; they graduated the same year from the same university and had gone through that university’s teacher education program. However, the program was structured in such a way that they had very few courses in common, and as Anna said, “we didn’t really know each other in school.” When asked how they were prepared by their teacher education program to teach in a collaborative context, both teachers stated that their field experiences, not their course work, exposed them to collaborative teaching. Anna noted that she took a course on collaborative teaching, but it “was more working with paraprofessionals and working with aides” or instructional assistants. She said, “as SPED [special education] teachers, we knew we were going to have to collaborate with general education teachers . . . [and] something I said a lot in our [teacher education] program was, why aren’t we working with the general education students?” In terms of his preparation for co-teaching, John said, “I feel like we talked about it a little bit, at some point,” but could not recall any coursework, readings, or assignments that directly addressed this issue. Both teachers, however, had to collaborate in their student teaching field experiences.

For her student teaching placement, Anna had two placements, both at Rutherford High School. She first worked in a self-contained high school classroom, teaching students identified with mental retardation. She was then
placed in what she described as a “bad collaborative setting,” assigned to a
general education English teacher nearing retirement who “treated special edu-
cators like assistants” and who struggled to manage classroom behavior. Anna
had to be removed from that placement because “the kids were so bad, the
classroom management was so bad and my presence was viewed as a dis-
traction.” Despite this, Anna described this placement as a “good learning
experience” that taught her what a collaborative relationship should not be.

John also student taught at Rutherford, teaching several sections of American
and World History. A special educator was assigned to work with several of his
classes. The special educator and John used a one-teach, one-assist model and
John said that, “I liked that, and had a really good experience with it. That
helped me have a positive outlook on [collaboration].” Anna and John left
their teacher education program with no formal coursework on collaboration
and with vastly different experiences with collaborative teaching situations—
Anna, intensely negative but a “learning experience,” and John, positive. Their
first years of teaching would reinforce these perspectives.

Anna’s first teaching position was in a middle school in the same division
as Rutherford where she worked in a fifth-grade self-contained special educa-
tion classroom for students identified as mentally retarded. It was a challenging
first year of teaching for Anna; she said that, “I don’t know how I survived
that year, man... I was thrown in the water with nothing. I didn’t have a
curriculum, I didn’t have any materials.” She had another negative experience
with collaboration, working with an instructional assistant she described as
incompetent, the “worst assistant known to man.” Anna survived that year but
realized that she missed the high school age group. Thus, her second year of
teaching, Anna returned to Rutherford. Initially, she was assigned to collabo-
rate with a Physics teacher, a situation she described yet again as a “disaster.”
Mid-year, her schedule shifted slightly and she started to work with John and
his World History I courses for two periods a day.

John, who accepted a job teaching ninth grade World History I at
Rutherford, noted that in his first year, “I had a curriculum and materials and
I still barely made it through the year.” John described intense struggles to
manage classroom behavior that he attributed to his pedagogical approach. He
stayed at Rutherford, however. In the fall semester of his second year he served
as a directing teacher for a social studies student teacher from the local univer-
sity in one class section of United States History for English Language Learner
students. John said he enjoyed this situation and that helped him learn more
about collaboration and working with others. He said, “we ran that class like
a [co-teaching] collaboration, so that was good practice for me.” When Anna
was assigned to work with him, he said he “was excited” to have someone to
work with in the classroom. Thus far John had had only positive experiences
with co-teaching and Anna was “very ready” to have a positive one.

At this point, the role of mentoring and professional development came
into play. Both John and Anna had been assigned a beginning teacher mentor
who observed and met with them regularly. When Anna’s schedule changed mid-year, her mentor (aware of Anna’s past experiences) sat down with both teachers and gave them a list of things to consider. As Anna recalled, their mentor suggested “well, you’re going to want to sit down and talk about your roles and exactly what each one of you are doing.” This suggestion was embraced by both teachers, particularly Anna, who felt strongly that “I wanted a set plan, because I was coming in at the middle of the year after John already had a set curriculum, so just jumping in is not exactly what I wanted to do.” Thus, after this conversation with their mentor, John and Anna sat down, established some ground rules for communication, and talked about what it meant to, as John explained, “respect each other as professionals and as humans.” They also divided up the tasks in the daily lesson; as John recalled,

I think it started with, I was the history major, and it’s my job to know the history content. I had the background knowledge to be able to do the more, lecture kind of stuff. And Anna had more background with reading strategies and things like that, so she took over the readings. It seemed like a pretty decent way to divide the work evenly.

Anna added,

A big part of me starting with the readings last year was the students were reading the information for the first time and I was too, but I could pretty much think on my feet and ask questions and give clear directions so the kids would understand [the content].

Both John and Anna characterized their working relationship that spring as positive. However, Anna did feel that she faced some challenges walking in mid-year. The curriculum was already established, she felt behind in terms of her World History I content knowledge, and she felt that students did not see her as an equal co-teacher or even as “the teacher.”

During the spring of John and Anna’s first semester working together, Rutherford’s administration notified all teachers that co-teaching and collaboration would play a central role in the school’s de-leveling plan and encouraged teachers to proactively form partners. Anna and John decided to continue collaborating; under the new plan, they would share a classroom and a schedule (teach together all day, every day). Over the summer, before the school year began, the administration required all collaborative teams to attend an intensive weeklong training session, run by outside for-hire consultants. This mandatory inservice included information about different collaborative models (one-teach, one-assist; co-teaching, etc.), guidance about how collaborative pairs could/should determine their respective roles, and tips about working together.
While Anna and John jokingly referred to this professional development experience as “collaboration camp” in the school’s media center, they both mentioned several useful tips and strategies they learned from the sessions. They noted that it helped “people get to know their collaborative partner” even better, to have time to get the room ready, and plan curriculum. As Anna said, “the Collab camp provided guidelines and suggested that we sit down and talk those through with our partner.” As a result, they sat down again in order to revisit what their collaborative relationship would look like. They looked through the curriculum, made changes, and discussed their respective responsibilities in the classroom. Anna felt a great deal more comfortable entering this school; she noted that her name was on the door, she had a desk, and she was starting off as an equal partner. And, as observations confirmed, their co-teaching partnership appeared successful. Both Anna and John characterized this first full year of collaboration as incredibly positive, that they both felt this was “the best year, yet.” They attributed this to their initial and ongoing communication regarding roles and respect, but also to their consistent views on how a classroom should be run in terms of delivery of content and classroom management.

In summary, observation data indicate that, in terms of their co-teaching relationship, John and Anna were exemplars, ambitious co-teachers. Interviews revealed that while the teachers attributed their success to compatible personalities, similar educational backgrounds and attention to “respect,” there were other factors that contributed to how John and Anna made sense of their working relationship. Neither teacher was explicitly prepared to work in a co-teaching relationship by their teacher education program. However, teacher education field experiences and working with a student teacher in his second year of teaching left John excited by the prospect of collaboration. Anna, after three negative experiences collaborating with a colleague, was ready for a success story. Also, the way John and Anna made sense of suggestions and coaching from their beginning teacher mentor and from a week-long intensive professional development experience helped them establish guidelines and assign roles that would aid in the development of a positive working relationship. While these factors contributed to an ambitious collaborative co-teaching relationship, interview data about their instructional decision making and their “curricular gate-keeping” reveals a complex picture of two teachers with differing views on the purpose of history instruction and the significance of the end-of-year test trying to figure out how to implement the World History I curriculum.

**COLLABORATIVE GATE-KEEPING**

A number of complex and interactive factors appeared to influence how John and Anna talked about their instruction. Their academic and behavioral
expectations for their students exerted a very strong influence on how they thought about teaching. Additionally, while both were incredibly aware of the end-of-year test and felt an intense level of surveillance and pressure from school administration regarding how well their students would perform, John and Anna made sense of this pressure in subtly different ways. Finally, their disciplinary backgrounds (SPED and history) played a role in how they talked about instruction, but not always in predictable ways. The story behind how their World History I curriculum came to be created provides context.

The World History I curriculum, as taught in their classroom, was not simply the result of John and Anna planning the curriculum in isolation. Rather, the material and resources they used as the foundation for their instructional planning had actually gone through several iterations over time and space. Several years earlier, the school division had paid a group of teachers to develop a pacing guide based on the states’ Standards of Learning for World History I; that is, a blueprint that divided the standards into units and provided a calendar dictating when and for how long a unit would/should be taught. After a chaotic first year, John decided that he needed to provide his students with a great deal more structure and consistency, or a pedagogical approach designed to “tame and regulate” in order to teach successfully (Lingard, 2007, p. 248). As a result, John sat with the school divisions’ pacing guide and with curricular materials inherited or borrowed, and developed a very structured SOL-focused teacher-centered unit and lesson plans that included a reading component, a note-taking component, a lecture/Pages® component and some sort of extension activity. In November, when a new teacher, Edgar, asked him for teaching resources, John shared his materials, but started adding to and revising the content of the readings. When Anna started working with John in January, she looked through John and Edgar’s materials and began focusing on the skills and strategy components of each lesson. She suggested modifying the guided notes, changing them from a series of questions into fill-in-the-blanks. Anna also added more charts, graphic organizers, mnemonic strategies and processing activities. She then created a list of terms for each unit to write on a word wall to be displayed prominently in the classroom. Taken as a whole, her instructional strategies were clearly designed to help students access, organize, and memorize teacher targeted content information in each lesson. The strategies she developed mirrored the types of instructional strategies that are researched and offered as examples of wise practice in the special education literature (Connor & Lagares, 2007; Fontana, 2004; Fontana, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2007).

At the end of the year, John, Anna, and Edgar sat down and revised these units. And, during their weeklong collaboration workshop, John and Anna made further changes. The three teachers agreed that they disliked the daily photocopying of handouts and decided to create “quarter packets”—all the materials and content students would need in a notebook for the entire quarter. The final iteration of these packets, used in the year under study, included
hundreds of pages that follow a very consistent structure: K-W-L, guided note sheet, reading (with short paragraphs, including essential SOL material and key concepts), a map activity, and extension/processing activities. Thus, the final product included the content-focused work of John and Edgar (two history teachers) and the strategy-specific interventions and supports of Anna, a special educator. And, these curricular materials reflected what John and Anna felt was best for their students in terms of preparing them to pass the end-of-course high-stakes test.

John and Anna described their students as “lower level,” struggling learners from widely varied backgrounds, with different reading levels, and attendance problems. The teachers viewed their students as challenging to work with, academically and behaviorally. Academically, they shared the perspective that their ninth graders entered class with almost no background knowledge in World History I. Behaviorally, John noted:

I like the lower level kids, it’s just that so many of these kids are just so mean. They are incredibly disrespectful which, for the most part, I can deal with OK. But it wears on you. I mean, they curse all the time and it’s funny that it bothers me, but it’s just so ugly.

Anna chimed in,

[the cursing] is all the time . . . and like, today, we had an issue with this student who forged a signature, was skipping class, and then was wearing a dress code violation. . . . And we had a student who ran away for 3 weeks and then was in jail for 2 weeks.

Their perceptions of students as a powerful and challenging context clearly shaped their pedagogical goal of teaching their 9th graders how to develop what they termed as “self-sufficiency in learning,” that is, the ability to identify and recall information independently. To achieve this, they wanted their daily lessons to be structured, with consistent routines and expectations.

John elucidated a rationale for this approach by stating that, over time, he had learned that his students behaved better in a structured and routine-oriented teacher-centered environment:

[In my first year], I was like, I’m going to do projects and fun stuff. I’m going to change it up. Worst idea ever. I feel like in a lot of cases you talk to people who are teaching at nicer places, they do fun stuff and have Socratic discussions or whatever. And so, you want, I wanted to be a good teacher like them. And then it turns out that that’s not how it’s going to work. So for me [behavior management improved] over time the more I structured. And then Anna brought even more structure into it
and I think that helped. And we’ve sort of added more routine and next year, if anything, we plan on even more structure.

Anna agreed that the students “really thrive” on the structure, particularly students identified with disabilities who had organizational problems or processing issues.

John and Anna’s perceptions of their students, academically and behaviorally, clearly influenced the ways in which they organized instruction and created a daily routine of Do-Now, lecture, reading, and extension activity. The content of each lesson, however, directly aligned with the SOLs and these activities promoted memorization and recall of SOL, packaged for consumption with chunks of deliverable content and supported with explicit strategy instruction to promote memorization and recall for the end-of-course test.

John admitted, “I think often we focus on rote memorization. You’ve [the first author] seen the way we drill all the time.” When asked to explain the philosophy or thinking behind instructional decisions, John always talked about the test, while Anna talked about what worked best for struggling students, particularly those identified with disabilities.

John wanted all of his students—100%—to pass the SOL test. He freely admitted that he had developed a psychological complex, or what Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) described as “addictive presentism,” about the SOLs, and had become a “scorer” who “lived for SOL scores.” He said that, “honestly, goal number one for me is to get my students to pass the SOL. I know that sounds . . . [pauses]. That is our number one goal and we often leave a lot of stuff by the wayside to accomplish that goal.” He added, “[The SOL test scores] are the only thing that tell me that I’m actually doing anything effective by the end of the year when my kids do well.” When pushed to expand on his philosophy of teaching, John said,

It’s hard, I guess it’s sort of changed. I’ve become such a scorer. Everything I live for is these scores because I feel that’s just kind of the way things are done here. It’s probably not the same way in other places that aren’t under such pressure to make AYP and stuff. But I’d say my philosophy is that I can and should be able to get every kid to pass that is here and isn’t a severe behavior problem. But I don’t know [long pause]. I also believe, I’d love to make the kids like history, get the stories out of it. But I don’t know.

It appeared that for John, the short-term gratification—“the rush”—he achieved when his students achieved high pass rates (as called for by his school administrators) was something that constrained his ability to ascribe any other purpose or significance for teaching World History (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 2524). Preparing students for the World History I exam motivated and consumed his professional pedagogical philosophy and practice.
Anna, however, after listening to John, revealed her sense of professional conflict between being recognized by the administration for successfully preparing their students for the test and a feeling that, as a special educator, there had to be some other purpose or significance for teaching children history. She said,

Because my background is SPED I can’t think that way because if I had to measure my students’ success with them passing things, then I’d have a serious problem because all of my kids have some learning issues. But, I do want kids to pass the SOL so they can get credit to graduate. But for my SPED mind, it’s giving them as many tools as they can use in the outside world. And yes, [our scores] definitely reflect on us as teachers but I’m not as hard on myself as John is. Because I do what I can do and if they don’t learn it then, it’s just, that sucks.

This statement reflects what S. J. Ball (2003) has described as “a kind of values schizophrenia” where a teacher struggles with the feeling of “a potential ‘splitting’ between [their] own judgments about ‘good practice’ and students’ ‘needs’ and the rigors of performance” (p. 221) as defined by their students’ success on ongoing benchmark tests and the final end-of-course test.

Both teachers readily admitted that a great deal of pressure was placed on them from the administration (at the school and central office). Anna noted, “there’s collective pressure that’s put on the SOL content teachers. This is what you’re doing. This is what the kids need to do.” John added, “and there’s a sense, like I take it really seriously because it needs to be taken seriously . . . it’s very stressful. Very stressful. Yeah, I just don’t know.” Both John and Anna could clearly articulate the concerted administrative pressure to meet their “productivity target” and could also provide examples of the way they were monitored, managed, and molded by the school division’s social studies supervisor to think that “successful” teaching of World History was ultimately measured through their students’ passing scores on the end-of-course test (see S. J. Ball, 2003; Foucault, 1977; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). In a meeting of World History I teachers with the social studies coordinator from the division’s central office, John recalled,

[right before the tests], not only were we nervous, but we had the social studies coordinator come in and say, “I really think you messed up here and here and here.” Right before the test. That was the worst meeting of my life. You know how you get frustrated? And then you’re irritable and angry? I was shaking angry the entire week. I don’t usually get that way.

Anna added, “it was just a lot of comments that shouldn’t have been said that made us extremely upset.” While John and Anna made sense of the high-stakes
test in slightly different ways, it was evident they both viewed it as important, wanted their students to pass the test, and aligned their instructional decisions accordingly.

Another interesting issue emerged when discussing John and Anna’s curricular decision making—how their respective backgrounds (history, SPED) shaped how they made sense of the content, that is, World History I. Interviews, observations, and curricular materials indicate that the division of labor in terms of designing instruction clearly fell along habituated disciplinary lines. John developed and taught historical content—reflecting the “antecedent subculture” of a discipline that has long favored the teacher-centered telling of the story of the past to children (Goodson & Mangan, 1995). Anna created explicit cognitive-based strategy instruction designed to help struggling learners remember key facts, comprehend text, and understand concepts. Similarly, in their teaching, the general educator/sped educator difference was observable. Anna tended to emphasize strategies (for example, a quick lesson with mnemonics to memorize maps), while John loved talking about and presenting the content and deferred to Anna for the “Jedi mind tricks” (his term for mnemonics and other memory strategies) to help them remember. Interestingly, both teachers took issue with the fact that the SPED teacher had to be the strategy teacher and the history teacher had to be responsible for content.

When sharing their views on history content and how these views influenced their instruction, the teachers immediately laughed, and commented on something they found strange about their professional development inservice on collaboration. As John explained,

I feel like they had a weird thing. They kept saying that the special educator isn’t the content master so he/she shouldn’t deal with content. They kept saying that over and over again. I think that’s kind of funny, because high school isn’t that hard. I mean, we’re adults here. We all passed high school.

Anna added, “and you have to learn the content in order to be a teacher in the high school . . . you can master strategies, but what do you do with the strategies if you don’t know content?” Anna’s comment appeared to be at odds with how the teachers constructed curricular materials and implemented instruction. However, when asked to talk more about their views on history, it became evident that Anna had spent some time thinking about history; she discussed the importance of teaching cause and effect, she reiterated that she enjoyed the narrative structure of history, its potential to get students to think about another time and place. John, when talking about history, became animated when discussing movies and their potential to enrich students’ lives, but otherwise struggled to elucidate why students should study history and reverted back to talking about the test.
The following slice of conversation about why students should learn World History I highlights some of these issues:

**Anna:** [a lot of the content] is really useful.

**John:** I think, yes, they need to know what it is to be Jewish and Christian and Muslim. They need to know... [very long pause].

**Anna:** That people didn’t used to farm.

**John:** [nods], Yes, or that people still farm. Where does your food come from? They say the grocery store!... They probably don’t need to know about the Gupta Empire in India, I don’t see that will ever affect them, ever. I guess that is another part of my teaching philosophy. I don’t think history is that important. We’re the fun class, I think. They don’t need us.

**Anna:** History is a story. And I think that with these kids, I’d like to think that we teach them a little bit about how to use their imagination because a lot of kids have rarely used their imagination before.

In this conversation, beyond the importance of teaching religion, John needed prompting from Anna to think about why students should learn world history. He readily admitted that he didn’t view history as important beyond reflecting the students’ ability to pass the test. This was further evidenced in many informal and formal conversations about the nature, content, and purpose of a history class. Consistently, John talked about test-related issues while Anna would attempt to shift beyond the concept of being a teacher of a school subject that simply exists to be tested. For example, when asked what they might do differently next year, John said, “I think we’re going to try to do more review content questions on your tests throughout the year... and in the packets, in every little unit put in a little quiz, just a 5-question thing.” Anna said,

I think we should teach more cause and effect, to [help them understand] Greece and Rome because in those units there are a lot of cause and effect and more complex ideas... ask them more complicated questions, like for our Do-Nows. Raise the bar... from straight regurgitation.

Pushed on what other skills they needed to learn, Anna promptly responded, “map skills, reading a map.” John concurred, but then reverted to talk about the test: “man, getting map skills, sort of. Oh, I don’t know. It’s so depressing. It’s just [sighs], really... [the] goal for me anyways is to get them to pass the SOL.” Even when asked what he would do in a world without SOL testing, John struggled to envision such a world:

I’ve been thinking about that and I’m not sure because it’s been so drilled into me that that [the SOL test] is the important thing. I think I would try to do more creative projects?... I would like to watch more movies.
His comments serve as a powerful example of S. J. Ball’s (2003) contention that
the “reformed teacher” is conceived of as simply responsive to external requirements and specific targets: . . . teachers are no longer encouraged to have a rationale for practice, account of themselves in terms of a relationship to the meaningfulness of what they do, but are required to produce measurable and “improving” outputs and performances, what is important is what works. (p. 222)

AMBITIOUS TEACHING? DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

While a small and unique sample, the case of John and Anna does offer an interesting snapshot of two gatekeepers making the day-to-day decisions in the classroom within a complex context contending with multiple policy initiatives— inclusion, co-teaching, high-stakes testing. They teach diverse learners (including several identified with disabilities) in a class packed full of factual content with an end-of-course test that directly impacts course credit and high school graduation. And, John and Anna work in a school and division that place a great deal of emphasis on test results. John and Anna worked seamlessly as a collaborative team; they shared a mission, a desire to help all students succeed on the end-of-course test. While they defined this in slightly different ways, the basis of their everyday pedagogical engagement with students was to prepare the students to access and memorize facts to pass the World History test. And, in terms of this ambitious vision of success, they did very well as teachers—100% of the students in the class observed passed the test. That school year the World History I team had a 92.3% pass rate, overall.

The teachers did well in other arenas. Both John and Anna wanted their students to develop “self-sufficiency” in learning history, and observation data did reveal a change in students’ skills over time. They used many instructional approaches that have been shown to increase student learning: activation of prior knowledge, processing activities, strategy instruction, scaffolding (see Fontana, 2004; Scruggs et al., 2007). They provided a structured environment with clear routines to manage student behavior and present and work with World History content. And, importantly, they asked students to draw connections between the civilizations and religions studied—they often reiterated the big picture, the big concepts that pulled early world history together. However, neither teacher could articulate this as a goal of their teaching, as something they intentionally focused on.

At the same time, it was clear that memorization of discrete facts played an enormous role in day-to-day instruction. Students encountered “testable” content in many ways; this content was constantly reviewed and tested. Test preparation occurred throughout the year; the teachers taught testing strategies,
emphasized the importance of the SOL exam, and dedicated several weeks to SOL review. Concern about the test pervaded the teachers’ discussion of their instruction. In addition, the school required a certain number of benchmark tests. These SOL-like tests were given periodically throughout the school year; the teachers administered the tests using a scantron that graded each test and entered the scores into a schoolwide data analysis system. John and Anna had access to each student’s score, as well as a breakdown of student performance by test item and by demographic subgroups (race, gender, ethnicity, SPED, English as Second Language, etc.). The school administration and central office staff also had access to these data and, as discussed earlier, held meetings with teachers to cast an evaluative lens on the ability of the teachers to prepare their students for success on the end-of-course test.

Thus, John and Anna’s co-teaching provides a case of a strong pedagogical articulation between content and process designed to meet the explicit need of preparing students for success on an end-of-course test. Policy—that is, the high-stakes World History I end-of-course examination—influenced John and Anna’s sense of pedagogical authority and decision making in terms of working with struggling learners. In terms of the pressure they felt from the administration, the “performance standards and high stakes test [served as] panoptic mechanisms to hold teachers accountable to “standardized” knowledge” (Webb, 2007, p. 284). Their concerns over “pass rates” served to limit, reify, and routinize the types of instructional activities/routines they felt would work with students who had to be prepared for the content-heavy end-of-course tests. The resulting form of instruction mirrored the same type of “defensive pedagogies” described by Linda McNeil (2000) that reduced the content into fragmented and easily consumable chunks of information to be memorized for the test.

In this context, with policies, practices, and discourse focused on performance and accountability (Jeffrey, 2002), John and Anna did not appear to know how to “create the necessary space for themselves” (Grant, 2003, p. xi) to engage in ambitious teaching practices that pushed student learning about history beyond the testable content. John and Anna did build relationships and connections with each other and with their students, but simply were not ambitious in teaching beyond the test. John, in particular, struggled to see the potential for history to enrich his students’ lives in any meaningful way beyond the test.

While this “teaching to the test” mentality reflects much of the literature on high-stakes testing (see Au, 2007), the way the co-teachers thought about instruction offers implications for the field. John and Anna managed to get struggling learners to pass a high-stakes test through using strategy instruction designed to prepare students to access, comprehend, and memorize chunks of content. But, what if John and Anna had encountered ways to use strategy instruction as called for by De La Paz (2005), that is, specific, scaffolded approaches to teaching reasoning or higher-order thinking skills?
Perhaps methods instructors, or researchers, could include more attention to discipline-specific strategies that help teachers teach “beyond” the test. And, as other research has emphasized (see K. C. Barton & Levstik, 2004), this study highlights the vital importance “purpose” plays in developing ambitious teaching. Teachers need to have a clearly defined purpose that extends beyond test scores, a significant and powerful reason for teaching history in ambitious ways. Perhaps focusing on citizenship, or on the potential of history to teach 21st century skills—to think creatively, think critically, reason effectively, make thoughtful judgments and decisions, to problem-solve—could have given John and Anna reason to teach beyond the test, to ascribe greater significance for history in their students’ lives.

On the other hand it was clear that, in terms of their co-teaching relationship, John and Anna were exemplars. John and Anna themselves viewed their partnership as a “success story.” The case of Anna and John explicitly or implicitly addressed the importance of a number of the expressed needs identified by Scruggs et al. (2007), including volunteerism (they chose each other), training (the summer in-service), compatibility (age, teacher training, shared desire to work with struggling or at-risk students), planning (they share a schedule and a planning time). This study also highlighted the significant role that mentoring, professional development, and earlier experiences with collaboration (both negative and positive) played in how John and Anna made sense of co-teaching. These findings have implications for preservice and in-service teacher education.

Clearly, neither teacher was adequately or explicitly prepared to work in a co-teaching relationship by their teacher education program. As inclusion is a central part of schools, it is vital that teacher education programs include more attention to how two teachers can work together to reach the needs of all students in all contexts, with or without high-stakes tests. This could involve major programmatic changes, like offering a dual license in a content area and special education (already occurring in many universities). Or, teacher education programs could pay closer attention to coursework, field experiences, and mentoring relationships. Field experiences could be designed to incorporate the opportunity for all students to engage in a collaborative teaching partnership. However, the experiences of Anna, who had such negative experiences with collaboration, point to the need for teaching preservice teachers what needs to take place before engaging in collaboration, as well as providing ongoing debriefing and mentoring by a university supervisor, instructional coach, or beginning teacher mentor. John’s positive experiences highlight the importance of providing general educators multiple opportunities to engage in collaboration, to learn how to share “their” classrooms, and avoid the turf issues referred to in the literature. Methods courses could be co-taught by general educators and special educators; this might help future general education history teachers understand the vital importance of strategy instruction designed to help all students learn content. Similarly, this could encourage special educators to
move beyond general strategies to support comprehension and access to history content toward more “domain-specific instructional approaches” that facilitate key concepts and “ways of knowing, reasoning, and problem solving” specific to history instruction (De La Paz & MacArthur, 2003, p. 151). Additionally, teacher educators could work on teaching collaborative partners the importance of developing a shared vision for instruction, a content-specific purpose that promotes ambitious teaching.

Recently D. Ball & Forzani (2007) called for research in education to stretch itself to examine the “instructional dynamic” between teachers, content, students and context (p. 529). Such work is significant because it helps extend our understandings regarding the affordances and constraints of policies on the education of all children in different institutional contexts. By exploring the relational understandings of teachers’ constructions of their pedagogical practices in an era of accountability, this case study reveals how contextual factors, including the socio-economic status of the school division, teacher and student interactions, teacher and teacher interactions, and teacher and administrator interactions, influence policy realization and status in challenging contexts. Although we studied only one pair of co-teachers, our work raises questions with regard to the importance of preparing teachers and administrators to recognize a broader and more democratic vision of teaching all children history that goes beyond equating effective teaching with pass rates on end-of-course tests.

NOTES
1 The names of the school and the teachers are pseudonyms.
2 Division policy does not allow researchers to interview students.

REFERENCES


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APPENDIX

Interview Protocols

Interview #1:

General/Personal Questions:

1. Tell me about your educational background and early teaching experiences.
   a. Prompts: How many years have you been teaching? What is your educational background? What is your content area background?
2. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
3. Describe your current teaching situation (classes taught, subject areas).
4. [For SPED teacher]: What does your SPED caseload look like?
5. Tell me about this class.
   a. How would you characterize your students (overall ability levels, reading levels, behavior issues) in this class?
   b. How many students in this class have been identified with disabilities? What are the disabilities?

Collaboration/Co-Teaching:

1. How is co-teaching being implemented in your school?
2. Were you prepared to collaborate (teacher education, professional development, etc.)? How?
3. Tell me your story: How did you come to work together?
   a. Why did you choose to work as a collab team?
4. Describe the co-teaching process you two employ. How did you come up with this approach?
5. How would you describe your approach to working with each other?
6. Are there any problems/challenges you’ve encountered with this co-teaching model? What do you like about the co-teaching model?
7. How do you collaborate in terms of
   a. Meeting IEP goals of individual students?
   b. Content (what is taught)?
   c. Class responsibilities (teaching, grading, preparing materials)?
8. What kind of specific modifications/accommodations do you make for students identified with disabilities in your classroom?
9. What are specific challenges related to planning for an inclusive class?
Planning/Implementing Instruction:

1. Tell me about how you planned this curriculum.
   a. When do you plan this? How is it working?
   b. What would you change for next year, if anything? Why?
2. How did you develop/organize this curriculum? What influenced your thinking about this?
3. How did you decide to sequence your instruction? Why did you do it this way?
4. What kinds of activities and teaching methods do you typically use? Why?
5. In your view, what are the important big ideas in World History I? Why should students learn history? What do you want students to leave your classroom with?
6. Describe your educational philosophy.
7. What kinds of things work best to teach the kids you teach? Why?
8. What activities are you aware of but don’t do with your students? What would not work? Why?
9. What is the influence of SOLs and the SOL test on your planning? Why?
10. What would you do differently if they did not exist? What would you do the same if they did not exist?
11. What approaches do you use to prepare all students, including students identified with disabilities, for the end-of-year test?

Interview #2

1. You just completed the school year. How do you feel it went? [Additional Prompts]
2. Tell me about your collaborative relationship. How did it go?
   a. How do you feel about your collaboration with your co-teacher? Strengths? Challenges? Things you would have changed?
3. What’s your schedule for next year? Will you be working with each other? What will you do the same next year? What will you do differently?
4. What are some problems/challenges you’ve encountered with co-teaching, if any? How or what did you do to address them?
5. How would you describe you and your co-teachers’ interactions during this year? Were there any challenges you faced in working together?
6. What are some benefits of this co-teaching model, if any?
7. What are your perceptions of co-teaching? How is your working relationship the same and/or different from other teachers in the school?
8. What other SPED duties do you have (question for SPED)?
9. What were your SOL pass rates? How do you feel about these pass rates? What would you do the same next year to prepare students for the test? What will you do differently?
10. What would you do next year if there was no SOL?
11. Do you feel pressure from administration/department head regarding test scores? Whose expectations are you meeting? If the scores aren’t good, what happens? If the scores are good what happens?
12. You collaborate with each other and with the other World History I teacher. Are there expectations for this? Is there money for curriculum work?
13. Talk to me about your students. What do you do well? What will you change?
14. How would you describe your approach to teaching?
15. You mentioned that you don’t do projects with your students. Why?
16. What is your purpose for teaching history? What do you hope your students left your class with? Why?