

Claire Jellinek - PDP Reflection (Identifying names removed)

U.S. History, 2010-2011

PROGRESS TOWARDS MEETING GOALS

- Reflection
- Submitted artifacts
- Data analysis
- Evidence of measurable outcomes

SUBMITTED ARTIFACTS

- Tracking Data for 2nd hour
- Primary Documents Analysis Rubric
- Student work on each strategy (SOAPS, APPARTS, and Written Document Analysis)
(See Documents A – I)
- Reflection
- Data Analysis

*The **final critical reading strategies assessment** will take place in May 2011, but I noted in my October PDP that I would evaluate the results to date by April 15th. My extensive reflection is included here. In May, I will add an appropriate addendum.

REFLECTION

What are the highlights of your PDP journey?

There are three significant highlights that have encouraged me to re-think how I will teach when I come back from my Teaching Ambassador Fellowship in D.C. First, I was surprised by what I learned about the role tone plays in exploring historical documents. Some of the most powerful learning moments were when my students and I embarked on a discussion about what a particular character felt like after reading a document or what my students think a character may have been feeling when he or she wrote it, said it or took it (in the case of photographs). Was there anger? Disgust? Sadness? A sense of loss? What word clues or phrases in the text, radio story or photograph tell you so? What might this tell us about how people felt about that particular historical event? When we heard a radio excerpt from the daughter of a Progressive Era civil rights leader, the students were captivated by her accent, her voice, and her eagerness to get her message out. One student: “Miss, she sounds way too sad for something like that!” Another student: “Well wouldn’t you be if you had to go through something like that...if YOU couldn’t get people to listen?!” Tone is generally something addressed in English classes but I have now seen that it is an especially powerful tool to analyze historical documents with ESL students. My students were even more involved when they could identify with a particular feeling *first*, and then work through the meaning the document brings as a whole.

A second highlight for me was learning about *what kind* of primary documents serve as the most powerful. For example, I wish I had spent more time on period photographs. I want students to see photos as primary documents. We looked at several – especially during the Progressive Era, but in the future I would like to provide photos from each time period. They turned out to be some of the most powerful documents for our students. It is not just because some struggle with their English fluency (though for some that was the case), but often the photos were excellent sources of knowledge because students would

examine the clothing or jewelry of a person. They would look at the kind of make-up a woman had on. They would ask about a person's car and a person's home. In their minds, our students continue to distinguish texts and photos. So much of history can be drawn from photos which reveal the values of the time (e.g. family, architecture, landscapes, and clothing).

I especially wish we had explored more *material object artifacts* as a source of primary documents. Material objects produce important information. Educators often equate the written word with academic authority and our students unconsciously absorb that prejudice. At SVA I think we are so eager to work on our students' reading and writing that we unconsciously tend to ignore untraditional primary documents. When I come back to teaching I will incorporate more non-written sources (beside radio and photographs) such as things people used in their homes or at work (e.g. a phonograph, a carving, or a pair of binoculars). Students may draw the same kind of evidence but they will absolutely be drawn to ask new and different questions. In the future, I will introduce my students to a combination of photos, radio clips, material objects. In fact, I found the *Little Albuquerque Theater* to be extremely helpful (and fun for the students!) in terms of material object artifacts. Students loved exploring 19th century women's purses, the materials used for their clothes, men's tophats, and so on.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHT! What was, perhaps, the most CRUCIAL learning experience for me as a history teacher was realizing that despite a U.S. History curriculum heavily focused on analyzing documents about the plight of slaves (Native *and* African), immigrants (legal *and* illegal), women, and the poor, I have used mostly texts as our source of primary documents. The irony is that many of those groups were not allowed to attend school and could not write. Their stories, therefore, have often been told through *others*. GREAT realization! When I come back to teaching, I will absolutely use more material artifacts.

I also want to note that we used radio/voice excerpts as a primary document, but only occasionally. I will absolutely do this more when I come back from D.C. The *acequia* grant has allowed us to begin exploring oral history and listening to different accents *within* New Mexico (which students had not expected to hear!) and has pushed students to ask questions about history that I do not think they would have otherwise asked.

PROVIDE A NARRATIVE THAT CONNECTS YOUR GROWTH TO YOUR ACTION STEPS AND ARTIFACTS

To establish a baseline for my 2nd hour in each of the three critical reading strategies, I explicitly taught them how to approach the SOPAS, the APPARTS, and the Written Document Analysis. I carefully scaffolded the teaching of the strategies so that we only tackled one strategy at a time and I modeled it for them on a transparency as we went along.

One very minor glitch was that students that I had taught in 9th grade had worked with the SOAPS strategy before (with me) and were thus very already familiar with it – and tired of it. As soon as I remembered that there was one section of 9th grade government which had had Mr. Trager and Ms. Davis, I realized an entire segment of my 11th graders had never used the SOAPS strategy before. I created small learning groups and divided my instruction accordingly. They quickly caught on. To date, I feel as though I still did not adequately teach that group the basics of a SOAPS analysis because I was rushed for time.

Another strong point of instructional growth was directly linked to “Key Action #3”: the rubric (*included*). Initially, my **Primary Documents Analysis Rubric** categories were: (1) recognizing a single perspective of a particular event; (2) recognizing an alternate perspective of that same event; and (3) recognizing the purpose of the document. After having used the rubric, however, I realized that our most meaningful class discussions naturally progressed towards talking about the main idea of document – what message does

the author what you to take away about this event after having read it? I realized that next time I should include a fourth category: "*identifying the main idea of the document*". See below.

Main Idea	I can clearly identify the main idea of this document; I can do this without Ms. J's help.	I can identify the main idea of this document; I can only do this with some help from Ms. J.	I struggle with identifying the main idea of this document; I depend on Ms. J or my peers to talk me through most of it. I depend on Ms. J or my peers to talk me through most of it.	Even with lots of help from Ms. J, I cannot identify the main idea of this document.
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Finally, a significant part of my growth as a teacher during this process was the general thought process around using a rubric. I learned that while rubrics can be very valuable, there are times when they are too clinical, when they create an environment that can squeeze out more abstract self-assessment. I watched my students assess themselves with the rubric and then without it in terms of their comprehension growth with each strategy. It was clear that many of my students liked discussing the challenges they faced with specific strategies but when they had to use a rubric they had to fit their ideas into the boxes I provided. It was constricting. When I pulled the rubric from the process, the learning was more organic, less of a chore. It was a very important realization for me as a teacher.

Action step #5 on my PDP requires students to apply the above critical reading strategies/rubric and formally submit three primary source document analyses in QTR 2, 3 in QTR 3, and 3 in QTR 4 for peer *and* teacher review. This is the step I needed the most latitude on because time was not on our side and using these documents did not always fit in with what we needed to get done. With frequent formative assessments, getting basic content in, and struggling with a three-day teaching week (this year, especially), there was not the time to work on these strategies as frequently as I had envisioned. I also realized that to gain important learning, it is not necessary that my students turn in “three primary source document analyses in QTR 2, 3 in QTR 3, and 3 in QTR 4”. The number per quarter was a figure I generated to create data but human data can be collected and assessed without dividing the data sources in such a draconian fashion. When I come back, I would LOVE to continue this PDP goal (revised to incorporate the lessons learned) and re-configure the data collection to allow more latitude for REAL LIFE school schedules. I do not mean to collect less data but next time I will divide the number of analyzed documents students need to complete *by semester*. This will allow the needed room for unanticipated scheduling glitches and simultaneously ensure that I have a somewhat even documents to months ratio to draw from: perhaps I could collect 4 critical reading strategies in the fall and four in the spring. As long as I make sure students start the year by exploring all three (at least three times each), I believe students can quickly gauge which strategy works for them.

Finally, I learned some basic teaching “lessons learned”. If you look at the APPARTS and SOAPS forms, there is room for AUTHOR and AUDIENCE and students love to simply write the name of the person. Over time, they learned that that would not garner credit because it does not really say *anything* about the persona of the character we are studying. Instead, I have tried to train students to write, for example, “AUTHOR: George Saito, Japanese Naval officer on the USS Michigan.” Another example is evident in *Document A*, an analysis of William Sumner’s “The Rich are Good Natured.” The student wrote “William Graham Sumner” but that tells us nothing about whether the student learned something about who he was.

Similar problems arose when students addressed AUDIENCE. In *Document B* for example, a student kept reiterating, "...people", so we had long conversations in class about why that is not enough.

I also noted that many students struggled with the PRIOR KNOWLEDGE section on the APPARTS form even though we had spent so much time this year talking about that. Then I realized we have also been discussing "historical context" a lot and perhaps, the students were confusing the two. *Document E* made me think that I should have included a category on the rubric that addressed whether or not students could recognize the significance of the document for understanding the historical event. In *Document F*, under "SUBJECT", the student wrote: "...how Hawaii was before", which says little to nothing. It *does* acknowledge that there was a difference between an "old" Hawaii and a "new" Hawaii, but it is not provide enough of a response to earn credit. Students responded much more thoroughly the more we reviewed what a "solid" answer should look like.

Alas, I now realize that I have focused on examples that almost entirely demonstrate "what we need to do better next time" type of reflection but there were numerous excellent examples of growth. My addendum will address this once I get May's data in.

EVIDENCE OF MEASURABLE ARTIFACTS

Quantitative Evidence: My measurable goal was that "Ninety percent of the 11th graders in my 2nd hour United States History class will successfully demonstrate basic comprehension of at least nine primary source documents." I defined successful as (1) accurate comprehension of the text and (2) adequate responses to related questions (oral and written). I also noted that students must demonstrate effective use of at least 2 of the 3 critical reading strategies I taught: "S.O.A.P.S.", "A.P.P.A.R.T.S.", and/or the "Written Document Analysis" by the week of April 15, 2011.

While 90% of my 2nd hour students did not demonstrate effective use of at least 2 of the 3 critical reading strategies, 67% did. This was tough for me because I had hoped to fare better. I will say, however, that three of my students from 2nd hour withdrew leaving only thirteen, two of whom turned in minimal work (all work, not just PDP related) for the duration of both semesters. I am also unsure as to how to calculate a proper % given that time-wise, there was no way I could have gotten them to complete the number of strategies that I had initially envisioned. My initial goal called for nine documents per student which seems very reasonable but one document analysis – done well – was much more time consuming than I had thought (whether for homework or for in-class work, or a combination thereof). *What was I thinking?* You have to be willing to use one, or even two, class periods on a given document. When I did, it was GREAT because I felt relaxed about giving students room to discuss it without timing the discussion. When I was pressed for time, however, I rushed them and they got much less out of it. All in all, my measurable goal of "ninety percent of the 11th graders in my 2nd hour United States History class will successfully demonstrate basic comprehension of at least nine primary source documents" was too ambitious.

Now look at the tracking data (see "PDP Tracking Data – 2nd hour"). With only 12 students in my 2nd hour (3 withdrew from SVA) and 4 of them turned documents in on a very inconsistent basis if at all. What was not defined in my original PDP was how I defined "basic comprehension" on my rubric. Early on, I determined that "basic comprehension" is a '2+' or higher. We analyzed 11 documents in all. To reach my goal, 90% of the class would have to earn a basic comprehension score of a '2+' or higher on 81% (i.e. 9 of the 11 documents) of the documents. If you look at the data table, the far right columns demonstrate the total # of Documents earning a '2+' or higher and finally, the percentage of "basic comp" (out of 11 analyzed). Exactly 6 of my 12 students in that class reached the 90% goal. However, if you look carefully

at the data, you will also see that of the 12 students in that class, 4 of them – a full 33% – turned in no work at all. This clearly had an enormous impact on my class-wide percentage.

Qualitative Evidence: The PDP process this year was VERY valuable in terms of informing my teaching. It is because of my PDP that I altered the way I approached both the teaching of content *and* the teaching of two specific skills: identifying multiple perspectives and developing a valid argument. This was especially true with the three specific historical periods: Reconstruction, WWI, and WWII (which we are currently studying).

Perhaps what set me off on my primary documents journey was a text I obtained from _____ at Amy Biehl High School, a piece by George Fitzhugh. I began to work on it with my students very early on in the year. He wrote a piece in the mid-1800s arguing *in favor of* slavery and it absolutely STUNNED our students: “*Did he really think this?*” “*At Truman, all we learned was that everyone thought slavery was bad. We studied slavery a lot in 8th grade but we never even looked at things like this.*”

As a second example, when studying WWI, we read excerpts of letters from soldiers describing the horrors of trench warfare. My students had already read about soldiers sleeping in trenches, how rats crawled across the men, the incessant firing, the noise, and the effects of mustard gas but I will not forget the expressions and reactions of my students when we formed a circle and read from a letter of a soldier who had found worms burrowing into his feet, constant infections around his mouth, no food, and no one to talk to about being afraid. Traditionally, I had been calling on students individually to read small excerpts of the letter but once the students became intrigued – and they did! – they began to “popcorn the reading” (volunteering to read excerpts one another without my calling on them). It was overwhelming to watch – very emotional.

Additionally, we read a letter from a Japanese-American couple who had been divided vis-à-vis the United States WWII internment policy. A Japanese-American man in New Mexico had written a letter to his wife who had been interned in Montana. The letter had been translated from Japanese to English but there were many spots where the translation was rough and hard to read. Our students often assume that happens only with Mexicans. As they struggled to read the letter, they began to ask important questions: “*Why couldn’t they just write in English?*” “*Who translated for them?*” “*Couldn’t they see each other...at all?*”

Ultimately, I made incredible progress with critical reading skills and this year’s junior class even if I did not make the 90% prescribed for in my initial PDP offering. They now ask stronger questions: more abstract, level three in nature, and more with more interest than they used to. My 11th grade students will walk away from the junior year of history with a tremendous regard for primary documents and some very specific analytical skills that they will be able to use in their senior year and college...and in life!