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# Resource to support teaching local history in Baxter, Iowa

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## Resource to support teaching local history in Baxter, Iowa

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### **Abstract**

National, state, and local standards are the forerunners in what educators are using to teach students in the classrooms. A lack of resources for young students can be detrimental when teaching students while also trying to follow those standards. The upper elementary grades at Baxter Community School District are lacking in those resources to teach about the local history of their town. The purpose of this project is to create an interactive book that can be used to help fulfill those needs in the teaching of local history. A concern for this project was determining what items to include in the book and what sources would be available to use for the research. A final concern was how to organize the information in the book.

The book, *Baxter: Through the Years* was created by using the information gained from an interview with Bev Cross the local historian, Jasper County Historical Society, and from six books: *Recollections and Sketches of Northwest Jasper*; *A History of the Schools of Jasper County, Iowa*; *Pioneer Tales of Jasper County*; *My Ain Folk*; *A Dictionary of Iowa Place-Names*; and *History of Jasper County Iowa*.

Resource to Support Teaching Local History in Baxter, Iowa

A Graduate Research Project  
Submitted to the  
Division of School Library Studies  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by  
Greg Pickett  
August 2014

This Project by: Greg Pickett

Titled: Resource to Support Teaching Local History in Baxter, Iowa

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

National, state, and local standards are the forerunners in what educators are using to teach students in the classrooms. A lack of resources for young students can be detrimental when teaching students while also trying to follow those standards. The upper elementary grades at Baxter Community School District are lacking in those resources to teach about the local history of their town. The purpose of this project is to create an interactive book that can be used to help fulfill those needs in the teaching of local history. A concern for this project was determining what items to include in the book and what sources would be available to use for the research. A final concern was how to organize the information in the book.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“If you don’t know where you are, you don’t know who you are.”

-Wendell Berry (Stegner, 1992)

Where did you grow up? Did anything special happen there? Can you tell me a little about the history there? If we have a sense of place, we should be able to answer questions like this. However, without proper resources, teachers cannot teach students about the valuable history of their locale. Because age-appropriate and organized resources about the history of their local environment are not readily accessible, local students may never know the roots and stories of their town, Baxter, IA.

Baxter, IA is located in Jasper County about 20 miles from the Iowa Speedway located in Newton, IA and about 38 miles northeast of Des Moines. In 2010, the population was approximately 1,101 according to the Iowa Census (Iowa State University, 2011). Baxter was established in 1883 on October 24<sup>th</sup> by David and Amy Smith and then was incorporated on December 13, 1894. Baxter was named for its first postmaster, S. Baxter Higgins (Savage, 2007).

#### **Problem Statement**

Studying local history provides the student with increased interest in the larger subject of history. The student advances from memorizing names, dates and places, to the desire of knowing what was being said about people, places or events (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Preservation Foundation, 2014). To accomplish such instruction, teachers and students need access to authoritative documents, primary source materials, and realia. According to the Iowa



Core (2010), students in grades 3-5 should be able to understand historical patterns, periods of time and the relationships among these elements.

## **Justification**

### **Importance of teaching history**

According to the Bradley Commission, history belongs in the school programs of all students, regardless of their academic standing and preparation, of their curricular track, or of their plans for the future. This provides a way for citizens to understand each other and their society. Additionally, history can help to deal with and identify change and link it to the past and present (The Bradley Commission on History in Schools, 1989).

Standards have been developed at the National and State levels that coincide with the Bradley Commission. Since its inception in 1988 the National Center for History in Schools (NCHS) has advocated for the improvement and enlivenment of teaching history at all levels. The NCHS has developed standards to be used for development of K-12 school curriculums in history and social studies (National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA).

### **Importance of local history**

By teaching local history, teachers are able to expose students to a larger historical context (Clark, 2004). The National Council for Social Studies has developed a set of standards based on ten themes. Several of these themes relate to the study of local history:

Time, Continuity, and Change

People, Places, and Environments

Individual Development and Identity

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Power, Authority, and Governance

## Civic Ideals and Practices

(National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2010)

*Time, Continuity, and Change* requires students to learn about the past and see how it can have an impact on the future. The theme of *People, Places, and Environments* sets expectations for students to map information from their understanding of the world in spatial terms. Students can find their identities with the theme of *Individual Development and Identity* by exploring how the environment plays a role in human development. *Individuals, Groups, and Institutions* includes standards for students to see how each of these topics can influence a town's changes over time. *Power, Authority, and Governance* demonstrates how all forms of the government function including at the local level. In the last theme, students examine how *Civic Ideals and Practices* across time prepares the students to close the gap between present practices and from which when they were formed in the past (NCSS, 2010).

The NCHS demonstrates how taking a “here-there-then” approach takes students from the present, to back in time to enlarge the child's view of their geographic and historical understandings back in time. This approach falls under NCHS's topic 1: Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago (NCHS, UCLA).

### **Deficiencies**

Currently, there are limited resources available that would appeal and be comprehended by an upper elementary student. A search of the school/public library catalog for Baxter, Iowa returned few results. Available resources about local history are either at a reading level beyond the reach of a typical upper elementary student or they are uninteresting. This makes it difficult not only teach the subject, but also to develop lessons to keep the attention of students.

Students should have the opportunity to learn about their local town's history from a resource that will pique their interest. Teachers should have a resource that connects the past with the present. With such a resource, local history could be taught at Baxter Elementary School.

### **Significance**

A resource that provides the teacher and students a means to learn about the local history of Baxter, IA will help to put a perspective on what has taken place around them. In addition, it can help to make connections to how the world has changed. By examining the local history, students can have a first-hand look at how the town has evolved from when it began in 1883 to its present form today. Additionally, students who know about their local history might develop a sense of pride for where they call home.

### **Audience**

The outcome of this project will benefit teachers in the upper elementary classrooms that teach social studies. Ultimately, the students in the social studies classes will gain knowledge of their locale and have the opportunity to develop points of pride. This project could have an impact on parents, community members, and other students if a copy of this book is available in the public/school library.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project is to create an interactive book that can be used in grades 3-5 to complement the local history curriculum. The content of this book is comprised of biographical information of town leaders over history, changes in Main Street over time, landmarks and important historical sites, and critical incidents in the town's history.

### **Research Questions**

1. What components of Baxter, IA history should be included in this project?
2. What is the nature of sources of information for a student-engaging resource?
3. What is the best organizational structure for a local history resource?

### **Assumptions**

An assumption made about the students in upper elementary classes is that they do not have much knowledge about the history of Baxter, IA. Another assumption is that upon the completion of this project the upper elementary teachers will use this book to help teach local history of Baxter, IA.

### **Limitations**

The sources of information for this project will be limited to interviewing individuals in the community as well as drawing upon resources found at the local historical society. Further, resources will be limited to those that fit readability and interest for elementary school readers.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The upper elementary social studies classes are unable to study a unit on the local history of Baxter, Iowa, because content is not available at an age-appropriate level for students. The purpose of this research project is to create an age-appropriate interactive book for students and teachers to facilitate the teaching of local history in the town of Baxter. The following review of research and literature support this project in these three areas: importance of teaching history, teaching with primary sources, and using interactive text.

#### **Importance of Teaching History**

In 1987, the Bradley Commission (1989) was formed to evaluate inadequacy of the history curriculum in elementary and secondary classrooms. This group included professionals ranging from classroom teachers to highly regarded authors. While all members of the group shared a passion for history, their political views, geographic region, and academic specialties varied. The first concern was to evaluate the history curriculum in the U.S. All fifty states surveyed, showed that history was subject-ranked highly in the educational curriculum. Upon the conclusion of the findings by the commission they were all in agreement that a foundation for history in schools was in place.

The Bradley Commission (1989) emphasized that as Americans, “It is imperative that all citizens understand how history was shaped in the past, what events and forces either helped or obstructed it, and how it has evolved down to the circumstances and political discourse over time.” Without this understanding, according to the commission, the American education system’s two foremost aims would not be achieved: preparation of all our people for private lives of personal integrity and fulfillment and their preparation for public life as democratic citizens.

The Bradley commission stated that all grades should be taught about history, not only in secondary school. The commission affirmed this by citing,

“Young children are fascinated by heroes, amazing deeds, fantastic tales, and stories of extraordinary feats and locales. History offers a wide range of materials to delight and engage the young learner. Although the use of dates is inappropriate in the early grades, children can begin to develop a sense of time and place ("long, long ago, far away") as they are introduced to historical literature. But as frequently practiced, the expanding horizons pattern discourages imaginative studies of distant worlds, different cultures, and exemplary lives” (p. 15).

In its position paper on social studies for early childhood and elementary school, the National Council for Social Studies supports the thoughts of the Bradley Commission on the value of preparing students to be citizens by teaching history (NCSS, 1988). According to the NCSS, elementary school social studies, especially in the primary grades, continue to suffer a decline in emphasis. On average, instructional time in this area is approximately 20 minutes per day at the elementary level and 34 minutes at the secondary level (NCSS, 1988). Some schools reported that the teaching of social studies was not present at all in the K-3 grade levels (NCSS, 1988). Teachers established goals for students in the upper elementary classroom that were built upon thinking and decision-making skills, but they were rarely practiced. Essays at this level are rare as well as opportunities to problem solve with inquiry activities that are key ingredients in citizen efficacy (NCSS, 1988).

To enhance the social studies curriculum, the NCSS established a Task Force on Social Studies Standards in 1994. During that time, standards in education were still in the early stages of development. The NCSS felt that if they could provide educators in the social studies field

with a suitable document, then the curriculum development would not be as daunting of a task (NCSS, 2010). Following the release of this book most states adopted or framed social studies standards of their own. However, in 2007 the NCSS Board of Directors felt that a new task force should be formed to reassess the NCSS Standards in hopes of incorporating updated research and educational thinking (NCSS, 2010). This updated book maintains the values of the original while applying new ways to incorporate literacy strategies and digital applications. According to Steven Goldberg, president of National Council for Social Studies in 2010-2011, “We need to preserve the hallmarks of solid social studies instruction so that students will gain the requisite knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to ‘do social studies’ every day, as we prepare them for college, careers, and citizenship in our ever-changing interdependent global society” (NCSS, 2010, p. 7). Most students would agree with Goldberg as Harris and Haydn (2006) found out that they want to learn more about history.

The main focus of Harris and Haydn’s (2006) study was to understand what students like about history and if there were patterns that showed who liked it. To find out the perceptions students had on the subject of history compared to other subjects, Harris and Haydn conducted a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a wide scope in the study. The study used a questionnaire that was distributed to 12 schools across three different areas within the United Kingdom. There were 1740 questionnaires that were filled out. In addition to the questionnaires, 160 students in the 11-14 year old age range were interviewed (Harris and Haydn, 2006).

The questionnaire used contained both closed and open-ended questions to collect the views of the students. These questionnaires were designed to show how students viewed history

in comparison to other subjects. Once the interviews and questionnaires were completed, the data was analyzed to find out if there were any patterns in the responses (Harris & Haydn, 2006).

According to Harris and Haydn (2006) the findings of this study indicated that a majority of students do enjoy history. The questionnaire indicated that students' preference for history had a direct correlation with how their teacher approached the topic and taught it to the students. This was reinforced by responses in the interviews as well. It was prevalent that students enjoyed interactive activities. Harris and Haydn stated that, "When asked to comment on a good lesson students had experienced in history, there were 614 positive comments about interactive teaching approaches" p. 321). Harris and Haydn indicated that the personality of the teachers as well as their interaction with the students were factors that lead students to enjoy history. It was hoped that the findings might be able to discern a particular topic that students enjoyed over the other, but student responses in the survey indicated a wide range of topics with no one topic dominating. When the results from the survey were compared with similar studies that asked if history was 'quite enjoyable' or 'not very enjoyable' it was found that 69.8% felt that it was 'quite enjoyable' (Harris & Haydn, 2006). Carl Savich's (2008) research reinforces that students respond positively to interactive teaching in the subject of history.

Savich (2006) felt that by stimulating critical thinking skills in students it would help to promote their feelings toward history. To do this Savich designed a research project where he used different techniques and strategies to help motivate students to show greater enthusiasm while studying history (Savich, 2006).

Savich (2006) indicated that two different methods were used to teach students in this project. The first method was strictly teaching students with a traditional lecture format. The second method used an interactive approach to teaching. This format involved the use of



inquiry, discussion, and role-play activities. These two methods were used in two different classes of the same subject that contained 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The response from the class where an interactive approach was administered showed an increased amount of engagement, enthusiasm, participation, and overall interest in history.

Quantitative data were collected on how students scored on assignments, quizzes, and tests. To collect qualitative data, a daily journal was kept in a logbook where the researcher assessed and evaluated how students participated and took part in discussions during class. All data was collected over the period of one semester (Savich, 2006).

Savich (2006) indicated that based on the results of qualitative and quantitative data, the difference in responses and scores showed a large difference between the two classes. The test scored in the class that was taught with the interactive method showed much higher scores than the class that was taught using a lecture method. Savich explained that a limitation to his data could be that he may have inadvertently skewed the results. The reason for this is that he wanted a pre-conceived result. There was a possibility that he may have ignored or overlooked some answers or results because they did not fit prior expectations. Additionally, the second class may have been aware that they were being taught differently than the first class so it could have changed their feelings toward the lessons.

With these findings it has been demonstrated that history is indeed an important aspect in education and students do enjoy it when they can be involved in the process. The study of history introduces students to connections they have with the past. By studying history, students are better able to make those connections with the past and see how they can impact the future.

## Teaching with Primary Sources

Primary sources can give students access to the past that no other source can. When teaching with primary sources, there are many items that can be examined; such as speeches, digital recordings in audio or video, artifacts, autobiographies, newspapers, letters, and photographs. By examining these sources, students may have a better grasp of what it may have been like to live during that time period.

Monica Edinger (2000) states, “primary sources are real stuff and real stuff is powerful stuff” (p. viii). Primary sources remind individuals about how things were in the past. It is difficult for a textbook to give someone the same feeling of actually being in that time the way a primary source can. Edinger discusses living and teaching in New York City where she can use Ellis Island, Lower East Side Tenement Museum, and the thriving immigrant neighborhoods as primary sources to visit. However, she notes that all places can use their own locale as a primary source.

Landscapes, maps, and newspapers are all exceptional examples of local primary sources that all communities can utilize to show students the history around them. Landscapes can be either natural or man-made features. Edinger (2000) explains how man-made features can offer a peek into the past through old street furniture such as: benches, streetlights, fire hydrants, telephone booths, and bus stops.

Edinger (2000) explains how maps can help show how locations can change over time. However, it can be difficult to find such maps. During one of her annual downtown tours Edinger (2000) decided to try and utilize some maps of that particular area from various time periods. Unfortunately, she found that there were very few maps that showed the changes over time. She learned that it is typically the buildings that change, but street names and locations

typically remain the same. It is noted that maps of differing time periods that show changes can be useful if they are available.

Edinger found that while teaching with primary sources, newspapers are full of useful information. Newspapers can include interviews, photographs, and other information to show what was happening during the time the newspaper was distributed. The information that can be found in older newspapers can be valuable, but Edinger points out that newer papers can provide information to compare and contrast with the older newspapers.

Edinger (2000) established that the Internet could provide a window into the world that is out of reach. She found that virtual field trips could be an inexpensive way to introduce students to a wide variety of primary sources. Some of these primary sources that can be found through a virtual field trip could contain: videos, photographs, and sounds. Edinger used the Internet to build a relationship with her students and those of a cooperative in Guatemala through a Peace Corps Partnership Program. The interaction between the Guatemalans and her class brought about a deep and meaningful experience that could not be formed elsewhere.

Another important primary resource Edinger (2000) pointed out is by using people as sources. She indicated that teachers should investigate their local community to find residents that have lived there for long periods of time. Letting individuals in the community know that information about the community is being sought is all that typically needs to be done. With her experience she has found that once she has gotten the word out, she usually has no problem getting responses back due to the willingness of people who want to share their stories.

While Edinger highlighted different areas where primary sources can be found outside of a textbook, Eric Randall Tomanec pointed out how sources within a text can also be useful.

However, those sources found within the text need be supplemented with outside primary sources as well (Tomanec, 2010).

In his study, Tomanec (2010) examined three fifth grade social studies textbooks that were used extensively in the State of Texas. The focus of this study was to determine how fifth grade social studies textbooks presented primary sources in an American Revolution unit of study. Tomanec examined seven historical events that took place during the American Revolution. His intention was to determine how primary sources were used within each textbook. The seven events that were examined were: Tax Laws, The Boston Massacre, The Boston Tea Party, Paul Revere's Ride, Lexington and Concord, The Battle of Bunker Hill, and The Declaration of Independence. The primary sources that were found within these textbooks were: quotes, written documents, photographs, cartoons, posters, maps, artifacts, paintings, and sculptures or statues.

To analyze the varying pieces of primary sources found throughout the three textbooks, Tomanec (2010) employed eight instruments of analysis set forth by the National Archives in Washington D.C. These instruments focused on written documents, photographs, cartoons, posters, maps, artifacts, and paintings. These primary sources were then cross examined by counting how many times they had appeared in each textbook pertaining to the American Revolution. The qualitative analysis of the primary sources were assessed by comparing them to a set of questions where answers varied depending on what type of primary source was being examined. These questions are as follows:

1. What kind of primary source is this?
2. Who created the object in question?
3. In what historical and organizational context was the primary source produced?

4. Who was the intended audience of the primary source?
5. How did the primary source affect the flow of events? (p 64)

According to Tomanec (2010), upon analyzing all of the primary sources pertaining to the American Revolution in all three of the textbooks, there were three themes that emerged. These three themes were: conundrum of fact, monolithic representations, and verisimilitude. According to Tomanec, it is essential to include primary sources in a social studies textbook, but one must be aware of conundrum of fact. Primary sources are provided from a personal perspective, and so one must remember three things about them: the information may not be entirely accurate, it might be lacking in details, and there is a possibility of bias.

The second theme of monolithic representation depicted how the primary sources found within a textbook can have an impact on the way students internalize the information. If a textbook provides primary sources that only represent one side of a story, students will not only be learning from only one perspective, but will also miss out on the opportunity to develop their own reasoning about what is being depicted (Tomanec, 2010).

Verisimilitude was the third theme that emerged from Tomanec's research. Social studies textbooks should provide students with viewpoints that cover both sides of the issue so that students can construct their own interpretation of history.

Tomanec (2010) found that while there were shortcomings within the three textbooks examined, there are possible solutions. Educators should continue to use primary sources within the textbooks, but have an increased attention on varying perspectives. Interactive learning in the classroom can be extremely helpful for student understanding of historical events.

These findings indicated that in order for students to have a sense of the past, primary sources should be used to instill the sense of "being" there and enable students to develop their

own feelings about what happened. Tomanec demonstrated how textbooks could provide students with the primary sources they need, but they should be aware of the possibilities of bias. If teachers and students can acknowledge and accommodate bias, the textbook can be a useful resource.

### **Using Interactive Text**

Students interact with digital forms of text through multiple devices such as computers, digital readers or e-Readers, cell phones, and tablets. David Pryor (2013) saw this observation as an opportunity to think about curriculum. As students attend school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they already possess high levels of technological literacy. This poses a problem for the school curriculum, as educators will need to prepare students for a future that is completely different from school, as they knew it. Reading strategies need to be changed to help students be able to comprehend these new forms of literacies (Pryor, 2013).

Digital forms of text have become a large component of a reader's text experience (Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Lenhart, Simon, & Graziano, 2001). According to Pryor, if educators embrace a constructivist approach to reading comprehension, they will see that engaging with digital text presents an opportunity to garner the development of reading strategies for comprehension, while also making the act of reading relevant to the lives of their students. Through these strategies students can begin to make connections with their text in new ways. For instance, Pryor (2013) pointed out how students using computers or Amazon's Kindle devices, are able to embed responses to text, in the form of notes, directly into the text itself. These notes can then be shared with peers and/or teachers for future discussions.

Pryor's study focused on how digital readers supported the development of a deep structure reading comprehension and in what ways digital readers supported efforts to

differentiate the reading experience to meet the unique needs of individual students for learning deep structure comprehension strategies. He studied a group of 9- to 11-year-old participants. Over the course of a school year, eight participants in the 9-11-year-old range were given iPads. Throughout the year, Pryor (2013) conducted 32 participant interviews and four observations of the participants' in their classroom. Additionally, he collected standardized state reading assessment scores for each participant and compared them to those students that did not have access to the iPads.

Once the data had been collected, Pryor created five categories of data or themes. These themes were, accessing digital dictionary, making highlights or notes, conducting Internet research, manipulating fonts, and using multiple apps.

The first theme, accessing digital dictionary, demonstrated how 100% of participants were able to efficiently use the digital dictionary. The function was relied upon heavily when students were reading an instructional level text. Additionally, students found that using the digital dictionary was much faster than using a paper version. Students stated how they typically would not stop reading to go to a paper version of a dictionary, but with a digital version they would make use of it (Pryor, 2013).

The next theme, making highlights or notes, gave students the opportunity to make notes within the text. All participants used this tool. Mostly highlights and notes were used to support a common purpose. Some students listed the reason for highlighting for coming back to it with an adult to understand it better (Pryor, 2013).

All but one student used their iPad to access the Internet for research. Students found that doing a Google search gained more reliable information rather than relying on Wikipedia, which was one of the links the Kindle offered. A student reading a book with an Albanian main

character found that by using the Internet he was better able to understand different parts of the story. Additionally, students were able to find digital images of unfamiliar words or places discussed in their text (Pryor, 2013).

The fourth theme that Pryor found from the results was manipulating fonts. Five of the eight participants used this feature and demonstrated it 32 times during interviews. Three less advanced readers felt that changing the font size made the text easier to read. Another student mentioned how some paper books can be intimidating when there are so many pages and the words are so small; but with the ability to change the font size, the book is not as overwhelming (Pryor, 2013).

The last theme was using multiple apps. The apps that students accessed to help develop their fluency were conducting Internet research, participating in the class online book group blog, and listening to audio books while reading text (Pryor, 2013).

State reading test score data were analyzed too, and the findings showed that the fourth and fifth grade classes of the participants were at the same level or above when comparing to other fourth and fifth grade classes. When compared to their peers, the participating students exceeded state reading standards at a higher rate. The data showed that 15% more fourth graders and 17% more fifth graders exceeded standards (Pryor, 2013).

While this study did substantiate that digital readers can have a direct impact on students using deep structure comprehension strategies, it was not without limitations. This study only focused on a small group of 9-11 year old students. Further studies might need to study a larger population. Another limitation is that with the use of technology this research may only represent a small portion of the potential digital readers can be utilized for comprehension strategies (Pryor, 2013). Adam Kelley's (2011) study of e-books took a deeper look at how



students could benefit from the use of e-books if outfitted with functions to cover a wider range of reading abilities.

Kelley (2011) pointed out that e-books should give all readers the background knowledge they need to understand the book. With this knowledge, the reading comprehension would be enhanced. To do this, e-books should provide multimedia at the times it is needed throughout the text. Clark and Mayer (as cited in Kelley, 2011) stated that, “when narration is matched with graphics, users are able to learn more information at one time because the graphic can be processed through a visual channel in the brain, while the narration is processed via the auditory channel.” However, it is important to note that according to Oakley and Jay (as cited in Kelley, 2011), an e-book overloaded with multimedia runs the risk of being reduced to “edutainment.”

Kelley produced an e-book based on the print version of *Rascal* that contained several chapters where a slideshow was introduced to the student before key moments in the story to build the background knowledge that might be needed. Additionally, the entire book offered optional narration. Throughout each chapter students had the opportunity to delve more deeply into the text by exploring vocabulary words, historical people, and some historical events that available within the text itself. As students came to a vocabulary word that has been selected as critical for comprehending the story, students were tasked with a multiple-choice question to provide meaning of a word in the context of the story. If unable to answer the question, students were then re-directed to slides that gave more information about the meaning of the word (Kelley, 2011).

In order to find out how the e-book would be received and its impact on comprehension scores Kelley sent home a consent form to thirty-three students in the class. After additional attempts at contacting parents, six forms were received (Kelley, 2011).

Students used the e-book for 30 minutes each day while Kelley took notes on behaviors and/or reactions to the story. At the end of the first week of reading the e-book, Kelley met with each student and asked for his or her thoughts on the book. If the student did not respond, an open-ended question was asked to stimulate a response (Kelley, 2011).

When students reached chapter 5, the midpoint of the book, they met with Kelley again to talk about their thoughts on the book. It was stressed that their responses would help make future e-books better. Again if there wasn't a response Kelley (2011) would ask an open-ended question to stimulate a response about what their thoughts were on the e-book.

Once students finished the e-book they met with the principal so they could fill out a questionnaire with anonymity. The purpose of the questionnaire was to seek out what features the students used within the e-book. If a student used a particular feature another question was asked about what the student felt about that feature (Kelley, 2011).

The results of the questionnaire showed that four out of six students used the vocabulary feature and felt that the vocabulary quizzes helped teach new vocabulary. Also, it was indicated that the clue or picture that was provided made it easier to understand as well. Students also felt that the interactive dictionary helped by providing how to pronounce words (Kelley, 2011).

Five out of the six students had noted that they used the narration feature at some point during their reading. Students felt that the narration helped them to hear words that they may not know without help. Also, the students enjoyed hearing the book being read to them fluently. The student who did not use this feature said that they could read faster without it (Kelley, 2011).

Kelley (2011) found that all students had used the background knowledge building features at least once. All students agreed that these features helped with their understanding of the text that they may not have been able to do on their own.

Kelley (2011) wrote that when students were asked about how an e-book is different from a normal paperback they responded with it being easier to read, more organized, more exciting, no page turning, and it has narration. Also, students were asked if they would like to have all their books in e-book format, and all but one student replied affirmatively. They felt that it allowed them to read faster, narration made it easier, and the e-book had more information to help with understanding the content. It was noted that the student who responded negatively raised the necessity of an access to a computer as the reason for his response.

Finally, comprehension data were collected from the Accelerated Reading program pertaining to each student's reading level, year-to-date comprehension test average, and *Rascal* e-book comprehension score. It was found that four out of six students scored higher for the e-book than they did for books at their reading level. The *Rascal* e-book was scored at a 7.0 level in Accelerated Reader, which is nearly four reading years above the students' current reading levels. Kelley (2011) indicated that it was encouraging to see that all students were successful despite the e-book being at a higher reading level.

Kelley (2011) noted that this research was limited to the participation of only six students. Also, this e-book was only tested in one class at a school and Kelley was the teacher so that could have influenced the interviews.

Based on the research, Kelley (2011) concluded that e-books could improve student learning and reading comprehension. The findings indicated that four out of six students showed improvement in the reading comprehension scores compared to their comprehension scores throughout the same school year. Victoria Cardullo (2013) agreed that the iPad could have a direct impact on students when they use it to interact with the text.

The purpose of Cardullo's (2013) study was to investigate the experiences of eighth-grade readers as they read nonfiction text on an iPad for academic purposes. To find out what experiences that the eighth graders had, Cardullo asked these two research questions:

1. What reading comprehension strategies do eighth-grade students use to read nonfiction text using the iPad?
2. What role do the iPad features play in the reading process? (2013, p. 2)

Cardullo (2013) employed a case study method with seven eighth-grade students in a social studies classroom located in a single charter middle school. The purpose was to investigate the reader's use of comprehension strategies employed by the student while reading, engaging and interacting with nonfiction text supported on the iPad. Before the case study students were given an opportunity to examine the iPad as well as have training from the researcher on how to use it.

During the case study the teacher in the social studies classroom included reading strategies within the lesson plans. These strategies contained identification of main idea, summary, and supporting details. Additionally, content area strategies were included such as evaluating primary and secondary sources, critical thinking questions, and content related vocabulary strategies and graphic organizers (Cardullo, 2013).

Cardullo (2013) spent a considerable amount of time in the classroom both as a passive observer and an active observer. Also, students were given a survey on their use of the iPad before and after the case study. Throughout the study students were observed using the device to research and engage in electronic writing, digital note taking, photographing artifacts and creating video book reports.

Students were found to have used a variety of comprehension strategies as they read the nonfiction text using the iPad. Context clues were the highest strategy to be used when there was an absence of hyperlinks. Students found that when a word could be clicked on, it would

undoubtedly help them to understand the text. Students stated that they found the videos and graphics to be a tool that helped them to comprehend the text as well. Cardullo (2013) explained that students felt more confident using the device throughout the process and that it helped them to understand the text in a whole new way than if they were reading it in paper form.

A limitation of this study would be the sample size. The proposed sample was chosen because they were proficient readers that were knowledgeable in different comprehension strategies.

### **Summary**

The Bradley Commission (1989) emphasized how all citizens should have the opportunity to know how history has shaped the past and present. Also, it was found that only 24 minutes of the day in the elementary and 34 minutes in the secondary is spent in social studies (Social, 1988). The NCSS (2010) found that the study of history introduces students to connections they have with the past. Harris and Haydn (2006) indicated that students do enjoy learning about history, while Savich (2006) indicated that by using an interactive method of teaching can help to build that enthusiasm for history. By studying history, students are better able to make those connections with the past and see how they can impact the future.

Edinger (2000) explains that it is difficult for a textbook to give someone the same feeling of actually being in that time the way a primary source can. She notes that all places no matter the locale can have a multitude of primary sources if they just take the time to look around. Tomanec (2010) discusses how primary sources can be used within textbooks. However, educators need to be aware that the primary sources can be biased.

Pryor (2013) found that students felt that books can be less intimidating when the function of manipulating the text was present. Kelley (2011) emphasized that to enhance reading

comprehension e-books should provide multimedia when it is needed within a text. Cardullo (2013) explained that students felt that when using e-books that had hyperlinks embedded into them they were better able to build upon the knowledge needed to comprehend the text.

These findings indicate that students are using multimodal tools to develop literacy skills rather than merely consuming content. New literacies require new knowledge, skills, and dispositions for learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Cardullo, 2013). It is necessary then to create an interactive book where students will have the opportunity to learn more about the history of Baxter, Iowa.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Problem/Purpose**

Currently, there are not any age-appropriate informational books for upper elementary students that explain the history of Baxter, Iowa. The purpose of this research project was to create an age-appropriate book that students can interact with and learn about the history of Baxter.

#### **Description of the Project**

The researcher created an interactive informational book that can be used as a source of information for upper elementary students, teachers, parents, and community members to learn more about the history of Baxter, Iowa. The book can be used by itself or in conjunction to a social studies curriculum studying local history. The primary audience of this project will be upper elementary students.

#### **Procedure**

The researcher used the Baxter Historical Society and the Jasper County Historical Society as sources for information for this project. These historical societies provided primary sources for the interactive book. The Newton Public Library was used to locate secondary information as well. These sources provided county historical documents and articles on the history of Baxter, IA.

To gain the insight of the residents of Baxter and surrounding towns, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted individually. The researcher will posted flyers about meeting times to discuss the history of Baxter at the local library in Baxter, the post office, and convenience store. The flyers were posted at the surrounding towns of Colfax, Mingo,

Collins, Maxwell, Newton, Ira, and Melbourne. Unfortunately, both the meeting times fell on days where the weather was unfavorable for travel. The Baxter historical society, which consisted of one person, Bev Cross was interviewed and provided information that was beneficial to the research. Cross was a former director for the Jasper County Historical Society as well.

Once the information was collected, the researcher compiled a list of overlapping events from the various sources. This list indicated the events that had a significant impact on the residents/town. With the help of Wyatt Eide, fifth grade teacher at Baxter Elementary, the researcher noted what they felt should not be left out of the book.

After the lists of important events were collected the researcher created the book using Shutterfly. The format of the book followed a timeline of events within Baxter, IA. The researcher used QR (quick response) codes within the book so students can learn further information about the town of Baxter, Iowa. The QR codes are linked to a preexisting webpages or videos. These QR codes were used to connect the student with the text by enabling them to go further into the history of Baxter. The QR codes were used in areas of the book where more information could be used to help explain a topic or issue.

Upon the completion of the book, the researcher enlisted the assistance of a colleague Mr. Eide to review the book before it was printed. This teacher was chosen because he teaches social studies/history at Baxter. After the review, any changes or additions to the book were made, and then it was printed.

### **Limitations**

This project was limited by the availability of authentic information. The researcher only used the surrounding communities for interviews and only the local historical societies. Only one



teacher at Baxter Elementary was used in the review of the book. This limited the input that could be received before sending the book to print. However, changes can be made to the book after it has been printed if additional feedback is deemed necessary to make a reprint. If this happens Mr. Eide will again review the book before a reprint is made.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PROJECT

See the separately bound project entitled *Baxter: Through the Years*.

A copy of *Baxter: Through the Years* is available in the Baxter Community Library: [www.baxter.lib.ia.us](http://www.baxter.lib.ia.us)  
A copy of the project is also available in the School Library Studies office at University of Northern Iowa: [www.uni.edu/coe/ci/sls](http://www.uni.edu/coe/ci/sls)  
Note added: Oct. 19, 2015

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When teaching about the local history of Baxter, Iowa, teachers in the upper elementary classrooms have found resources to be insufficient. Available information is either presented in text above the level of the readers or is severely limited. The purpose of this project was to create an interactive book that teacher and students in grades 3-5 can use to enhance the local history curriculum.

#### Summary

The researcher used available resources on the history of Baxter, Iowa. Those resources included books from the local school/public library, an interview with the town historian, and sources from the Jasper County Historical Society.

To answer the research question of what the nature of sources of information for a student engaging resource, the researcher found that most of the information came from the interview and a book at the local library, *Recollections and Sketches of Northwest Jasper*. The Jasper County Historical Society provided many original pictures for the project as well. To deepen the learning experience and engage the students, the researcher found videos on the Internet used as components to make the book interactive. The videos were referenced in the book with QR Codes. Students will scan the code with a device and then be directed to the video or other media.

After all information was collected, the researcher was able to answer the next two research questions of what components of Baxter, IA history should be included and what is the best organizational structure for a local history resource. The researcher met with Mr. Wyatt Eide to select appropriate information to include in the book. Both Eide and the researcher felt

that using a timeline format would help the students to see how a town can change over time. Then the researcher used Shutterfly to create the book. Throughout the book, questions were posed to readers. These questions appeared in the book itself or through a QR Code. Students would use an electronic device to scan the QR code to learn more about what appeared on the corresponding page. Some questions were meant for students to go and research an item, and others were meant as a discussion piece. After the informational aspect of the book was complete an index was created. The researcher created the index using items that were important to the contents of the book.

### **Conclusions**

This book was created for the use of upper elementary students and teachers in enhancing the curriculum about local history of Baxter, Iowa. All students, teachers, parents, and community members may use this book to learn more about the history of their town.

### **Recommendations**

While the resources that were used for the research of this project had valuable information, experiences can be an even better tool to discovering more about the town around them. Further research could be done by interviewing more people and finding out what they have to offer. The people of Baxter might have more to offer than what was discovered by the researcher. Therefore, more primary sources could be made available that the researcher could use. A possible future project might be video-recorded interviews of citizens recalling stories from Baxter's past. Such a project might be appropriate for students to undertake once their interest is piqued by the current interactive book.

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## APPENDIX A

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me what a typical day was like growing up during elementary school? The summer?
2. What was a favorite thing to do when you were younger?
3. What stores do you remember in Baxter?
4. What was Main Street like?
5. How did you get to school?
6. What did you want to be when you grew up?
7. What was the best memory you remember while growing up?
8. What did a typical dinner consist of?
9. Did you have a favorite lunch at school or did you take your lunch? If so, what was it?
10. What was one of the most memorable events that you can remember that happened in Baxter?