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M is for Marshalltown

Beth S. Steffa
University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract

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The template for this project will be shared with the third grade teachers who teach the unit, and three third grade students who have recently completed the Marshalltown history unit.

The target audience for this project is third grade students and teachers. Students in kindergarten through fourth grade, and parents can also benefit from the book. The book is designed to engage students in the study of their local community and give them a glimpse into the past in the hopes that students will feel connected and have the desire to learn more about their community.

M is for Marshalltown

This Graduate Research Project

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Division of School Library Media Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Northern Iowa

By Beth S. Steffa

April 23, 2006

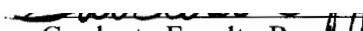
This Research Paper by: Beth Steffa

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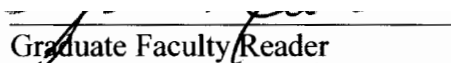
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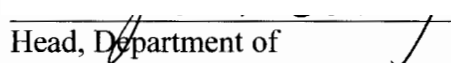

Head, Department of
Curriculum & Instruction

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Abstract

There are not any informational picture books about the required third grade local history unit in Marshalltown, Iowa. The purpose of this research is to provide a new age-appropriate illustrated informational alphabet book to be used in conjunction with the Marshalltown history unit. The format will contain photographs of notable people and historic sites that are taught in the third grade unit. Other people and places that make Marshalltown unique are used in order to make the alphabet complete. Cultural diversity is represented in the project.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“History, by apprizing them of the past, will enable them to judge the future.”

Thomas Jefferson

Learning history in social studies class may seem daunting and boring to many students, whether it is world history, American history, or local community history. Students are often inundated with numerous facts and dates to memorize. This may be difficult for students who are visual learners, English language learners, personal learners, hands-on learners, or who have special needs. There may also be a lack of age-appropriate, appealing books that allow students to make connections with what is being taught in the classroom, or that will pique their interest to learn more.

History is a required course for students beginning at the elementary level. According to the Iowa Department of Education, elementary students are required to learn about the history of their local communities. “Local history refers to the past of a place itself: to what happened, what was recorded, what was preserved, what has been written and said about a place” (Kammen & Prendergast, 2000, p.296). But what if what has been written is not geared toward elementary students? Students learn better and are able to make more connections when age-appropriate, appealing books are available for them. Books written at students’ grade level with captivating illustrations that support the text are ideal. This research project will produce an age-appropriate and appealing local history book about one local community, Marshalltown, Iowa, to be available for the students of the Marshalltown Community School District.

Importance of History

Learning history offers students an opportunity to take a glimpse into the past and gives them a new perspective on how people and events have changed over the years, and how these people and events have made an impact on their lives today. Wineburg (2001) claims “history holds the potential, only partly realized, of humanizing us in ways offered by few other areas in the school curriculum” (p. 5). He further states, “the past becomes a useful resource in our everyday life, an endless storehouse of raw materials to be shaped or bent to meet our present needs. Situating ourselves in time is a basic human need” (p. 5-6). Maxim (1999) pointed out that ‘The National Standards for History, 1996 suggests that “history—along with literature and the arts—provides young children one of the most interesting studies in which they can be engaged: history connects each child with his or her roots and develops a sense of personal belonging in the great sweep of human experience”’ (p. 408). Quality literature that is age-appropriate can help make the subject of history more interesting to elementary age children and can bring the past to life.

Importance of Local History

For young children, learning about their local community is a stepping-stone to learning about the broader subject of history. According to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, “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. The study of local history gives the student a better sense of realism. It is a body of information that can be relevant to the students’ own surroundings” (www.cmhpf.org/kids/TopicalEssays/y-study-it.html). Students are more apt to be

engaged in the topic of history when it is relevant to their lives. For students, learning local history is valuable, because it provides a link to other curricular areas such as “geography, environmental studies, social studies, and civics”(Stephens, 1977, p.11). Stephens states, “Its greatest value, however, lies in what it can contribute to historical training” (p. 11). Stephens further suggests, that by having teachers teach local history, it can bring out the aspects that make the students’ community unique and to strengthen their sense of belonging in the world (p.14). When students learn about the local community history, it promotes citizenship and develops pride for their community.

Importance of Marshalltown, Iowa History

Marshalltown is a mid-sized midwestern city located in the heart of Iowa and is the county seat for Marshall County. Marshalltown has a rich and interesting history. Founding father, Henry Anson, founded Marshalltown in 1853, and since then, the town has continued to grow, both economically and culturally. The biggest impact on Marshalltown’s growth was due to the hard work and determination of Greenleaf Woodbury, who was instrumental in getting the railroad to Marshalltown. Inventors and entrepreneurs have greatly contributed to Marshalltown’s growth. William Fisher founded Fisher Controls, which manufactures valves (Apgar, p. 359). Dave Lennox founded Lennox Industries, which manufactures furnaces and air conditioners (Apgar, p. 375-376). Fisher Controls and Lennox Industries are two of Marshalltown’s largest employers. Businesses that have helped the economy, like Willard’s Furs, Stone’s Restaurant, Diamond Vogel, and Zeno’s have been in business for years and are operated by third – fifth generation family members. Marshalltown is also the hometown of some unique characters, like The King of Koin (T. Nelson Downs), who was a world famous

magician and performed coin tricks in vaudeville (Apgar, 497). Johnny Green was a Pottawattamie Indian chief, who befriended the early settlers, and prevented a massacre by a band of Sioux warriors. Marshalltown is fortunate to have many historical buildings and interesting historical sites. The Binford House, Sower House, and courthouse, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The community takes great pride in its historic Main street project currently underway.

Since Marshalltown was founded, people have come from all parts of the world to live in this great town. Today, people from other countries continue to make Marshalltown their home, with the largest portion of immigrants being Hispanic. They have come to Marshalltown to find employment and many have opened businesses. According to the 2000 U. S. census, the population of Marshalltown was 26,009 with the racial makeup being 86.8% White, 1.3% African American, 0.4% Native American, 1.0% Asian, 0.1 Pacific Islander, 8.6% from other races, 1.8% from two or more races, and 12.6% Hispanic or Latino (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). Due to the large influx of Hispanic immigrants within the past ten years, it is not only important for students who are natives of Marshalltown to learn about the local history, but it is important for those who have immigrated and become a part of the community to know the town's history. By giving students background knowledge of Marshalltown, they will take more pride in their town and develop a sense of ownership, which in turn can make them better citizens.

Curriculum

The history curriculum for Iowa schools is set forth by the Iowa Department of Education. The standards for grades K-4 for history are as follows:

Topic 1 Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, now and long ago.

1. Understands family life now and in the past, and family life in various places long ago.
2. Understands the history of the local community in North America varied long ago (Kendall, 1997, p. 11).

If students are to understand the history of the local community from the past to the present, resources need to be made available that are visually stimulating, with limited text that supports the illustrations.

According to *Iowa History Online*, the state requirements for history in Iowa can be found in the *Iowa Education Code 281:12.5(3)b*. This code states: “Social studies instruction shall include citizenship education, history and social sciences. Democratic beliefs and values, problem-solving skills, and social and political participation skills shall be incorporated. Instruction shall encompass geography, history of the United States and Iowa, and cultures of other people and nations. American citizenship, including the study of national, state, and local government; and awareness of the physical, social, emotional, and mental self shall be infused in the instructional program” (fp.uni.edu/iowaonline/l.htm).

Besides the national and state standards, there are standards and benchmarks mandated by the Marshalltown Community School District (n.d.) for teaching the local history unit for third graders. They are as follows:

Marshalltown Community School District Standards for the Social Studies K-3

Standard 1 Develops the ability to analyze and develop perspectives of past, present, and future.

1.15P Construct the historical development of their community

1.16P Understands that people and places change over time

1.17P Explain the significance of historical holidays

(T. Ahart, personal communication, January 19, 2006).

Historical Literature

With these standards, the National Standards for History ‘stresses that teachers should bring history alive by using “stories, myths, legends, and biographies that capture children’s imaginations and immerse them in times and cultures of the recent and long-ago past”’ (Maxim, 1999, p.411-412). The Standards further recommend “ in addition to stories, children should be introduced to a wide variety of historical artifacts, illustrations, and records that open to them first-hand glimpses into the lives of people in the past” (411-412). The use of stories, artifacts, and records gives more meaning to the students. Maxim further suggests “informational books help bring a historical perspective to the lives of young learners. Informational books function as a major content resource for the history program. Elementary school social studies texts, the traditional source of content, are frequently oversimplified in an attempt to keep them readable. However, a rich collection of informational books can provide the depth not possible in a textbook treatment of the same topic” (419). Wineburg (2001) claims, “we need to feel kinship with the people we study, for this is what engages our interest and makes us feel connected” (p. 6).

Currently, the Marshalltown local history unit is one of the longest units for third grade students. Teachers are expected to use a wide variety of materials, according to the National Standards for History, but the teachers in the Marshalltown Community School District lack current, age-appropriate, and appealing materials to teach this particular unit. Upon searching for materials for this unit at Anson Elementary in Marshalltown, only three resources were found in the reference section of the Anson Elementary media center. They are as follows:

Marshall County History 1862 by the Marshalltown Matins-Kiwanis Club, published in 1982. This small book consists of text only and has a mere 14 pages. The book is very unappealing to elementary students.

History of Marshall County by the Central Iowa Genealogical Society. The publication date for this book is 1974. The book consists of mostly text and includes tables and charts, with several black and white drawings. Actual photos were not used in this book. This book contains 696 pages and is intended for an adult audience. It is inappropriate for elementary students.

Marshalltown History: A Historic Photo Album 1853 – Today by the Times Republican Newspaper in conjunction with the Historical Society of Marshall County. The Pediment Group published this book in 2002. This is the most recent reference book and contains many black and white photos with captions. This book is more appealing than the other two resources, but does not include many of the people and places taught in the Marshalltown local history unit. This book is also intended for an adult audience.

The Marshalltown Public Library has more sources available, but after reviewing what was available, none of them are appealing to elementary age students. These books are for reference only and cannot be loaned out to the school.

Teacher Librarian Role

It is very frustrating to not be able to locate appropriate resources for teachers and students when they are in need. A media specialist has four major roles to fulfill, which include being a teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and a program administrator. *Information Power* says, “As teacher, the library media specialist collaborates with students and other members of the learning community to analyze learning and information needs, to locate and use resources that will meet those needs, and communicate the information the resources provide. As instructional partner, the library media specialist joins with teachers and others to identify links across student information needs, curricular content, learning outcomes, and a wide variety of print, non-print, and electronic information resources. As information specialist, the library media specialist provides leadership and expertise in acquiring and evaluating information resources in all formats” (Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998, p. 4-5). It is the responsibility of the media specialist to locate resources for teachers and students that are age-appropriate, appealing, and apply to content and curricular areas. Students need resources of quality that will pique their curiosity to learn more, specifically when it comes to history.

Lowe also agrees that media specialists are responsible for locating resources. With the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, public schools are being held

accountable for student achievement. This has impacted school libraries to align their resources with the curriculum that is taught and tested in an effort to raise student achievement in schools all over the country (p.5). More importantly, Lowe states, “Teachers often found that when they tried to match textbooks to goals and objectives of the curriculum, much of the curriculum in some areas lacked textbook support” (p. 6). This is definitely the case for the third grade teachers trying to teach the Marshalltown local history unit.

This researcher spoke to two third grade teachers at Anson Elementary in Marshalltown, Iowa, and both agreed it would be an asset to have an alphabet picture book to use for this unit. One of the teachers commented that she had always wanted to have an ABC book about Marshalltown (C. Stansberry, personal communication, January 19, 2006). This researcher also spoke to an elementary school library media specialist in the Marshalltown school district and she stated that they had one book to use and it was falling apart. She said that this is a big unit for third graders and thought it would be an excellent idea to have an alphabet book about the town of Marshalltown (E. Youds, personal communication, January 24, 2006). Another elementary school library media specialist this researcher spoke to was also excited to hear about this research project. She has requested copies of the book upon its completion. She said that it would be a valuable addition to the Marshalltown history unit (Y. Ferguson, personal communication, March 31, 2006).

Another Iowa teacher librarian discovered the Des Moines schools also lacked age-appropriate, attractive books for third graders. She stated, “There are titles about the city for adults, but they are generally very comprehensive and the language is too

complex for third grade students. They also tend to be very large, heavy volumes with extensive information about the city” (Hackett, 2004, p. 8). If students are going to be excited about learning about their local community history, they need appropriate resources.

Alphabet Books

Traditionally, alphabet books have been used to teach young children the letters and sounds of the alphabet. More recently, however, alphabet books have made their way into the classrooms of older elementary students. While the sequence of the letters are the same in these books, the content differs. According to Chaney (1993) many alphabet books now teach concepts other than the usual letter recognition and the sounds of the letters. Different levels of content offer a wider audience range (p. 98). Alphabet books have a place in the content area of social studies. Alphabet books, according to Chaney, “can be valuable for providing students with (1) an introduction to or an overview of a topic, (2) a stimulus for research, (3) oral and written language development opportunities, and (4) multicultural awareness” (98). Alphabet books are very useful to students, because they are in a picture book format, which is a comfortable format for them. They are also non-threatening due to the presence of less text than a textbook and more illustrations.

Gensicke (1993) studied the need for an informational picture book to teach six to ten-year-old students the history of Iowa. Gensicke created an alphabet picture book after she discovered there were not many sources available to teach students about the history of Iowa at this particular grade level.

Gensicke viewed 350 alphabet books before she created her own alphabet book. Important people and places of Iowa were included in the book that represented each letter of the alphabet. Illustrations were included to support the text. Gensicke's book entitled *I is for Iowa* was published in 1995. Gensicke states "The Iowa alphabet book places primary focus on introducing historical concepts. The writer hopes it will serve as an important tool to assist Iowa educators in developing their Iowa history units to meet the needs and interests of children" (p.3).

Problem Statement

There is a lack of age-appropriate material available to use for the Marshalltown history unit for third grade students.

Research Questions

1. Is it possible to create a book about the history of the town of Marshalltown, Iowa for elementary students?
2. What people and places should be a part of the book?
3. Would an alphabet book be an appropriate format?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to provide an age-appropriate, appealing alphabet book on the history of Marshalltown to enhance the Marshalltown history unit.

Definitions

Curriculum – the courses offered by an educational institution Merriam Webster (2006)

Merriam Webster Online. January 22, 2006. Retrieved from <http://webster.com>.

Visual Learners – learners who gain knowledge or understanding better through visual information Merriam Webster (2006) *Merriam Webster Online*. January 22, 2006. Retrieved from <http://webster.com>.

English language learners – learners whose first primary language is not English Merriam Webster (2006) *Merriam Webster Online*. January 22, 2006. Retrieved from <http://webster.com>.

Trade book – a book intended for general readership Merriam Webster (2006) *Merriam Webster Online*. June 16, 2006. Retrieved from <http://webster.com>.

K-W-L – instructional technique using a 3-column chart where teachers activate students' prior knowledge asking what they **Know**, then students specify what they **Want** to learn, finally students discuss what they **Learned** North Central Region Educational Laboratory (2006) *NCREL Online*. June 16, 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/learning/lr2kw.htm>

Assumptions

An alphabet picture book that portrays people and places about the community of Marshalltown, Iowa, would be an asset to the third grade teaching staff in teaching the Marshalltown history unit. It would capture the students' interest and expand the students' knowledge about their town, community and heritage. An illustrated alphabet book would not be able to capture all of Marshalltown's history, but would touch upon the people and places highlighted in the unit from the past to the present.

Limitations

The proposed project of an alphabet book about the town of Marshalltown will develop from the current third grade curriculum from the Marshalltown Community

School District. This book will be age-appropriate for the elementary level, particularly third grade. The book will be limited in text and rich in photographs that support the text. This project is designed to enhance the unit currently taught. The information and photographs will be limited to the number of letters in the alphabet. The people and places selected will cover areas taught in the unit. Business selected will be businesses that have been in business for over fifty years.

Significance

Currently, there is a void for elementary students looking for an informational book on the history of Marshalltown, Iowa. The few resources that are available are written for adults. These books contain mostly text that is very small and hard to read, and contain very few pictures. These books are old and are very unappealing, with the exception of the newest one written in 2002, but even this one is not geared towards elementary age children. These books contain either too much information or not enough. The book *Marshall County History* with 696 pages is just too cumbersome for elementary students. The information contained in these books does not cover the scope of the Marshalltown history unit. This information alphabet book will be age-appropriate with limited text and photographs of the past and the present that will appeal to students to pique their curiosity to learn more about their town. The book will be storybook length, with which students at this grade level are familiar, and the size of the book will accommodate them better than a 600-page volume. This book will be a valuable instructional tool for teachers who currently have very few resources available to them. This book will aid visual learners, English language learners, personal learners, hands-on learners, special needs students, and reluctant readers. Students in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd,

and 4th will benefit from this book as well. This book will enrich the Marshalltown history unit throughout the Marshalltown Community School District.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Presently there is not an informational picture book about the history of Marshalltown, Iowa for the state required third grade local history unit. The purpose of this research is to provide an appealing, age-appropriate picture book to support the Marshalltown history unit. Related research falls into three areas; the significance of teaching history in the elementary classroom, elementary students are capable of learning history, and integrating literature into the history curriculum.

Significance of Teaching History in the Elementary Classroom

Ravitch and Finn, Jr. (1987) conducted a nationwide history and literacy test to 8,000 eleventh grade students throughout the U.S. to assess students' basic knowledge about events and people in history. The results of the test were grim, even more so, because most of the questions related to American history and 78.4 percent of the students were enrolled in American history at the time of the test (p. 46). Only 54.5 percent of the answers were correct. Using the grading scale that is used by classroom teachers, Ravitch and Finn, Jr. state, "the students' overall performance is unsatisfactory" (p. 45-46). Further, "the national average of 55 percent on the history portion is a shameful level of performance" (p. 201).

Ravitch and Finn suggest that this generation of students is ignorant of important things that they should know and these students and those to follow "are at risk of being gravely handicapped by that ignorance upon entry into adulthood, citizenship, and parenthood" (p. 201). They also believe that critical thinking is an important skill for students. Critical thinking can be acquired by studying history and literature, because it

requires “context, perspective, and breadth”, which are the exact experiences that can be gained by studying history and literature (p. 203). Ravitch and Finn recommend that history be studied from the earliest grades to high school and more time should be devoted to the teaching of history during the school day. History should also be taught cumulatively and at a careful pace with reinforcement each year like other subjects. In the early grades, students should learn about the past by studying family histories and local histories (p. 206). According to this recommendation, Ravitch and Finn suggest that students are quite capable of learning history.

The Bradley Commission on History in Schools (1989) formed in 1987 to evaluate the history curriculum across all grade levels in the United States (p. 9). The Commission was comprised of seventeen highly regarded authors and teachers who taught across all grade levels. All members of the Commission came from different regions with different interests and political views, but they all shared the same passion for history and its importance in American schools (p. 18). The Commission, along with others, saw a need for reform to bring the subject of history back into American schools. The Commission affirmed, “that no matter what the time or place, human beings need a sense of self, a sense of how they got where they are in order to understand and evaluate where they are going next. It [History] provides the basis for understanding such other disciplines as philosophy, the arts, religion, literature, law, and government. Through the study of the past, individuals are empowered to develop a more informed way of seeing, knowing, and coping with the larger human society in which they live” (p. 10).

The Commission’s first task was to evaluate the history curriculum in the U. S. The Commission surveyed fifty states and was dismayed to discover that ‘History is

typically a forgotten subject in the elementary schools, where an “expanding environments” approach assumes that preadolescents cannot understand historical concepts’ (p. 11). The Commission further states “A shocking 15 percent of the nation’s youngsters do not study American history in high school” (p. 11). The Commission unanimously agreed there needs to be a foundation for history in our schools (p. 11).

The Commission asserts that the subject of history has a place in all schools for all students regardless of their grade level. History is a subject that can help students understand and deal with change and can help them link the past and the present (p. 21-22). More importantly, the Commission states, “Without such understanding, the two foremost aims of American education will not be achieved – the preparation of all our people for private lives of personal integrity and fulfillment, and their preparation for public life as democratic citizens” (p. 22). The Bradley Commission recommends that elementary students learn history beginning in kindergarten (p. 32). The Bradley Commission and Ravitch and Finn concur that teaching history in the elementary classroom is significant.

Students are Capable of Learning History

Crabtree (1989) asserts that elementary students are ready to learn history. Crabtree gives an example of an inner-city teacher who used a clothesline to teach students about historical time. Current pictures of the students were placed on the clothesline with baby pictures placed further back. As the teacher read books about the past, students would draw pictures and place them even further back on the clothesline. The students determined on their own that dinosaurs lived “long, long, long, long ago” (p. 38). Crabtree asserts that educators should not wait to teach history when students reach a

particular stage of development, because math and science are not taught that way. A foundation is built and more layers added as they progress through school. It would be ridiculous to have students wait until high school to be bombarded with endless dates and facts to memorize. Educators would never do this with math or science, so why should history be any different? (p. 38). Crabtree states “Historical thinking, including causal analysis, takes many years to acquire, but its foundation is rightly laid in the elementary school” (p. 38).

According to Barton and Levstik (1997), before 1980 it was thought that elementary students were not capable of understanding history and needed to wait until they were older when they could understand abstract ideas (p. 13). Barton and Levstik conducted research to see if students from kindergarten through sixth grade could make sense of historical time. Fifty-eight students from rural, inner city, and suburban areas of Kentucky were interviewed. Students were shown visual images representing different time periods from America’s past and asked to put them in order from “longest ago to closest to now” (p. 14). As students put the images in order they were asked what time period they thought the image was from, which pictures were the oldest and newest, how things had changed over time, and had they learned anything about the past outside of school (p. 14).

Barton and Levstik’s research yielded some interesting findings. They say that through the interviews with the students it was made very clear that the students knew a lot about the past and even the youngest students put most of the pictures in the correct order, even though they didn’t separate the images into the different time periods. They were also impressed with the amount of background knowledge the students had about

how life had changed over time including clothing, architecture, furniture, and the effect of technology (p. 14). When it came to understanding historical time, Barton and Levstik state that every single student knew what it meant to put the visual images in order from “oldest to newest” (p. 15). Barton and Levstik assert “When 6-year-olds can sequence a set of pictures ranging over 200 years with this much ease, it suggests the perception of them as lacking in historical knowledge is in need of revision” (p. 15). Moreover, “our research, as well as studies by a number of our colleagues, convinces us that even young children’s ideas about the past are sufficiently complex and warrant a central role in theory and research on history education” (p. 16). Despite previous theories, young children show they are quite capable of learning about the past.

Brophy and VanSledright (1997) conducted research regarding elementary students and learning history. Three fifth grade teachers and their students were part of the case studies, with each teacher approaching history with a different teaching style. The population studied came from middle to upper-middle income families in Michigan (p. 250).

Each case study unit began with a K-W-L chart with stratified samples of students interviewed before and after each unit. Samples of student work, test results, and oral responses during classroom discussions and activities were used. Their research also included a yearlong study of a stratified sample of 10 students who began the study in the late spring of their fourth grade year and concluded at the end of their fifth grade year. This group was chosen because it coincided with the first year these students would experience a chronological survey of U.S. history (p. 8).

Findings from their research suggest that students that have been exposed to the “expanding communities” curriculum are more prepared to learn U.S. history. They support “the body of work that has developed in recent years indicating that elementary students are interested in history and capable of constructing meaningful historical understandings even though many of them are not yet very skillful at abstract thought” (p. 252). Brophy and VanSledright recommend making the learning of history meaningful to children while they are young so that they can gain a sense of identity and while they are at a stage, where they have natural curiosity to learn more by visiting historical sites and reading more about history. Students need to be exposed to a variety of sources other than textbooks to help make “history come alive” (p. 261-263). This research suggests that students are capable of learning history and using sources other than textbooks can keep students engaged in the subject.

Keller (2002) discovered through her research that students in primary and elementary grades are very capable of learning history. The purpose of Keller’s research was to study the pedagogy and content of history lessons at the primary and elementary level (p. 6). Keller used a collective case study to research three classrooms at a public, Montessori, and Christian school, in Bloomington, Indiana. The students were in first through third grade.

Through interviewing, documenting, and observing, Keller’s findings suggest that students at these grade levels are capable of learning and benefiting from history lessons (p. 6). Keller states that learning history helps students develop a sense of judgment, empathy, tolerance and time, and provides rich context for learning basic skills (p. 6). Evidence that children are capable of learning history was found in the students’

historical class journals, family histories researched, and history activities (p. 205).

Learning history helped students gain a better sense of themselves and others (p. 12).

Keller concluded that children in first through third grade are highly capable of benefiting from having history as part of the curriculum. Keller recommends developing curriculum for history at the primary and elementary grade levels.

According to the literature, primary and elementary students are quite capable of learning history and it would be to their benefit to build the foundation beginning in the early years.

Integrating Literature in the Elementary History Curriculum

The Bradley Commission (1989) recommends integrating as much literature as possible into the history curriculum throughout all grade levels, because it “opens for children far richer and more engaging materials than most now enjoy” (p. 187).

Lebsack’s (2002) research derived from her students having a breakdown in understanding during their history lessons. The students would reorganize the lesson through their personal experience and because students were constructing their own knowledge, it was creating a roadblock for new knowledge (p. 1-3).

The research was conducted on 27 nine and ten-year olds in the researcher’s elementary classroom on a U.S. military base located in the Southwest. Lebsack used naturalistic inquiry to study her classroom one full year by teaching history 90 minutes per day and integrating literature with the history lessons. Eighty hours of video were taped, and there were 12 open-ended interviews, 36 individual interviews, 260 written responses, and 92 drawing responses to children’s literature (p. 8).

Lebsack found that “nine and ten year olds were able to think abstractly if they were given a reference point in the present to compare and contrast. This disputed Piaget and Hallman who measured abstract thinking as the ability to sequence dates and talk about history in isolation to the present” (p. 136). Lebsack’s findings suggest that using nonfiction books increased the students’ ability to understand historical lessons (p. 87-88). She recommends using fiction and nonfiction during the same time period to balance history lessons, because she witnessed the excitement and understanding in her students when they made connections between the two (p. 142). Books other than textbooks can be very powerful resources for students when learning about the past.

Austin’s (1989) research was a case study that involved integrating children’s literature in the curricular areas of social studies, language arts, and science in interdisciplinary units. The population studied was third and fourth grade students and six teachers (p. 1). Through teacher interviews, Austin’s results suggest that the students “made relationships and connections leading to greater and deeper understandings of subject matter” (p. 8). Teachers reported positive feedback. The researchers findings suggest that through the students’ projects and writing assignments, they demonstrated that they learned more holistically, and the depth of their thinking and sensitivity was raised. Students were also more at ease when confronted with new subject material when it was based upon a literary narrative, because it was familiar to them. The confidence and willingness to share their opinions increased as well “because of their bond with the text” (p. 87-88). An important finding in Austin’s research is that “Teachers also observed that children, especially below-level, readers not only read more but voluntarily explored a greater variety of subjects and literary genres” (p. 88). The teachers agreed

that using literature and focusing on the aesthetic and appreciative values allowed students to connect with the text in a non-stressful environment, which allowed them to take risk in discussing with classmates and using their natural curiosity to learn more (p. 88). Using literature in the curricular area of history empowers students to take risks, read a variety of genre, and encourages reluctant readers.

Milton Meltzer (1994) is a distinguished author and historian who has written more than 85 books for young people. Meltzer strongly believes that literature helps to “bring history alive” for students (p. 33). Meltzer’s books contain more than just facts, he likes to stir up emotion in his readers, especially young children and hopes that his books “raise questions in the minds of young readers and teach them not so much facts and dates or formulas but the art and necessity of asking questions (p. 21-22). Meltzer feels that textbooks are dull, lack emotion, and “treat the past very gingerly” (p.31). He states, “Young children are drawn into the pleasure of reading books with rhythmic language, engaging plots, and vivid characters. Must the teaching of history be confined to boring and emasculated textbooks?” (p. 35). He also suggests that textbooks harm students by what is left out and believes that is why there is a lot of room for trade books (p. 83). Trade books and picture books have a place in the elementary history curriculum.

Hackett (2004) studied the need for a picture book about the history of Des Moines, Iowa for the Des Moines Independent Community School District’s third grade local history unit. Hackett discovered there were not any books appropriate for this particular grade level for the local history unit.

Hackett prioritized historical sites in Des Moines and incorporated a cartoon figure by the name of Kel who is on a field trip visiting the historical sites of Des Moines,

Iowa. Digital pictures were used to support the text. Hackett concluded that she was able to produce a picture book titled *Adventures with Kel in Des Moines*, with photos of quality that would enhance the third grade unit and would be an asset to students and staff.

Summary

The researcher has found evidence that teaching history in the elementary classroom is significant, students are quite capable of learning history at the primary and elementary level, and integrating literature into the history curriculum can make it more meaningful to students.

The need for students to begin exploring history came from Ravitch and Finn Jr. (1987) and the Bradley Commission (1989). Barton and Levstik's (2004) research supported this with their findings that not only should history be included in the elementary curriculum but also students are able to make sense of historical time and are quite capable of learning history. Brophy and VanSledright (1997) also agree that students should be taught history at the elementary level and need to be exposed to sources other than textbooks. Keller's (2002) research supports students learning history because it develops empathy, tolerance, and a sense of judgment. Crabtree (1989) asserts students need to have a foundation of history at the elementary level in the same way as the curricular areas of math and science.

The Bradley Commission (1989) recommended integrating as much literature as possible into the history curriculum because it is more engaging than textbooks. Lebsack (2002) found nine and ten-year olds were able to think abstractly and that nonfiction books aided students in the ability to understand the past. Austin's (1989) research

suggested that by incorporating literature into history lessons, the students developed deeper thinking skills and deeper understanding of the material being taught. Meltzer, as a distinguished author for young people, brings history to life for students by including information left out in textbooks. Hackett's (2004) research showed that there definitely is a need for picture books particularly when studying local history for third grade students.

This researcher intends to create an illustrated informational picture book about Marshalltown, Iowa for the third grade local history unit in the Marshalltown Community School District that is taught every year. The preceding research demonstrates that this would be a useful and valuable resource.

CHAPTER 3

Procedures

At the present time, there is not an appealing age-appropriate informational book about the required third grade unit on the history of Marshalltown, Iowa. The purpose of this research is to provide an age-appropriate appealing picture book to support the Marshalltown history unit.

Project Design

This researcher will be creating an informational alphabet picture book with illustrations that support the text. This picture book will enhance the Marshalltown history unit for teachers and students. The book will be appropriate for elementary age children. There will be text in a large font, with captivating illustrations. This book will contain the information about people and places that are covered in the unit and will be an asset to teachers and students as this is a unit that is done every year. The picture book will be an appropriate resource to motivate students to learn more about their community. It will also bring the history of Marshalltown alive for students who have immigrated to the community and speak English as a second language. It will also provide valuable background knowledge for these students. This book will aid visual learners and reluctant readers. In sum, this book will help a variety of students with diverse needs.

The book will be an extension of the places visited on the yearly field trip as part of the unit. The researcher is planning to include a photo from the past and a photo of the present day site so students will be able to see how things change over time and to make more connections. A field trip has been taken in past years, but if funding for this trip

ever became an issue, students would be able to take a visual field trip of Marshalltown through this book.

The book will be in alphabetical order with the letter in the top left hand corner of the page with text and illustrations placed to the right or below, or a combination of both depending on the size of the photos. This format was chosen because this is an organized format that children are already familiar with.

Parameter of Project

The researcher will be creating an alphabet picture book that will focus on notable people and historic sites of Marshalltown, Iowa that are presently studied in the third grade local history unit. The book will encompass the people and places studied in the unit as well as other noteworthy people and places so that the alphabet book will be complete. The book will include the cultural diversity of the population that can be found in the town. The book will be approximately 32 pages in length.

The information in the book will include information that is currently taught during the unit as well as other information that is noteworthy about Marshalltown, Iowa in order to make the alphabet complete. Businesses included will be businesses that have been in business for more than fifty years. The people and places in the curriculum will take precedence. A proposed list of these is Appendix B.

The researcher will use black and white photos from the past along with high quality colored photos of present day Marshalltown so students will be able to make more connections to what they are familiar with in their community. A digital camera and an Olympus camera will be used.

The layout of the book will vary depending upon what photos are available to use from the past. The pictures will represent the letter of the alphabet and be large enough to capture the students' interest, but allow enough room for the text. Some pages will include a picture from the past, while others will include photos of the past and present day where applicable. The photos will be from 1853 to the present.

Storyboard

This project will be in the form of a picture book. The picture book will contain each letter of the alphabet with accompanying photos to represent each letter. There will be a mixture of black and white photos, and color photos. The photos will capture the students' interest and support the text.

The text will be the size appropriate for third graders. The vocabulary will be geared towards elementary students using the Spache Readability Index and Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability guide. The text will be factual information about the people and historic sites about the community of Marshalltown, Iowa. The proposed book design is Appendix A.

For this project, a picture book will be an excellent way to bring the history of Marshalltown alive for students. This form will work best because students are already familiar with picture books. The book will be large enough for more than one child to look at for teachers to use for a read aloud. This book will serve as a valuable resource for students and staff.

Procedures

The researcher will begin the project by speaking with third grade teachers to make certain that all of the people and historic sites covered in the unit will be included

in the book. Next, photos from the past will be identified, evaluated, and chosen to be placed in the book. Permission will be obtained from the Marshall County Historical Society to use photos. Photos will be taken for the alphabet letters deemed worthy of having present day photos. The text will be written and evaluated at the third grade level using the Spache Readability Index and the Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability guide. The style of lettering for the alphabet letters will be chosen. When the storyboard is complete, Connie Stansberry along with two other third grade teachers will evaluate the book. Mrs. Stansberry will be an excellent resource as she is a veteran teacher and expressed enthusiasm for this research project.

Three third grade students from Anson Elementary School will also evaluate the layout. Third grade students were chosen because they have just experienced the unit. The input from these resources will allow the researcher to make any adjustments necessary.

Project Format

The format of this research project will be an illustrated informational alphabet book in the form of a picture book. The entries in the book will be in alphabetical order and bound vertically so it is user friendly to students.

Chapter 4

The Project

See accompanying book

M is for Marshalltown

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this project was to research the local history of Marshalltown, Iowa and create an informational alphabet picture book, which could be used for the required third grade local history unit. The criteria the researcher used to choose what represented each letter of the alphabet, was based on primarily what is taught in the local history unit. Other factors include historical landmarks, places that make Marshalltown unique, and inventors, because third graders do an invention unit prior to the local history unit.

The researcher paid careful attention to the photos and pictures chosen to engage the reader. The text was carefully chosen to be at a third grade reading level and to support the photos and pictures.

Conclusions

The researcher was able to include a majority of the people and places taught in the Marshalltown history unit. For the letter G, a Native American was chosen instead of a white settler, so that diversity was represented in the book.

The photographs are of very good quality and the researcher paid careful attention to lighting and angles. The finished product will be used towards the end of the school year and will be an asset to the teachers who teach the unit and to the students who will be learning about their local community.

Despite careful wording, the text had to be revised in order to get it at the third grade reading level. The text is at the high end of the third grade level, but the unit is taught in the last semester of the school year. The researcher had three third grade students read the book, a low, average, and high-level reader. All three students read the book without any difficulty.

The researcher can see several different possibilities for mass production of the informational picture book. One possibility is to have the book produced in a consumable format for every third grade student in the Marshalltown Community School District. The students could receive their own copies to refer to during the unit with extra blank pages added at the end of the book for them to journal, add their own photos or drawings, to write down what they would like to learn more about, or places they would like to visit. Another option would be to give each student in the district a copy after they have seen the Marshalltown History Pageant performance that all third graders attend at the same time.

The second possibility is to have the informational picture book published. A third grade teacher highly recommended that the researcher get the book published. The book would enhance every third grade classroom and elementary school library in Marshalltown and throughout Iowa. It could act as a model for students. Teachers and students would be able to refer to it during the unit, before a field trip, after a field trip, or if there isn't money for a field trip, this book could be used instead. The researcher was also encouraged to have the book published by the youth librarian at the Marshalltown Public library. She could see it as an asset to the library and suggested using it during one of their summer programs by introducing the book and take a walking tour of places

highlighted in the book. The researcher would like to see a copy of the book at the Marshalltown Historical Museum for others who may be interested in learning the history of Marshalltown, Iowa.

The third possibility would be to use the book electronically. It could be shown using a projector in a classroom, or students could read it individually or with a partner at a computer station. Text could also be enlarged for students with vision problems. The electronic version could also be added to the school library's website.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The researcher highly recommends researching to see if the informational alphabet picture book made a difference in motivating third graders about the local history unit or made a difference in their learning. The researcher recommends using a survey for teachers and students.

Another recommendation is to move beyond the community of Marshalltown and research Marshall County. The researcher also feels that other communities could benefit from a local history informational picture book based on their community. Students could help write and illustrate the book.

As a result of this research project, the researcher has gained more knowledge of the history of Marshalltown, which will help when collaborating with the third grade teachers to teach this unit. The researcher has also gained an appreciation of the history behind this great town. A result the researcher did not expect was to have a desire to become involved in the Marshalltown Historical Society. The researcher is interested in volunteering to organize materials, organize the library, and help with other activities.

It is imperative that students learn about and understand the history behind their local areas. Learning about their local communities helps them make sense of where they belong in the world. As they see the changes in their communities from the past, it will, as Thomas Jefferson says, “enable them to judge the future.”

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Appendix A

This is where the letter will
be placed.

A

This is a photograph
of Henry Anson.

A is for Anson. Henry Anson founded Marshalltown, Iowa in 1853. He named Marshalltown after Marshall, Michigan. Anson Elementary, Anson Middle School, and Anson Street were all named in his honor. Maybe you have noticed the statue of Henry Anson that was placed in front of the courthouse in 2004.

This is a photo of the statue of Henry Anson in
front of the Marshalltown courthouse.

Appendix B

Proposed list of possible people and locations for project

- *A – Henry Anson**
- *B – Binford House**
- *C – Courthouse**
- *D – Dunham Bush**
- *E – Education**
- *F – Fisher Controls**
- *G – Johnny Green**
- *H – Hispanic immigrants**
- *I – Immigrants**
- *J – Jeff Clement**
- *K – King of Koin (T. Nelson Downs)**
- *L – Dave Lennox**
- *M – Marshalltown (scenic photo of city)**
- *N – New time (aquatic center, bike path)**
- *O – Old Main St. & new Main St.**
- *P – Public Library (current & proposed)**
- *Q – Quite a place to live**
- *R – Riverside cemetery**
- *S – Susie Sower house & Stone’s restaurant**
- *T – Tallcorn Towers**
- *U – Unique**
- *V – Vision (new plans for downtown)**
- *W – Weatherbee schoolhouse**
- *X – X marks the spot where Marshalltown began (a photo will be taken of a plaque located on a downtown building that marks the location of the first log cabin, that belonged to Henry Anson.**
- *Y – YMCA/YWCA (old/new)**
- *Z – Zeno’s Pizza**

Appendix C

Readability Tests

Spache Readability Index

The following computation is used to determine the readability of text.

- Count the total number of words.
- Count the number of sentences.
- Calculate the average sentence length by dividing the number of words by the number of sentences.
- Count the number of words that are not found on the Spache Revised Word List (difficult words) Note: Count each difficult word only once.
- Calculate the percentage of difficult words by dividing the number of difficult words by total number of words in the sample and multiply by 100.
- Algorithm: $0.141 * _ \text{average sentence length} + 0.086 * _ \text{percent difficult words} + 0.839 = \text{grade level}$.

This formula is used to calculate the difficulty of text for third grade and below.

Flesch Reading Ease

The following computation is used to determine the ease of reading text.

- Calculate the average number of words per sentence.
- Calculate the average number of syllables per word.
- Multiply the average number of syllables per word multiplied by 84.6 and subtract it from the average number of words multiplied by 1.015.
- Subtract the result from 206.835
- Algorithm: $206.835 - (1.015 * \text{average_words_sentence}) - (84.6 * \text{average_syllables_word})$

This formula rates the text on a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the easier it is to understand. Authors are encouraged to aim for a score of 60 to 70.