

PREPARING PRESERVICE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS TO USE PRIMARY SOURCES IN TEACHING HISTORY

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For years I've used primary sources with great success in my fourth grade classroom to help my students see history not only as real and relevant but as fascinating and intriguing.... Primary sources help my students to think hard about the past and to construct their own views of history instead of relying on the authors of textbooks and trade books to do it for them. The result is a classroom of curious, engaged, invested learners, students who are having memorable learning experiences.¹

Social studies educators have recognized the value of students using primary sources as they engage in historical inquiry. The literature supporting the use of primary sources is too voluminous to begin to list. Scholars such as Kobrin and Percoco have written books on teaching history using primary sources for teachers of grades seven through twelve. In addition, "Teaching with Documents" is a regular feature in *Social Education*.² However, until this past decade, the emphasis seemed to be on using primary sources with older students. Now, an increasing number of elementary school teachers are introducing children to these resources. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, *Social Education*, and *The Social Studies* have all published articles on using primary sources with elementary children.³ A review of the program guides for regional and national conferences of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) reveals an increasing number of sessions and clinics related to primary sources for both secondary and elementary grades. The quote at the beginning of this article is from the first book written for elementary teachers on how to use primary sources with children. In her book, *Seeking History: Teaching with Primary Sources in Grades 4-6*, Monica Ediger describes how her fourth-grade students engage in historical inquiry using processes professional historians use as they examine a variety of primary sources.⁴

The NCSS social studies curriculum standards include performance expectations for using primary sources in early grades and middle grades as well as high school. For example, one of the standards under the theme of "Time, Continuity, and Change" for the early grades states:

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over times, so that the learner can...identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, ... photos, and others.⁵

The NCSS standards for social studies teachers emphasize that social studies teachers,

at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of time, continuity, and change. They should...provide learners with opportunities to investigate, interpret, and analyze multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints within and across cultures related to important events...and enable learners to apply modes of historical inquiry to analyze historical developments....⁶

Linda Levstik and Keith Barton have conducted extensive research on engaging children in historical inquiry and on children's understanding of history. Their research on how children learn, along with other researchers' investigations on children's historical understanding, indicate the importance of students using and applying knowledge in authentic situations similar to those people face in the "real" world. What better way to understand what historians actually do than by engaging students in inquiry using primary sources just as professional historians? This enables children to construct their own understanding through asking questions meaningful to them, analyzing resources, making interpretations, and drawing conclusions.

In the preface to their book, *Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle Schools*, Levstik and Barton invite the reader to “imagine classrooms where students regularly, and actively, *do* history—frame questions, gather data from primary and secondary sources, organize and interpret that data, and share their work with different audiences.”⁷ The authors worked with teachers and students in classrooms like this for a number of years. In some of these classes the children were recent immigrants while in others the families of students had lived in the same area for generations. Although some classes were full-inclusion, most included at least a few students with special needs in social studies. The classes were in a variety of settings ranging from rural to suburban to urban, however,

Despite their many differences, these communities of inquiry have several things in common. In each one, even the youngest children describe historical study as interesting and important. Moreover, historical study in each of these classrooms deals with important historical content and engages students in authentic historical inquiry.... The teachers...renew our conviction that history is relevant to the lives of even the youngest school children, and that disciplined, reflective historical inquiry is *not* the sole province of university historians.⁸

Preparing preservice elementary teachers to create classrooms like those described by Levstik and Barton which are able to meet the NCSS *National Standards for Social Studies Teachers* is quite a task for teacher educators. Elementary social studies methods instructors continually make revisions to better prepare students to teach social studies. One part of this ongoing revision involves ways of enabling these elementary education students to engage children in inquiry using primary sources. One way to do this is to conduct a literature search seeking information on how other education professors are teaching their social studies methods courses. There are few articles on teaching elementary social studies methods courses.⁹ In *The Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, the statement is made that there is scant evidence to answer questions about how social studies methods courses are taught.¹⁰ In a recent search, not a single article was found that focused specifically on preparing preservice elementary teachers to use a variety of primary sources with children. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to share the strategies and resources used to prepare preservice teachers to utilize primary sources and through this process, encourage other social studies teacher educators to describe what they do in their courses in relation to primary sources. As social studies teacher educators, we all have a vital interest in developing and sharing effective methods of preparing our future elementary teachers.

Assessing Preservice Teachers' Knowledge of Primary Sources

All educators know that new learning builds on prior knowledge. Therefore, during the first class session of a social studies methods course, it is important to assess preservice teachers' understanding and attitudes about different aspects of social studies teaching by asking them to complete a questionnaire. Two of the questions relate to primary sources. An analysis of the responses to these two questions for the last four semesters indicate that only about 25 percent of the eighteen to twenty students enrolled in my social studies methods course have an understanding of primary sources and/or have used them in classes at the university or K-12 level. The following are typical responses I receive from these knowledgeable students each semester:

1. What are primary sources?
 - Information that comes right from a source.
 - An eyewitness to something.
 - Someone or something that has a direct connection to the event or object.
 - Direct source of information.
2. What primary sources have you used in any classes at the university, high school, middle school or elementary school level?
 - We had speakers come in from other countries.
 - I remember taking many field trips. These trips allowed us to understand the historic background of a particular place.
 - Videos on Western Europe.

- We had people such as war veterans come in and talk about their experiences.
- Historic documents.
- Artifacts.

Typical responses from the students unfamiliar with primary sources were:

1. What are primary sources?
 - Basic sources such as textbooks, trade books, and encyclopedias.
 - The sources people use when writing a research paper.
 - Sources that give facts about a topic.
 - The first source you go to for information.
2. What primary sources have you used in any classes at the university, high school, middle school or elementary school level?
 - Textbooks and maps.
 - Books, videos, and maps.
 - Encyclopedias, the Internet, and literature.
 - Books, encyclopedias articles, and the Internet.

In reviewing students' responses to these two questions, I related what was written in Question Two to the definition given in Question One. Obviously, a certain map or book or item from the Internet can be a primary source, but the first group of students was able to give a reasonable definition of primary sources and gave more specific and detailed listings of primary sources they had studied.

Building an Understanding of Primary Sources and How to Use Them

With this information about students' understanding and use of primary sources, it is vital to provide experiences in working with these sources before students will be able to use them with children effectively (See Appendix A for a listing of the various types of primary sources.). I begin by inviting those students who are knowledgeable about primary sources to share their definitions and experiences. The students then analyze the definition provided in the course text, which defines a primary source as "a document, work of art, or artifact produced during the period being studied."¹¹ This definition is then broadened by Cynthia Brown, who defines by primary sources as "any material created at the time of an event, or later from the memory, by someone in the event."¹² By this time, the other students begin to recall class activities such as studying the Gettysburg Address or looking at artifacts in a museum. They explain that they didn't realize these were primary sources.

The next step is to increase students' understanding of these sources and introduce them to ways of using these sources effectively in the elementary classroom. This can be done by engaging the students in a simulation followed by historical inquiry in order to experience what they might have children do. Primary sources about the growth of the railroad in the United States, such as the Transcontinental Railroad, are useful. In addition, regalia such as engineer hats, railroad spikes, models of the engines and train cars used during that period often add interest. Having a wealth of materials for a topic allows for simulations and inquiry experiences. The instructor should remind students, however, to look beyond the content since the types of primary sources and the experiences can be generalized to many other topics they will be teaching.

The instructor then conducts a simulation to demonstrate the importance of establishing the historical context for children. The preservice teachers sit in chairs placed in the position of a train car facing a photograph of a steam engine. Along a wall are copies of a photograph of two engines face to face on a track at the golden spike ceremony, which celebrated the linking of the two different railroad companies that had laid the track. These are covered with paper curtains to simulate train windows. As they listen to a recording of steam engine sounds, the students close their eyes and travel back in time while the instructor counts by tens from the current year back to 1870, more specifically to May 10, 1869. Students are then instructed to open their eyes because they have arrived in Promontory Point, Utah. They remove

the paper curtains and describe what they see and what they think is happening as they study the photograph of the linking of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. One student reads a copy of a poster put out by the Union Pacific Railroad announcing the event and advertising travel on the railroad. Others volunteer to read a copy of the telegraph message sent after the last spike was driven in. Next, the instructor passes around railroad spikes for them to examine. Finally the students listen to a tape recording of a reading of an eyewitness account written by Mr. Toponce who was present at the ceremony. The students, therefore, have reconstructed the event through these primary sources.

To provide historical background on what led to this event, the preservice teachers stay on the train car and travel further back in time to 1862 when President Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act giving land and loaning money to the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads to build a railroad connecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. To illustrate how to immerse children in the setting and time period and make it interesting, we use a model train engine of the Jupiter (one of the engines in the photograph), other model train cars representing the period, and track to lay on a large floor map showing the route. Some students wear engineer hats and kerchiefs as they lay track and place the model train cars at Promontory Point. We talk about the Irish and Chinese immigrants who endured hardships and dangers as they helped to build the railroad. Reboarding the train car and traveling up in time to 1869 ends the simulation.

Next, begins the historical inquiry. Students remain in the 1800s using only sources created during that time period for their investigation. The class becomes students of history as they follow the methods and resources of historians using the following steps in inquiry:

1. Define the problem or question;
2. Speculate on possible answers (hypothesize);
3. Gather information;
4. Analyze the information and test hypothesis; and
5. Reach a conclusion.

The main question the students investigate relates to the impact of the growth of railroads? Some of the hypotheses students usually suggest include: unification of the nation, promotion of settlement of the West and development of manufacturing in the East, destruction of the way of life of the Native Americans, development of towns, creation of new jobs but displacement of canal workers and stage coach drivers, and safer travel. To test their hypotheses and investigate other questions, students divide into groups and study the primary sources that have been gathered and placed in folders for each group. Each file contains a variety of materials for different grade levels.

As these preservice teachers work, they are experiencing processes of historical inquiry to use with children they will teach. In addition, the instructor should guide the students in examining the sources from the point of view of a future teacher and respond to the following questions:

1. Which sources or selections from these sources would you choose to use with different grade levels?
2. What inferences might children make from using these sources?
3. How would you provide scaffolding as they work with these sources?
4. What questions would you ask them?
5. How would you help children make connections between this information and their lives today?
6. In addition to inquiry, what are some creative ways of using these sources with children?

After examining the sources and accepting or rejecting hypotheses, students complete the inquiry process by drawing conclusions and making generalizations. The groups share and discuss their findings, conclusions, and generalizations. They then move into the role of future teachers and discuss the above questions about using these sources with children.

At this point, students engage in making the transfer of what they have learned from this simulation and inquiry, which happens to focus on railroad history, to other topics children study in elementary

school. They are shown other primary sources such as Anne Frank's diary, the diary of Zlata Filipovic—a girl living in war-torn Sarajevo, photographs of World War II with children, military camps during the Civil War with drummer boys, letters and journals of people who witnessed or participated in different historic events, toys and household objects used in the past, a hat worn by a suffragette, pages from old catalogues, or a hymn of praise to the Nile River written around 1600 B.C.E. during Egypt's New Kingdom. After examining these items, the students create a class web of all the different types of primary sources elementary teachers might use with children.

Now that students have a clear understanding of the variety of primary sources, they examine how to use them in more detail using the following teaching sequence for a primary source:

1. Establish time and place.
2. Present the primary source.
3. Start with open-ended questions.
4. Then ask very specific questions.
5. Finally, analyze the primary source.¹³

Developing an Understanding of the Value of Using Primary Sources With Children

By now, the preservice teachers have developed an understanding of the wide variety of primary sources available and of some ways to use them with children. It is also important that they recognize the value of introducing these materials to children and be able to verbalize justifications for their use because their integration must be based on theories of teaching and learning. Therefore, the instructor should spend some class time discussing the theories and ideas supporting the use of these sources in teaching. Again, the instructor begins with the preservice teachers' current understanding by asking them to brainstorm reasons for using primary sources with children. After they give their ideas, the instructor provides feedback. The following is an example of this activity:

- Gives children first-hand information about events or time periods.
- Allows them to examine items from the past.
- Tells how people lived in the past.
- Provides opportunities for children to do their own interpreting and evaluating since the sources haven't been interpreted for them.
- Encourages higher-level thinking and problem solving.
- Makes people and events of the past real.
- Provides accurate and authentic pictures of the past.
- Helps us teach in a way that allows children to investigate as historians.
- Helps children make a connection with the past.
- Discusses items not generally found in textbooks and trade books.
- Debunks some of the myths of history.
- Allows children to construct their own understanding of events and time periods.
- Provides opportunities for meaningful and authentic learning experiences.
- Encourages higher-level thinking.
- Provides hands-on experiences.

The instructor then elaborates on some of the ideas on this list. For example, the advantage of children being able to make their own interpretations is based on the cognitive theory of constructivism. The preservice teachers are familiar with the basic assumptions of this theory since they studied them in an educational psychology course the previous semester. The textbook for that course states that according to constructivism, meaning is constructed by the learner; prior knowledge plays a major role in this construction. Children actively involved in their own learning, learn concepts more effectively when they are given a variety of examples within the context of authentic activities (activities similar to those encountered in the outside world).¹⁴ Students have also read the NCSS Position Statement, "A Vision of

Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies,” which states that children “develop new understanding through a process of active construction. They do not passively receive or copy curriculum content; rather, they actively process it by relating it to what they already know (or think they know) about the topic.”¹⁵ As an illustration of how primary sources enable children to do this, the instructor selects sources on the theme of immigration for students to examine. We look at photographs of immigrant families traveling on ships, living in crowded tenements, and laboring in factories. Then the students read accounts written by immigrants describing their journey, their frightening experiences on Ellis Island going through the admittance processes, and their adjustment to the living conditions, schools, and work. After discussing writings similar to the following, it is not hard to imagine how these materials would make people in the past seem real to children:

The steamer *Florida*, fourteen days out of Naples, filled to capacity with 1,600 natives of Italy, had weathered one of the worst storms in our captain’s memory and glad we were to leave the open sea and come at last through the narrows into the Bay. My mother, my stepfather, my brother Giuseppe and my two sisters, Liberta and Helvetia clustered on the foredeck. Giuseppe and I held tightly to Stepfather’s hands and Helvetia clung to Mother. Passengers all about us were crowding against the rail. Jabbered conversation, sharp cries, laughs and cheers filled the air. Mothers and fathers lifted up babies so that they too could see the Statue of Liberty.¹⁶

We lived there (Ellis Island) for three days—Mother and we five children, the youngest of whom was three years old. Because of the rigorous physical examination that we had to submit to, particularly of the eyes, there was this terrible anxiety that one of us might be rejected. And if one of us was, what would the rest of the family do? My sister was indeed momentarily rejected; she had been so ill and had cried so much that her eyes were absolutely bloodshot, and Mother was told, “Well, we can’t let her in.: But fortunately, Mother was an indomitable spirit and finally made them understand that if her child had a few hours’ rest and a little bite to eat she would be all right. In the end we did get through.¹⁷

I turned seven after we got here and they put me in the first grade. I didn’t know the language and every time the teacher even looked at me I would start to cry, because I was afraid and I didn’t know what she was saying. But...when it was recess time, this one girl came and put her arm around my shoulder. She didn’t say anything, she just took me outside, stayed with me during recess, and when recess was over she brought me back to my seat in school.¹⁸

Then the instructor leads a discussion concluding that a meaningful and authentic approach for children is to have them create their own primary sources by interviewing family members or people in the community who immigrated in the past or recently. More than likely, these preservice teachers may have children in their future classes who have recently immigrated. Also, many children have had experiences moving and attending a new school. Children can build on this knowledge to make connections with the topic of immigration. Finally, the class compares these sources with a chapter on immigration in the children’s social studies textbook. Through these activities, the preservice teachers realize how primary sources can help children construct a deeper understanding of immigration than by using textbooks or secondary sources alone.

Locating Primary Sources

At this point, we examine the issue of where to find primary sources. An entire class period is devoted to this question. The instructor then brings in catalogues and information on publishers offering them as well as more of the actual sources. The students also receive a copy of a bibliography of primary sources for children (Appendix B). In addition, the instructor should encourage students to share with their class what they can find. More importantly, the class discusses how to locate primary sources in any place where they may be teaching and ways to involve their future students and the families of these children in gathering and creating them.

The next class begins by looking at catalogues by publishers offering facsimiles of primary sources such as Cobblestone Publishing, Discovery Enterprises, Ltd., and Jackdaw Publications.¹⁹ Each unit is written for grade five and up and contains a variety of sources with teaching ideas and forms for analyzing the photographs, documents, and other writings. Unit topics include Ancient Greece and Rome, the Civil War, child labor, immigration, the frontier, and women’s rights. Many of the individual issues of Cobblestone’s magazines such as *Calliope* (on world history), *Cobblestone* (on American history), *Footsteps* (on African American history), and *Appleseeds* (for primary grades), include original sources.

Discovery Enterprises has recently introduced a new series of books suitable for children as well as a book of study methods and forms for using these sources, entitled *Get a Clue!*, Jackdaws has wonderful photograph collections and primary source kits with teachers' guides on a variety of different topics studied in elementary school. Preservice teachers enjoy a pretend "shopping spree" using the Social Studies School Service catalogue.

Students should be familiar with excellent writers of juvenile nonfiction who emphasize primary sources. Russell Freedman, Milton Meltzer, Phillip Hoose, and Susan Bartoletti are just some of the authors whose children's books utilize primary sources. Web sites such as "American Memory" (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem>), maintained by the Library of Congress National Digital Library Program, or the "History/Social Studies Web site for K-12 Teachers" (<http://execpc.com/~dboals/boals.html>) are useful as well. The preservice teachers select a Web site from a list provided by the instructor and bring primary sources from it to share in class. Although one should not encourage the use of textbooks with children, the instructor should acquaint students with the newer social studies textbooks, which incorporate some primary source material. Texts by Scott Foresman, Houghton Mifflin, and others have some reproductions of old paintings, maps, and artifacts as well as excerpts from diaries, letters, and other sources.

Preservice teachers are often amazed at the wealth of print and Internet resources available. They look forward to selecting appropriate ones to make people and events in the past seem real to children. In addition to these, perhaps some of the most meaningful sources might be those they and their future students locate and/or create themselves. Therefore, the class should explore how to do this wherever they may be teaching. For example, they can locate people for children to interview who have witnessed or been involved in historic events or who would be willing to describe what life was like in earlier time periods. They can find out what the local museums, historic sites, historical societies, chambers of commerce, businesses, newspapers, organizations, and library archives offer. For example, one summer the author was visiting a seashore town and dropped in at the chamber of commerce. She found a calendar with large photographs of different streets in the town taken in the past and present. Students using these calendars to study their town could compare the photographs to discover how it has changed over time. Our university is located in a historic area that provides a wonderful opportunity for students to discover local resources available to teachers.

The social studies methods students also explore ways to help children and their families bring personal primary sources into the classroom. Giroux emphasizes that good teachers give children opportunities to authenticate their own experiences and speak with their own voices.²⁰ Hickey states that "When teachers use strategies and plan lessons that build on prior knowledge by incorporating the child's own cultural learning and experiences, the child is empowered as a learner."²¹ Campbell maintains that children demonstrate a sense of self-worth as well as improved skills and abilities when they are in classrooms where teachers do this.²² It is important to emphasize encouraging children to interview family members to discover their history, and to find artifacts, letters, post cards, diaries, old household items, clothes, and toys used in the past. The instructor can give the preservice teachers an assignment to do this themselves. They are to share in class a personal primary source or one about their local community. This information can be used to create a class history book. Some read interviews of relatives who immigrated from other countries or letters written by family members during wars. Others show old photographs, copies of birth certificates, medals earned in a war, or news articles about their families. One of my preservice teachers was excited to find a photograph of a relative with Amelia Earhart. Another proudly brought in her grandmother who had immigrated to the United States from Italy. The class enjoyed interviewing this woman about her experiences and later explored ways of preparing children to conduct interviews. The value of preservice teachers participating in this assignment is reinforced when one reads comments such as:

I have many stories and many pictures of the events of my grandparents' lives. They keep all of these things very alive for all of us with stories, letters, and pictures. The Italian side has kept better documentation, but the Irish Nana has kept some things that will provoke an interesting story. While writing this brief description of my family it was very difficult not to delve deeply into stories that were told to me many times. But, I have thought of using these experiences

as a primary source while teaching any historical event that might have occurred during my grandparents' lifetime. This will be my opportunity to share these experiences with others that will truly gain from their past lives.

For further information, preservice teachers read selected chapters in *Bringing History Home: Local and Family History Projects for Grades K-6* by Gail Hickey and *Keepsakes: Using Family Stories in Elementary Classrooms* by Linda Winston.

Using Primary Sources in Field Experiences

After these experiences, the preservice teachers are ready to apply what they have learned. The field experience component of the course provides this opportunity because each pair of students teaches social studies in an elementary classroom one hour a week for most of the semester. In the class session following each field experience, students reflect on their teaching. Since the preservice teachers are scattered throughout three local elementary schools, teaching a variety of grades and topics, the experiences shared enrich classmates' knowledge and better prepare everyone for what they may encounter in their own classrooms in the future.

It is always rewarding to observe how well the majority of methods students integrate primary sources into whatever topic they are teaching and to read their journals reflecting about their experiences in using these sources with children. The following excerpts illustrate two teams who used photographs from Jackdaws' photographic collections:

We taught about child labor today. We hung up the huge picture of child workers which immediately caught the attention of the students. We had a very long discussion about each of the pictures. The students were so captivated with the pictures that they didn't want to do anything else but talk about them.

We started out by having the students talk about their family members who were involved in WWII. Many of them had grandparents who fought in the war. Some of their stories were incredible to hear. We showed some pictures of the Japanese Internment Camps and explained what they were and why they existed. The students had many questions to ask about the pictures. We then put a war time music CD on and had the students pretend to go back in time. They were to write a letter home telling what things were like as a soldier or as a person in the internment camp.

Other teams shared personal collections:

I showed the students a short film entitled "Ellis Island: A National Monument." The film did a good job of acquainting the kids with Ellis Island and...allowed me to be able to talk to the students about some personal artifacts that I had brought in about my family's entrance into Ellis Island.

A number of teams asked children to read highlighted parts of historical accounts and respond to them in a creative way:

I passed out historical accounts of earthquakes in California from 1857, 1906, and 1925. I asked students to read pre-highlighted features of the text. We discussed the content and the writer's perspective. Then I asked them to write a poem based on the perspective they got from the documents and how the writer was feeling at the time.

Photographs from books were also frequently used:

We reviewed what we covered in our last lesson on immigration. Next, I asked the students to close their eyes and imagine that they and their families were moving to another country. I asked them to imagine how they would feel about such a move and to imagine some of the difficulties they would encounter. Next, I introduced the book, *Immigrant Kids*, by Russell Freedman and read some excerpts from it. I then gave a copy of the book to each group and told them to look at the pictures and describe what they see and think is going on in the photos.

I felt that my lesson was successful because each student was able to comprehend the information we were discussing about immigrant school age children. I think what contributed to the success of this lesson was the powerful pictures that the children viewed in *Immigrant Kids*. For example, after I read the chapter on what it was like to go to school in the 1900s as an immigrant, the children could truly visualize this concept due to the pictures. When I asked the students to write in their journals about the difference between a classroom in 1900 and their classroom, they each wrote ten to twelve responses when I only asked for two! I was very pleased because usually these students do not like to write at all. Having the pictures of the classroom that the immigrants attended was very beneficial because the students were able to see and understand the differences. One student said, "Wow, the teacher's desk is as big as ours! The students are also sitting on top of each other. There is no room to move; like in our classroom there is plenty of space."

Some preservice teachers invited children to bring personal primary sources for a group history book:

I chose to continue with what we had been working on during my previous meeting with the children so that we could have a completed group history book. They were supposed to interview someone in their family, and then write a brief family history. I think that this activity helps not only to have the children connect with their own family heritage, but to also realize that their ancestors were immigrants, which gives them a personal connection to our unit on immigration.

This student wrote about using maps as primary sources:

I read aloud a description of the Rocky Mountains region written by John Powell and explained his place in U. S. history. Powell created maps of that area. Then we explored the Rocky Mountain region using the maps Powell helped to create and photographs from that time period.

Combining several sources helped the following student's lesson to be successful:

I think that my lesson on emigration to California during the Gold Rush was successful in terms of the learning experiences the students received.... Some of the aspects of my lesson that I feel helped to make this a success included the use of...pictures and advertisements from the Gold Rush era, and the personal accounts of people who experienced some aspect of this event. I believe that these primary sources helped to provide the students with a good understanding of what the Gold Rush was like and some of the hardships people faced. I think they liked viewing primary sources because it provided a certain connection to that era that is otherwise impossible to achieve. Their reactions to the materials demonstrated their excitement.

Occasionally, a preservice teacher will not have a positive experience using primary sources with children. For example, one student wrote:

On Thursday I taught a lesson on our town's history using primary sources. I used a book that contained before and after pictures of many popular and historical areas. The pictures ranged between 100 years ago in comparison to present day. I also created a handout to complete a photo analysis for each student. I put the photo analysis handout and the pictures onto a transparency so I could guide the students through the observation process. It took a great deal of classroom management to keep the students interested, as well as being quick with questions that the students were able to answer. I did, however, find that I had difficulty with a few of the photos because I was not completely sure of some facts. If I were to do this lesson again I would need to become more aware of some historical facts, such as when our town acquired telephone lines, I found this lesson to be rather boring in comparison to previous lessons, but I also realize that this lesson could be greatly improved if I added a few more creative aspects.

When students share frustrations, like these, the other students learn from their experiences. Then students analyze what has happened, discuss reasons why the lesson was not successful, and consider what to do to use the sources more effectively. However, most preservice teachers and their students enjoy using these sources.

Conclusion

During the last class session, students are asked to complete a second questionnaire so that the instructor can read their reactions to the classes on campus and their field experiences, as well as to find out what was most helpful to them as future teachers. Several of the questions were specifically about primary sources. The following are the questions and some typical responses:

What were the advantages or disadvantages of using primary sources in your field experience?

- The students got to see first hand what life was like and were motivated because they were able to see that the events were real.
- It makes the topic more real to children.
- Students were more inquisitive and attentive during the lesson. They were able to relate their own lives to the lives of children in the past.
- They allowed students to really see what it was like and got the students more into the lesson. Since they were interested, they seemed to learn more; and they were excited.
- The children loved primary sources because they did not want to open their textbooks as they did for other social studies lessons. I can specifically remember one student saying, "Wow, this is so neat, we get to learn about the children during the American Revolution and the games they played, not just about the war." Using these sources

helps children actually relate to the time being studied as opposed to just learning the facts as a textbook states. They can also expand their reading as opposed to the controlled reading of a textbook.

What was most helpful in our class on campus in preparing you to use primary sources?

- The class where we went back in time on the train. I got to see how to use primary sources appropriately.
- Definitely the train experience. You showed so many different sources and used creative ideas to get children involved.
- I really enjoyed the activity in which we looked at the Jackdaw photographs from different time periods. It made me realize how these photographs can make the periods more real to children since we got to see actual people during that time.
- The most helpful to me was when we simulated being on the train. Using the set up and props was very helpful in imagining I was in this time period. The sound effect and the pictures used also made me feel as if I were back in time and living in that time period and actually experiencing those things as they were happening.

Reading the responses students provide to the end-of-semester questionnaire, grading finals to assess their understandings, and evaluating their field experiences in teaching all provide information the instructor needs to continually improve his or her social studies methods course. There is so much that needs to be included in the course to better prepare our preservice teachers to teach social studies. Teaching history using primary sources is one of many pieces; however, what we learn from this in-depth exploration impacts on other aspects of the course as students transfer understandings in this area to anthropology, citizenship, economics, geography, political science, sociology, and the processes of social studies. It provides the basis for comparing primary sources with the many wonderful historical fiction books for children and learning to use both of these as well as other materials appropriately. As I reflect on my course at the end of each semester and read as well as listen to the cooperating teachers' and elementary school students' reactions, I realize that planning enough class sessions in my social studies methods course for in-depth exploration in using primary sources with children is well worth the time.

In the afterword to her book, *Seeking History: Teaching With Primary Sources in Grades 4-6*, Monica Edinger writes:

The past is alive and well in our culture. It turns up in movies, in books, on the internet, and in our everyday lives. Sometimes it is as personal as a passport, while at other times it is as remote as the images on television of armed conflicts in far away places.... As a teacher, my hope is to help my students to be thoughtful about the history they see represented around them: to wonder about it, to inquire about it, to challenge it, to learn from it. And it is the actual voices, the actual images, and the actual materials of the past that enable my students to do so. Getting beyond all those who profess to tell them how to think about the past, my students determine how to think about the past for themselves.²³

Although Edinger is speaking of her fourth grade children, I would expand that to include preservice teachers. It is my hope that they, as well as the children they teach, will be “thoughtful about the history they see represented around them” and “determine how to think about the past for themselves.”

Appendix A

Types of Primary Sources

Photographs	Journals	Ballads
Autobiographies	Posters	First-Hand Accounts
Folk Songs	Maps	Paintings
Oral History	Diaries	Music
Memoirs	Interviews	Objects
Games	Poems	Toys
Drama	Directories	Documents
Artifacts	Literature	Census Reports
Catalogues	Clothes	Newspapers
Historical Cartoons	Sculpture	Films
Transcripts	Lists	Letters
Ads	Videos	Art
Slides	Speeches	Tickets
Sketches	Songs	Monuments
Historic Places	Informational Records	

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