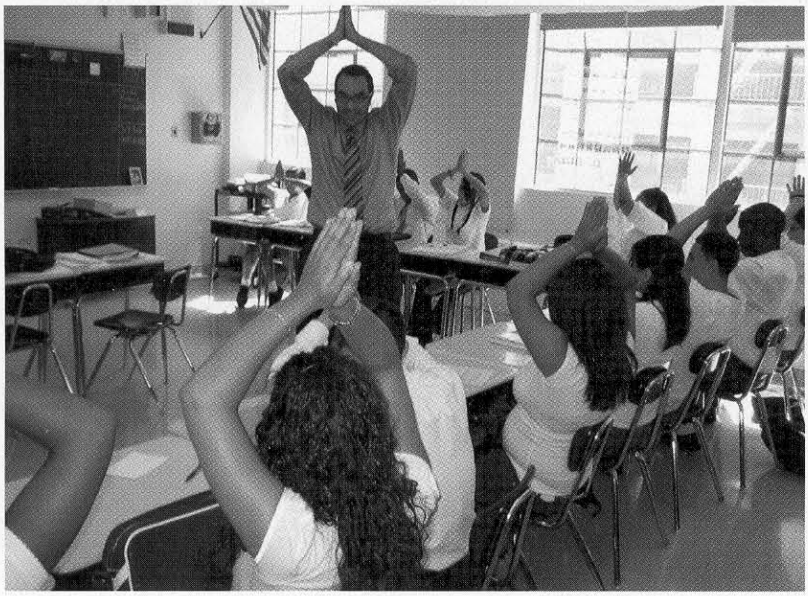
Facing High Stakes in High School



25 Successful Strategies From an Inclusive Social Studies Classroom

David J. Connor

Christopher Lagares

Every day in Christopher Lagares's inclusive high school social studies classroom, students are meaningfully engaged in the process of understanding U.S. government and history. Pass by at any moment and students may be playing a game exploring the motivations and backgrounds of different groups of U.S. immigrants . . . rotating to various stations and analyzing different types of primary source documents . . . or practicing a choreographed dance or mime to help them memorize important content. Many educators struggle to infuse life into a seemingly dry curriculum, hoping that they can cultivate the same love they feel for a discipline in their students. Despite all good intentions, the result can be less than satisfying. Lagares takes a unique approach, combining pedagogical creativity with a personal intensity to teach urban students from relatively low-income families. His personalized professional toolkit combines research-based practices such as backwards planning (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998); differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999); principles of learning (Learning Research and Development Center, n.d.); brain-based research (Wolfe, 2001); and understanding diverse learners (Tileston, 2004). The result is a dynamic classroom in which students with learning disabilities and behavior disorders, those considered at risk for academic failure, those for whom English is a second language, and typical students come together to learn.

Most high school teachers are concerned about the potential risk of student dropout, a phenomenon that has remained steady at approximately 14% since 1987 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). However, as Blackorby and Wagner (1996) note, the likelihood of high school dropout is significantly greater if a student is labeled as learning disabled (36%) or as having emotional and behavioral disorders (59%). Dropping out of school is the result of complex and often interlocking issues, one of which is the ever increasing academic demands placed upon all learners, including those with disabilities (Deshler, Schumaker, Harris, & Graham, 1999). However, research has shown that student retention is possible when adolescents work with a helpful person and experience success in a helpful class, regardless of content area (Dunn, Chambers, & Rabren, 2004). Chris Lagares and the supportive environment he maintains illustrate these two notions of "helpfulness."

Although laughter often fills the air, students take Chris's class very seriously. This year-long course of study concludes with one of five New York state examinations, part of a system that raised the standards for all students, reinforced by the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. If students do not pass the Regents Examination in U.S. government and history, then they cannot earn a state-endorsed diploma to graduate. Students with disabilities can obtain an individualized education program diploma—although most students with high-incidence disabilities who aim to attend college do not want this option, and are personally driven to pass the state test.

The very nature of courses culminating in high-stakes examinations creates great pressure for teachers and students

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alike, requiring a concerted effort by everyone. Partnering with two dedicated special educators at the school, Chris shares his curriculum, helps modify tests, and participates in ongoing conferences about students who struggle the most. Nonetheless, regardless of their struggles with attention, memory, or language, Chris maintains high expectations for all students. This article invites you to step inside his classroom and experience 25 selected strategies that Chris uses to prepare students not only for the culminating statewide examination, but also the promise of college beyond.

Appealing to the Senses

1. Memorizing Major Concepts: Detailed Story, Visualization, and Choral Repetition

Chris helps his students learn and memorize the Bill of Rights by telling them a story that encompasses all of the major tenets. This story is divided into a sequence of tableau-like images, which the teacher and students vividly describe. As each new image is added onto the story, the class retells the story from the beginning in call-and-response style. Students also write the information on a specially prepared worksheet. The first three amendments can be depicted as follows:

"

Teacher: Step One: This Sunday I visited a big wooden church (religion), with a priest reading *The New York Times* (press). He then spoke (speech), to his congregation (assembly), and asked them to sign a petition (right to petition). *Repeat what happened to me on Sunday.*

Students repeat information.

Teacher: Step Two: I walked out of the church and saw a bear dressed in a cowboy suit surrounded by a little girl and a group of veterans. The girl laughed at the bear, making him angry. He ripped the sleeves off his cowboy shirt, revealing hairy bear arms, and shot two guns into the sky (the right to bear arms). Let's start from the top of my weekend adventure. *Where does this story begin?*

Students repeat Step One.

Teacher: *What happens next?*

Students repeat Step Two.

Teacher: Step Three: The veterans were scared of the bear and ran across the street to a series of brick houses. They tried to get into the house but an old man refused to let them in (protection against the quartering of troops). *What does this house look like?*

Students describe house.

Teacher: *Let's begin the story . . .*

"

While repeatedly retelling the story, it is important for students to not merely memorize each step in the sequence, but to also be able to identify the tenets it represents. This form of pedagogy creates multiple connections (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to the targeted concept and subconcepts, thereby creating a greater chance that they will be remembered (Bocchino, 1999). This method is also an example of culturally responsive teaching; call-and-response is a form of participatory social dynamics often found in African American churches (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Williams Shealey & Callins, 2007).

2. Using Students' Personal Visual Symbols

In most classroom activities, Chris invites his students to use visual symbols to remember key concepts. When taking notes during a lecture on the Bill of Rights, students drew the following items representing the first five amendments:

- A human head with an open mouth: free speech.
- A gun: right to bear arms.
- A house: government may not require people to house soldiers.
- A house with an arrow through the front door: protection against unreasonable searches or seizures
- Scales: no one may be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.

3. Carousel Graffiti

This pedagogical strategy is named after the fairground ride. In his classroom, Chris has set up several "stations," each containing a historical document that students must analyze—perhaps a quotation (or series of them), a political cartoon, an etching (e.g., mines during the industrial revolution), a photograph (e.g., social conditions documented by Jacob Riis), maps, etc. Groups of four students rotate through the stations to analyze each document, recording their observations or thoughts on the document. Once everyone has rotated throughout all stations, the class discusses the observations and notes. Chris records selected notes from the class discussion on the blackboard; students can copy these notes, or do independent writing in their journals (summary, elaboration of a single point, etc.).

Cognitive Connections

4. Making Multiple Connections to Texts

Current examinations challenge students to take a more analytical stance toward processing information; several feature document-based questions (DBQs) that students have to dissect and comment upon. When presented with a document such as an excerpt from an international treaty, a sale of goods, a passenger ship chart, or a regional map, many students "draw a blank," unsure of how to proceed. To counter this, Chris uses six text-based symbols customized from suggestions by Beers (2003) to forge as many connections as possible:

- S Surprising: What surprised you in the text?
- * Important: What is important in the text?
- ? Clarification: What are you unsure about in the text?
- T-T Text-to-text connections: How does this reading relate to other texts read?
- T-C Text-to-class connections: How does this text relate to a history lesson or another class?
- T-S Text-to-self connections: How does the text relate to you personally?

Figure 1. Text Connections

Chris's students routinely write these six symbols on documents they analyze in class or in their homework assignments (sticky notes can be used on school textbooks or materials used by multiple classes). The symbols serve as "entry points" for students into what might first appear as overwhelming; they also give Chris some insight into the complex process of an individual student's comprehension, and the basis for one-on-one discussions. Students keep a copy of the text connection symbols in their history binders, and another is permanently posted in the classroom (see Figure 1).

5. Grouping Students

Group work is central to creating and maintaining a dynamic, inclusive classroom. Having students collaborate in groups to apply newly introduced information and problem solve contributes to a stimulating interactive environment (Gut, 2000). Chris regularly groups students in a variety of ways:

- *By interest:* Students can choose to research a nation subject to intervention by the United States during the Age of Imperialism.
- *By ability:* Students are assigned a task, such as analyzing a specific case that went to the Supreme Court. Each group considers the same questions (e.g., What was at stake? Which groups would be impacted most?) and shares their findings at the end of class; the length and complexity of the original documents may vary.
- *At random:* To promote a true classroom community, all students should be able to work constructively with all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, language status, sexual orientation, or ability level, on a regular basis.

Ensuring that students with disabilities are appropriately engaged in group work may need to be a scaffolded process. For example, a teacher may first have students individually focus on a related task and—when mastered—practice that task with a partner, before transitioning into groups. Although some students with disabilities may need additional support in cooperative groups, others may flourish and "play to their strength" in a variety of roles such as problem solver, reporter, focuser, step-checker, devil's advocate (taking a contrary position), or class presenter.

6. Analyzing Cartoons

Political cartoons often prove tricky for students to understand. To provide his students with the tools for an in-depth examination (see Figure 2), Chris asks them to:

- ✓ Look at the *whole* picture.
- ✓ Divide the cartoon in four parts and examine each part individually. (This ensures that students consider details they might miss with a superficial analysis; see Figure 2.)
- ✓ Circle and identify the visual symbols, and note what they symbolize.
- ✓ Describe what action is taking place.
- ✓ Read any dialogue, titles, or captions.
- ✓ Think of what you already know about this time period in history.
- ✓ Write what you think the cartoon is "saying."

7. Using Current Events

Students are curious about the events they hear about on the news or see in newspapers. Teachers can turn this to their advantage and use current news stories to help teach important concepts in government such as federalism or checks and balances. This method connects past history with present practices and related issues. For instance, when teaching about checks and balances, Chris collects newspaper headlines regarding bills signed or vetoed by the president, Supreme Court decisions, and Congressional debates. Student groups sort the headlines into three piles, and explain how each story illus-

trates our system of checks and balances.

8. Maximizing Multiple Choice

Training students how to approach multiple-choice exams can greatly improve their performance. Six simple steps provide strategies that help students get started, approach questions systematically, provide a safety net if they are stuck, incorporate time-management skills, and use probability to boost students' chances of answering questions correctly (see also Runté, 1995).

1. Read the question first.
2. Answer before looking at the possible choices. (Chris's students read the question, covering the answer choices, and come up with an original response before selecting from possible answers.)
3. Eliminate choices. (Students cross out those answers that are "distracters" or that they know cannot be true).
4. Never leave a blank space. (Students check to make sure they've answered every question. This advice varies according to the type of examination. For example, students are penalized in the Regents exams for not attempting to answer, whereas in the SAT it is better to leave a blank rather than risk losing a point.)
5. Guess, mark, move. (If they are stuck, they guess an answer, mark the question with a star, and move onto the next question. At the end of the test they return to reconsider their guesses).
6. Avoid changing answers. (Students who change their answers often find out later that their first choice was correct. Chris teaches his students to go with their "gut feeling" and only change an answer if they are *absolutely sure* their first stab at the question was an error.)

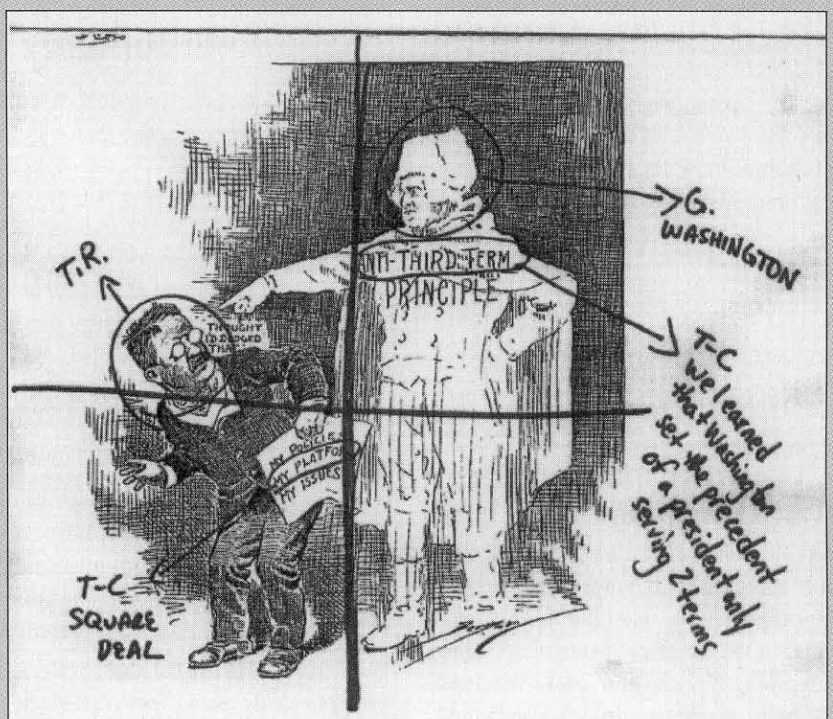
9. Using Accountable Talk

While working in groups, students sometimes have a tendency to stray off task. To counter this, Chris asks his students to "interrogate the text" when analyzing documents, and provides them with prompts.

- Reading an amendment: "What is most interesting to you?"
- Scanning a treaty: "What is most surprising?"
- Reading a short biography: "What is this person's most valuable contribution to the United States?"
- When considering a law: "What are some serious implications?"

When interrogating a text, all group members underline and use asterisks and their "connection" symbols (see Figure 1). When everyone has completed reading the document, the group has a focused discussion based upon their text connections which will later be summarized for the whole class. Discussions can be further honed by presenting more specific questions (e.g., "What were the top three advantages based upon the president's decision?"). Accommodations for students who have difficulty in reading might include working with only a section of a document, using a modified text, working with a group leader-reader, and discussing the content. Students who experience difficulties in writing can bullet information, write one-word/one-phrase/one-sentence responses, answer prepared cues, or respond to questions that vary in degrees of complexity.

Figure 2. Analyzed Cartoon



Anti-Third Term Principle by Clifford K. Berryman

Untitled. [Anti-Third Term Principle], 10/01/1912 (ARC Identifier: 306175); Series: Berryman Political Cartoon Collection, 1896 - 1949; Records of the U.S. Senate, 1789 - 2005; Record Group 46; National Archives.

http://www.archives.gov/global-pages/larger-image.html?i=/historical-docs/doc-content/im... 5/14/2007

Customized Materials

10. True or False Comparisons

Quick quizzes have been a staple of classes since schools began, and are still useful—with a twist. In comparing and contrasting Hamilton and Jefferson, for example, Chris prepares a series of statements about each president and reads it to the class; students respond by writing *true* or *false*. In reviewing the

answers as a class, Chris elicits points of similarities and differences between each founding father, helping to review and recycle previously taught information. (A written version of each statement with a "T" or "F" at the end can help some students to focus and keep their thoughts organized.)

Quick quizzes have been a staple of classes since schools began, and are still useful—with a twist.

11. Modified Texts

Many students, regardless of their skill level, struggle with ways writers from previous centuries used the English language, which seems foreign to their contemporary eyes and ears. Teachers can help students unlock "antique" texts by presenting them with modern language versions of the same document. Chris provides his students with snippets of the Declaration of Independence on slips of paper written in both modern English and in its original form, and encourages them to match the corresponding parts. Admittedly not for historical purists, modified "student-friendly" versions of key concepts allow adolescents to connect with important ideas from primary sources in concrete rather than abstract ways. Although such modifications can be seen as bare bones, they often serve as a first step toward understanding, and fleshy details can be added later. In addition, a quick round-robin read-aloud by student volunteers ensures that the whole class processes the essential information.

12. Creative Content-Specific Games

Games are enjoyed by people of all ages, and can enhance and extend learning. In Chris's class, students play the Immigration Game, assuming the role of a U.S. immigrant (see Figure 3). Chris designed the game to teach his students about the diversity of immigrants to this country, and encourages his students to use both facts and their imagination to create a unique character. To assist students who have difficulty in processing multistep instructions, teachers can model the activity, encourage a "trial run" with a partner, or reduce the number of required characteristics.

13. Review Activities

The density of the curriculum and amount of information to remember necessitates a variety of review activities that Chris uses simultaneously throughout all units of study. He provides his students with multiple opportunities and a variety of ways to memorize information and facts, including:

- *Rewriting lyrics of contemporary songs* (for example by Beyoncé or Usher), to include content from curriculum (Note that the chorus of a song is usually easiest to remember.)
- *Using flash cards* that reflect the class study guide (see also strategies 20 and 23)
- *Using specialized flash cards for vocabulary* (e.g., students underline in red marker all words dealing with Cold War foreign policy)
- *Using a storyboard as a study guide* (see Figure 4), creating sequential or thematic visuals to incorporate important incidents, events, and people

14. Fairytales and Fables

Many concepts in the curriculum may originally appear far removed from a student's real-life experience. Bridging this divide has always challenged teachers. Storytelling in the form of humorous fairytales or fables can enchant, entertain, and, most importantly, engage students. For example, in teaching the concept of tyranny, the stimulating story of *Her Majesty Queen Yuckabella* (see box, "Additional Resources") draws students into what become heated debates on civil liberties.

Preparing for Higher Education

As students progress through school, the amount of knowledge they are required to acquire expands exponentially (Deshler et al., 1999). This knowledge cannot be retained without strategies for managing workloads, organizational techniques, and plans for studying. Study skills do not come naturally to most people, and can be particularly problematic for students who have difficulties with memory, organization, language, and time management. In other words, these skills must be woven throughout the curriculum and taught both explicitly and repeatedly. The majority of students aspire to attend college; all of these skills are vital for continued academic success. Bearing these points in mind, Chris uses strategies designed to teach students how best to organize, self-manage, study, and self-reflect—in an ongoing manner. In turn, these skills can carry on through college to help students meet the demands of an even more academically rigorous environment (Mitchell & Sedlacek, 1995).

15. Note Taking

Students are required to take notes often, and can be supported in a variety of ways including being provided with outlines (Lazarus, 1996) and graphic organizers, or shown various symbols for short cuts. Immediately after taking notes, Chris's students have opportunities to synthesize the information and respond to it either in writing or orally. Time to process allows students to solidify and organize ideas, as well as forge connections to previously taught concepts.

16. Modeling

Whenever possible, show students exactly what you mean. For example, when teaching note taking, ask a colleague to assist your class; as you give a short lecture, the colleague can take notes on an overhead projector, chalkboard, or whiteboard. After the lecture, the colleague can explain personal decision rules (symbols, abbreviations, organization, etc.) and answer students' questions. Inviting multiple colleagues to participate would demonstrate differences in note-taking styles. After the note-taking unit, give a short lecture and have students take notes; the class can discuss the decisions they made.

Figure 3. The Immigration Game

Student's Name: _____ Section: _____

Step 1: Country of Origin	Step 2: Marital Status	Step 3: Children	Step 4: Age	Step 5: Home Town	Step 6: Criminal?	Step 7: Relatives	Step 8: Synthesize!
Roll the dice and add up the values, to determine what nationality your immigrant character will be. **Country — Religion** 2 Dominican Republic — Roman Catholic 3 China — Buddhist 4 Poland — Jewish 5 Hungary — Jewish 6 Germany — Protestant 7 Italy — Roman Catholic 8 Ireland — Roman Catholic 9 Russia — Jewish 10 Lithuania — Jewish 11 Japan — Buddhist 12 Spain — Roman Catholic	Roll one die to determine if you are married, single, or widowed. • Even number = married • 1 or 5 = widowed • 3 = single	Roll one die to determine how many children you have. The value of the die is the number of children that are with you.	Roll the dice to determine the age of your immigrant character. One die is the number in the "tens" place (other than 1). One die is the number in the "ones" place.	Look at a map of your country. Pick any town or city in which you live.	Roll one die. If you roll a 2, you have a criminal record. If you roll any other number, you are not a criminal.	Roll the dice and add up the values to determine if you have family in the United States, who that person is—it will determine where you live. 2 No relatives 3 Uncle in Manhattan 4 Cousin in Brooklyn 5 Brother in the Bronx 6 Uncle in Manhattan 7 Brother in Manhattan 8 Uncle in Manhattan 9 No relatives 10 Cousin in Queens 11 Cousin in Chicago 12 Cousin in Buffalo	Write a biography or journal entry of your immigrant character on a separate sheet of paper. You can make up additional details. When writing the biography or journal entry, be sure to include all the details from the Game. Also include: • Why did you want to live in America (push and pull factors)? • How did you feel about leaving your home? • What did you expect America to be like? • How were you treated by Americans?
Write down your country of origin and your immigrant's religion.	Write down your marital status.	Write down the number of children you have.	Write down your age.	Write down the name of your home town or city.	Are you a criminal?	Write down your results.	*The biography/ journal entry is a creative piece. Please be sure to write it in paragraph format.*

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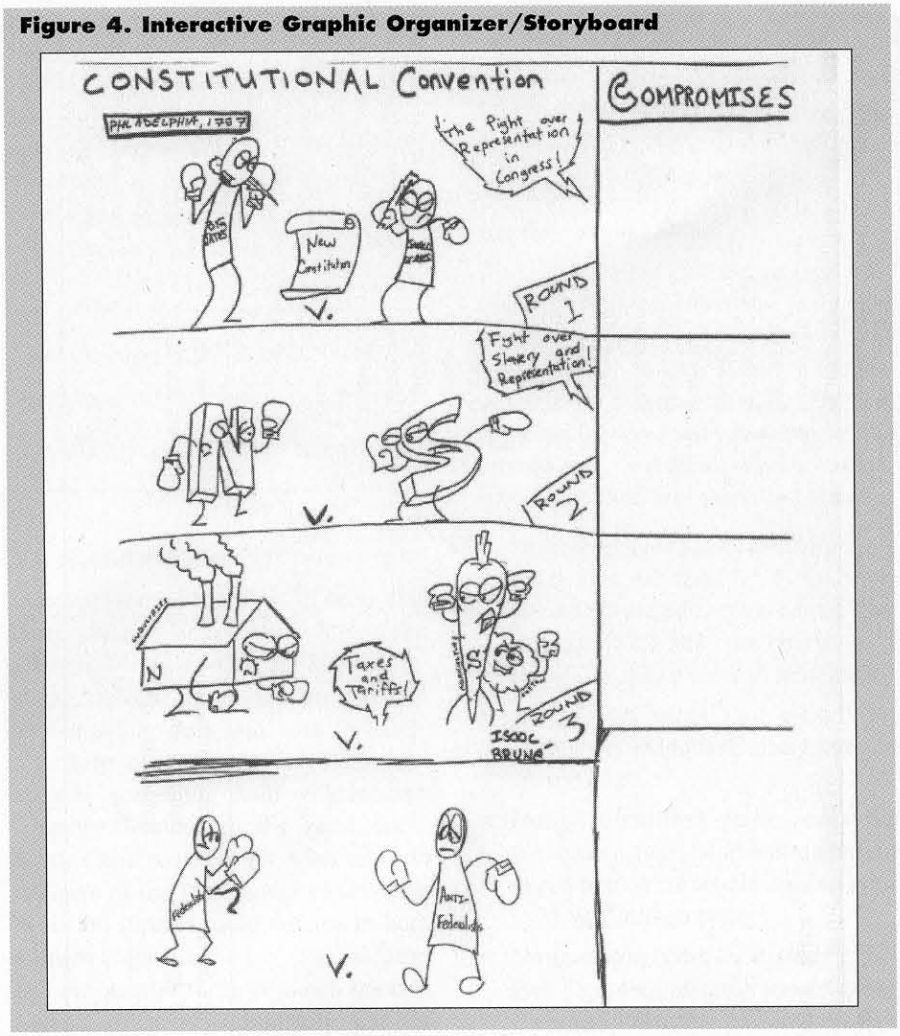
Figure 4. Interactive Graphic Organizer/Storyboard



17. Customizing Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are extremely useful and there are many ready-made varieties. However, customized graphic organizers (Figure 5) help teachers structure information by conceptually mapping out superordinate and subordinate concepts, allowing students to see the connections between them. Students can then take notes in the blank spaces to enhance their general understanding. This can be done individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a whole class activity led by the teacher.

18. Selecting Vocabulary

A high school history curriculum exposes students to a highly specialized vocabulary. One approach to helping students acquire the required vocabulary is to encourage them to circle unfamiliar words in the course of their reading. For purposes of study and review, Chris chooses five to seven related vocabulary words or terms (e.g. ratify, impeach, regent, treaty, null and void). His students then explain what they think each word means. Chris models relating the word to his own life experience ("I cancelled a check, making it null and void," "I refused to sign the contract, making it null and void," etc.), and asks his students to give examples orally and in writing (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

19. Attacking Vocabulary

Students can be taught how to figure out a word or phrase on their own using different techniques:

- *Ask yourself:* Is there a smaller word in the bigger phrase/word? (For example, in "Progressive Era," the word *progress* is in *progressive*, and provides a clue about what was accomplished during that time period).
- *Use a native language other than English:* The word *incarcerate* might be easier to understand for Spanish speakers if they think of the Spanish word for jail, *carcel*.
- *Use a thesaurus:* Find a synonym or related word already known.
- *Use a dictionary:* Look up the meaning of the word, discuss it with the teacher, and then copy in a personalized dictionary made from a pocket-size address book.

20. Creating Study Cards

Because using index cards is often a novel idea for high school students, Chris guides his students through the process of why and how index cards are utilized. In doing so, he equips his students with ways to organize, memorize, and make connections throughout the curriculum. Study cards (see Figure 6) incorporate such techniques as mnemonic devices, illustrations or icons, and key words. The whole class can brainstorm and negotiate clues and cues, or students can make individualized cards.

21. Study Plans

Chris allocates time for his students to discuss and map out study plans. Using calendars, students "guesstimate" how long they will need to study for a weekly test/quiz as well as major tests. They describe their own study habits (time of day, environment, factors of light/noise, etc.) as well as discuss their plans with partners.

22. Interactive Graphic Organizers and Guides

Using teacher-made materials illustrating important points in U.S. history and policy, Chris's students debate the major concepts, then paraphrase the most important items in the spaces provided or available (see Figures 2, 4 and 5). Interactive graphic organizers can be created by students for the whole class to use, such as Figure 4's storyboard.

Additional Resources

Primary Sources

The National Archives at http://www.nara.gov offers both a wide variety of government related documents and teaching materials on how to use documents.

Teachers looking to personalize their lessons should visit the treasure trove of images, audio files, and documents related to specific time periods in American history at the Authentic History Center's site at http://www.authentichistory. com/.

Interactive Activities

Teachers interested in connecting current events to their curriculum should visit CNN's Web site for teachers and students at http://www.cnn.com/studentnews/

The Public Broadcasting System created a separate page for educators at http://www.pbs.org/teachers/. This site offers lesson plans tied to their programming, oftentimes with on-line interactive activities.

Lesson Plans

For links to lessons and educational Internet sites visit the National Endowment of Humanities' education site at http://edsitement.neh.gov/.

For lessons, reading suggestions or inquiries related to education visit The Educator's Reference Desk's http://www.eduref.org/.

Cartoon Analysis

The National Archives provides worksheets to help teachers assist their students interpret historical documents. This article used a modified version of the organization's cartoon analysis sheet originally found at http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf.

Queen Yuckabella Rebellion Simulation Game

This simulation originated from a lesson submitted by Ms. Roseann Fox entitled "American Revolution Simulation." It can be found in its original form at http://www.eduref.org/Virtual/Lessons/Social_Studies/US_History/USH0003.html.

Modifying Texts (The Declaration of Independence)

The secondary author modified the activity described within Strategy #11 from materials and various activities presented at the "Enlivening American History Through Primary Sources" summer institutes. Teachers from the now defunct Office of the Superintendent for Alternative, Adult and Continuing Education in New York City, participated in various workshops focusing on a different century in American history. Dr. David Gerwin of Queens College led these institutes in collaboration with Mikal Muharrar, from the New York Historical Society. The teachers enrolled in the "18th Century Institute" received the original version of the activity in a binder provided by this program.

Figure 5. Customized Graphic Organizer

Making Connections Across Levels of Government

	Executive	Legislative	Judicial
National	• President enforces laws • Commander in Chief • Gives State of Union Address		
State	• State Governor enforces state laws • Head of State Militia • Signs bills by state legislature into law • Gives State of the State Address		
City	• Mayor heads local government • Responsible for New York City Police Department • Signs Bills by City Council into law • Gives State of City Address		

Figure 6. Study Card Example

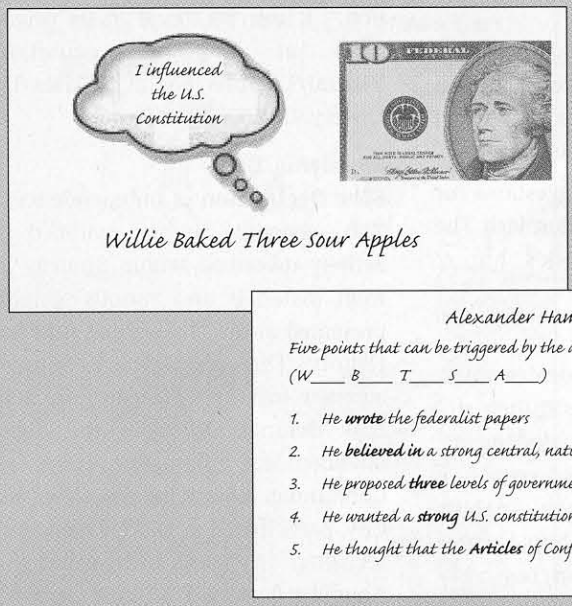
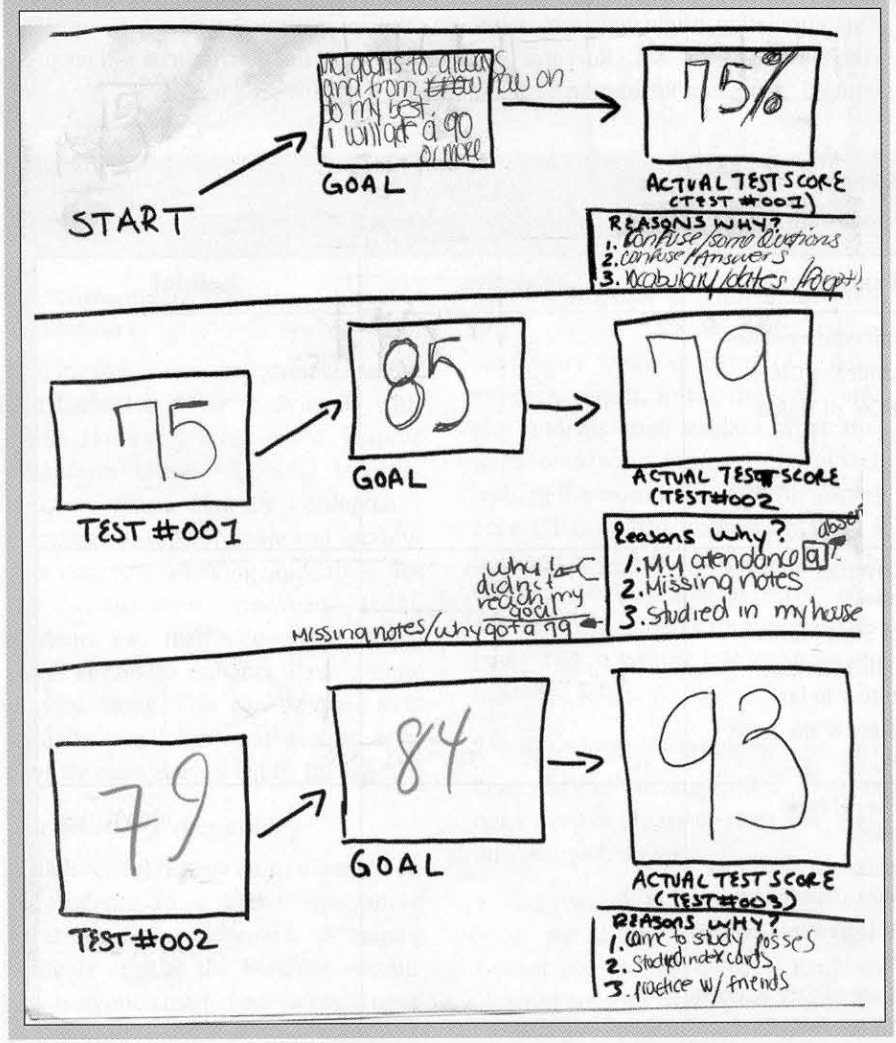


Figure 7. Student Self-Reflection and Self-Monitoring



23. Organizing Study Unit Materials

Chris collects the materials for each unit of study in individual envelopes; the envelopes include class-created flash cards, class notes, and a teacher-generated checklist of unit topics. His students can review the checklist before an exam, so they know which cards they already have and which they may need to copy to complete their review pack. This helps students who have missed school because of illness or erratic attendance. Chris's checklist is divided into categories to further help students organize their own cards. (For instance, the Age of Industrialization might be grouped into categories such as "Robber Barons," "Labor," and "Treatment of African-Americans." The category of "Robber Barons" might include flash cards on Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, monopolies, trusts, and corporations.) This organizational strategy provides students with easy-to-grab mini-packets of flash cards for a quick study, or a deeper read of class notes, at any time. In addition, it also promotes independence and self-reliance, in turn assisting Chris's students in developing self-sufficiency.

24. Forming a Study Posse

Promote the necessity to study if you want to maximize your score on examinations, especially high-stakes tests. Organize an after-school *study posse* (or another team-related catchphrase) to review information, share tips, clarify tricky areas, update and expand index cards, and help students feel more confident in terms of approaching exams.

25. Promoting Self-Analysis and Self-Monitoring

Chris routinely budgets class time to review the results of in-class examinations structured similarly to their state's high-stakes test. His students conduct error analyses of their own work (see Figure 7) to reveal areas of strength and weakness. In addition, they identify in writing the factors that made them perform at their current level, and discuss these with a study buddy. Students set goals (at least 5 points more!) for the

Chris routinely budgets class time to review the results of in-class examinations structured similarly to their state's high-stakes test. His students conduct error analyses of their own work.

next examination, and can also chart their efforts.

Final Thoughts

Teaching an inclusive high school class that concludes with a high-stakes test is a job that comes with multiple pressures. Reflective teachers respond to this challenge with creative lessons that engage students in meaningful ways. The 25 suggestions in this article grew out of Chris Lagares's experience working in a social studies class; to some degree, all can be generalized to other high school disciplines—in general and special education classrooms alike.

The current era of high-stakes testing has caused many schools to seem less welcoming to students with disabilities than to their nondisabled peers (Parents for Inclusive Education, 2006). As a result, all teachers need to utilize creative methods rooted in research to support struggling learners and demonstrate that all students can succeed. It is equally important to note that all students cannot pass all tests, even if they try their hardest. In such cases, it behooves educators to illustrate the limitations of testing, while emphasizing the value of reaching goals through recognizing each individual's personal growth.

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David J. Connor *(CEC NY Federation), Associate Professor, Department of Special Education, Hunter College, City University of New York.* **Christopher Lagares**, *Teacher of Social Studies, Manhattan Village Academy, New York.*

Address correspondence to David J. Connor, Department of Special Education, Hunter College, City University of New York. 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10065 (e-mail: dconnor@hunter.cuny.edu), or to Chris Lagares, Manhattan Village Academy, 43 West 22nd St. New York, NY 10010 (e-mail: Mvateacher@aol.com.).

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