

Reflection 1:

One of the hardest parts about studying long ago with children is helping them to grasp what that means. As I planned this inquiry, I spent a lot of time thinking about much loftier goals like appreciating multiple perspectives, etc. However, I soon realized that some students were still struggling to differentiate between now and two hundred and fifty years ago and thirty years ago. In February, our class was in charge of running an All School Meeting. (All School Meetings are times when the whole school gets together to share in and celebrate one class's learning. They take place on a weekly basis and classes take turns running the meeting.) My students were interested in presenting their colonial characters that they had just created and were very excited about. We considered having a street scene set up in which the other kids could go around and meet the characters. However, it soon became evident that this would be hard to facilitate and too sophisticated to hold the attention of kindergarteners and first graders.

This made me pause. In the past, I have given math assignments that ask children to explain a tough concept, like comparing fractions, to a kindergartener. I find that it helps kids slow down and really think things through. Here was a real life context that required us to do the same. So, we had a class meeting and I told them that they had to figure out what part of our study their kindergarten buddy classes would be able to understand. They eventually came up with the idea of presenting a series of scenes in which a narrator said: "Today we have..., but 250 years ago, they had... instead." They spend the rest of the morning compiling a list of all the differences between today and Colonial America. We then dramatized this, gathered costumes and props, and practiced it.