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ABSTRACT

This report presents detailed summaries of the responses of seven exemplary elementary teachers to a series of open-ended questions about effective social studies curriculum and instruction. The questions addressed the teachers' opinions about elementary social studies purposes and goals, content selection, and representation modes; forms and functions of teacher-student and student-student discourse; preferred activities and assignments; methods of assessing learning; and controversies currently being debated primarily by social studies scholars. Findings indicated that all of the teachers favored using a variety of content sources in addition to or instead of a textbook, engaging students in a variety of forms of teacher- student and student-student discourse in addition to or instead of traditional recitation, and engaging students in a variety of learning activities in addition to or instead of traditional worksheets. The teachers agreed with recent critics in viewing the social studies curriculum as thin, trite, and redundant in the primary grades, but they did not advocate eliminating or reducing instruction about families, neighborhoods, and communities or perhaps replacing this content with increased emphasis on history. Instead, they called for teaching the families, neighborhoods, and communities content more effectively through direct experiential learning and through comparisons with parallels in past and contemporary cultures, thus introducing a more comparative and global perspective. (Author/LBG)

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College of Education

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The work is designed to unfold in three phases, beginning with literature review and interview studies designed to elicit and synthesize the points of view of various stakeholders (representatives of the underlying academic disciplines, intellectual leaders and organizations concerned with curriculum and instruction in school subjects, classroom teachers, state- and district-level policymakers) concerning ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in these five content areas at the elementary level. Phase II involves interview and observation methods designed to describe current practice, and in particular, best practice as observed in the classrooms of teachers believed to be outstanding. Phase II also involves analysis of curricula (both widely used curriculum series and distinctive curricula developed with special emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications), as another approach to gathering information about current practices. In Phase III, models of ideal practice will be developed, based on what has been learned and synthesized from the first two phases, and will be tested through classroom intervention studies.

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Abstract

In order to inject teachers' voices into current debates about what constitutes effective elementary social studies curriculum and instruction, this report presents detailed summaries of the responses of seven exemplary elementary teachers to a series of open-ended questions. The questions addressed the teachers' opinions about elementary social studies purposes and goals, content selection and representation modes, forms and functions of teacher-student and student-student discourse, preferred activities and assignments, methods of assessing learning, and controversies currently being debated primarily by social studies scholars. Findings indicated that all of the teachers favored using a variety of content sources in addition to or instead of a textbook, engaging students in a variety of forms of teacher-student and student-student discourse in addition to or instead of traditional recitation, and engaging students in a variety of learning activities in addition to or instead of traditional worksheets. The teachers agreed with recent critics in viewing the social studies curriculum as thin, trite, and redundant in the primary grades, but they did not advocate eliminating or reducing instruction about families, neighborhoods, and communities (and perhaps replacing this content with increased emphasis on history). Instead, they called for teaching the families, neighborhoods, and communities content more effectively through direct experiential learning and through comparisons with parallels in the past and in contemporary cultures, thus introducing a more comparative and global perspective.

EXEMPLARY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Jere Brophy and Bruce VanSledright[1]

This report describes and compares the views of exemplary elementary teachers concerning basic curriculum and instruction issues in elementary social studies. The issues concern questions such as the following: What should we be trying to accomplish in elementary social education, and what makes these purposes and goals preferable to recognized alternatives? Given these purposes and goals, what is the most important content to teach, and why? What key ideas should be stressed, and how might they be represented intelligibly to elementary children? What sorts of questions and activities would be most useful for helping such children deepen their understanding and apply what they are learning to their lives outside of school?

These issues have been and continue to be debated among social studies educators. However, the debates are dominated by university-based scholars and tend to be limited to advocacy of general policies based on theoretical positions, with little or no related collection of empirical data. Debates tend to focus on general issues such as the degree to which social studies ought to be taught as separate courses designed to introduce students to history and the social sciences versus as an integrated subject with its own unique purposes and goals focused around preparing students to think critically and make informed decisions in their roles as citizens in a democracy (Brophy, 1990;

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Jenness, 1990; Shaver, 1991). Elementary-school issues are often slighted or ignored.

The arguments in these debates tend to be phrased in purely theoretical terms even though many aspects are amenable to empirical investigation. Issues relating to social studies purposes and goals must be debated primarily through value-based reasoning, but issues concerning the feasibility and appropriateness of particular content and teaching methods as means for accomplishing those goals include questions that can and should be addressed empirically (e.g., Can students at the grade level in question understand this content meaningfully? What aspects of the content are suitable for teaching at this grade level and how can they be represented most effectively? What sorts of questions and activities would be most helpful for developing the content with these students?). The study described in this report was one of a set designed to expand these debates by focusing more specifically on issues vital to the design of elementary social studies curriculum and instruction, injecting teachers' voices more prominently and comparing their views with the views expressed by university-based scholars and interviewing students concerning their knowledge and thinking (including misconceptions) about topics commonly taught in the elementary grades.

Research and scholarship on elementary social studies has focused on the expanding communities scope and sequence which is followed by most of the elementary social studies series offered by the major publishers. This scope and sequence has been so popular in the last 50 years or so that it has been called the de facto national curriculum in elementary social studies (Naylor & Diem, 1987). It begins with a focus on the self and the immediate environment in kindergarten, then moves on to families in first grade, neighborhoods in

second grade, communities in third grade, the state and region in fourth grade, the United States in fifth grade, and the world in sixth grade.

The expanding communities framework is thought to fit well with children's "expanding horizons"--their gradually increasing knowledge about people and places farther removed from them in space and time as they get older. The framework also has been popular because it fits well with the citizen education emphasis in social studies by drawing content from various sources and blending it to center on topics rather than by organizing the curriculum according to separate disciplines. The framework can accommodate most emerging topics (environmentalism, multicultural education, etc.) and can be taught with different degrees of emphasis on integration, causal explanation (in addition to mere description), application of the content addressed, or emphasis on skills such as data gathering, critical thinking, or decision making.

Despite its popularity and durability, the expanding communities curriculum, and especially the market-share textbook series that are widely used as the basis for teaching it, have been subjected to various forms of criticism over the years. The expanding communities approach has been criticized for being too age-grade oriented; being too traditional and middle-class oriented in its treatment of families and communities; being sequenced according to adult rather than child logic (for example, a state is just as abstract a concept as a nation, so there is no necessary reason why children should study the state before studying the nation); fragmenting the curriculum so that students do not get enough opportunity to see relationships that exist across communities; and failing to allow for integration of skills instruction with instruction in content (Joyce & Alleman-Brooks, 1982; Naylor & Diem, 1987). Those who want to develop a global rather than a more narrowly American purview in students note that television now brings non-western lands and cultures into

the home early, so that if one waits until the sixth or seventh grade to begin teaching geography and cultures with an emphasis on human commonalities, it may be too late to overcome ethnocentrism that has developed in the meantime (Mitsakos, 1978). Those who want to see a return to a heavy emphasis on history as the core around which to build the entire social studies curriculum tend to attack the expanding communities approach because it emphasizes content drawn from anthropology, economics, and sociology (rather than history) in its treatment of families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Ravitch (1987), for example, dismissed much of the content taught in primary-grade social studies curricula as "tot sociology," viewing it as mostly a collection of boring information that students have no interest in and do not need to learn anyway (because they develop most of this knowledge through normal experiences outside of school). She claimed that the approach was developed by progressive educators of the 1930s for reasons that have become obsolete, and that in any case, its relative merits have never been tested, let alone validated, against plausible alternatives. Along with Egan (1986) and others, Ravitch (1987) argued that, contrary to the assumptions underlying the expanding communities approach, children not only are able to understand but are highly interested in learning about the exotic and the "long ago and far away" (including myth and lore), especially when instruction is embedded in narrative formats featuring stories that focus on heroes and carry moral implications.

Larkins, Hawkins, and Gilmore (1987) expressed similar views in their critique of social studies textbook series used in the primary grades. They further suggested that some of the goals and associated content addressed in those grades are ill suited to textbook-based curriculum and instruction and need to be approached through experiential learning. If you want to teach

young children about neighborhoods, they argued, guide them through explorations of their own neighborhood instead of having them read information about neighborhoods in a textbook.

Other criticism of the elementary social studies curriculum is more accepting of the expanding communities scope and sequence but critical of typical textbook series as vehicles for representing it. Critics complain that these series emphasize breadth of coverage over depth of development of ideas, present information as disconnected parades of facts rather than as networks of connected content structured around important ideas, contain too many paragraphs that are unclear because the material is too compressed and elliptical, frequently disrupt the flow of content by inserting vignettes or skills exercises that have no connection to the rest of the unit, devote excessive space to pictures and graphics that are not related to important ideas developed in the text, are lacking in coherence and reader friendliness of exposition of content, lack integration of skills content with knowledge content, unnecessarily sanitize the content in order to avoid controversy, and present not enough content in the primary grades but too much in the middle grades (Beck & McKeown, 1988; Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; Brophy, 1992b; Brophy, McMahon, & Prawat, 1991; Elliott, Nagel, & Woodward, 1985; Larkins, Hawkins, & Gilmore, 1987).

Especially relevant to the present study are reports by Brophy, McMahon, and Prawat (1991) and by Brophy, Prawat, and McMahon (1991), which compared the views of prominent social studies scholars with those of selected elementary school teachers. Prior comparisons of the views of social education professors with those of elementary teachers have focused more on differences than on similarities (Mehlinger & Davis, 1981; Shaver, 1987; Stanley, 1985). These studies suggest that elementary teachers are oriented more toward students than

subject matter and that they typically favor a citizenship training emphasis, teaching of a broad range of facts, and inculcation of traditional and locally favored values. In contrast, professors tend to place more emphasis on concepts and generalizations drawn from the disciplines, addressing less content in greater depth and with more emphasis on application and a critical stance toward values and traditions. Professors tend to criticize teachers for relying too much on textbooks, teaching isolated facts and skills without enough emphasis on coherent conceptual structures and application opportunities, being overly accepting of textbook content as valid, teaching in ways that inculcate uncritically positive attitudes toward national policies and the status quo, and being overly pessimistic about what their students are capable of learning. Teachers tend to criticize professors for being too academic and middle class in their orientation, overemphasizing generalizations from the social sciences while underemphasizing humanistic or value elements and content that is important in the students' lives or currently in the news; underemphasizing the need for direct teaching and a strong base of information before undertaking problem solving; and overemphasizing experimentation, inquiry/discovery exercises, and other activities seen as impractical for classroom use or not worth the time and trouble that they require.

Leming (1989) described the views of these two groups of social educators as representing two different cultures. He depicted theorists (professors) as oriented toward social amelioration and change but teachers as oriented toward tradition and stability, theorists as favoring countersocialization but teachers as favoring socialization, and theorists as viewing citizen education as the unique function of social studies and favoring critical thinking as the method but teachers as viewing teaching of particular content as the unique function and favoring didactic instruction as the method. He emphasized the

need for each group to develop more sympathy for the concerns of the other, but in particular, for social education theorists to become more knowledgeable about and responsive to the social and political pressures faced by teachers.

Brophy, McMahon, and Prawat (1991) and Brophy, Prawat, and McMahon (1991) addressed this concern by interviewing prominent social education scholars who were selected because they also were interested in and knowledgeable about elementary social studies teaching, as well as exemplary elementary teachers who were selected because they were interested in and knowledgeable about theory and research in social education. These two sets of interviewees showed a great deal of agreement in their statements about ideal elementary social studies teaching and learning and in their reactions to one of the leading market-share elementary textbook series (here, they echoed the same general criticisms of these series described above).

There were many areas of agreement between the two groups and their disagreements were minor differences in emphasis rather than flat substantive contradictions. The teachers were relatively more student oriented and the professors more subject-matter oriented. The teachers were relatively more accepting of the textbook series they critiqued, but they were at least as much concerned about expanding their students' purviews by exposing them to multicultural content and global education values as they were about inculcating traditional and locally favored values. They did not heavily emphasize structuring the content around a limited number of key ideas, but they did emphasize making sure that students not only could understand what they were learning but could apply it to their lives outside of school.

The teachers called for a range of activities that would extend considerably beyond the narrow reading/recitation/seatwork format. In discussing desirable learning activities, they emphasized affective as well as cognitive

purposes. They saw activities not just as vehicles for promoting understanding or application of key ideas, but also as ways to motivate students' interest and get them actively involved in the learning process, to personalize learning by providing concrete experiences, to address students' individual needs and learning styles, to provide concrete experiences that young students need to support their learning, and to provide teachers with a rich set of data for assessing student learning. In general, the teachers had more to say about questions and activities than about goals and content selection.

Taken together, the literature on curriculum and instruction issues in elementary social studies suggests the need for more attention to teachers' voices in the debates and for attempts to bring empirical data to bear on assumptions about the kinds of content and activities that are well suited to the learning needs and interests of elementary school children. In other studies being done concurrently, the authors have been interviewing elementary students to determine the nature of their prior knowledge (including misconceptions) and their learning relating to key ideas taught in their social studies courses. In the present study, the focus is on elementary teachers. Through extended interviewing of a selected sample of such teachers, we have elicited their experience-based beliefs about what is appropriate social studies curriculum and instruction for students at their grade levels.

Procedures

This study was not an experiment but an attempt to glean experience-based wisdom from veteran teachers who had established local reputations for excellence, including (but not limited to) excellence in teaching social studies. We identified such teachers through administrators in school districts in the Lansing, Michigan, area We explained the purpose of the study and asked to be

put in contact with potential interviewees who fit the above description. We expressed a special interest in teachers from the primary grades, where social studies teaching and learning has been least well researched despite controversies over what would be appropriate social studies goals and content for those grades. Noting that social studies is often slighted in primary grade classrooms, we emphasized to school district personnel that we wanted to interview teachers who not only had established reputations for all-around excellence, but who were interested in social studies and emphasized it consistently in their teaching. District personnel responded accordingly for the most part, although a couple of nominees were dropped after preliminary interviews indicated that they did not actually place much emphasis on social studies in their teaching.

We had intended to interview at least one teacher at each of Grades K-5, but the limited availability of suitable teachers and our own limited resources prevented this. We ended up interviewing seven teachers, two from first grade, two from second grade, one from third grade, and two from fifth grade. The teachers came from three suburban districts serving predominantly white, middle-class populations. Four of them worked in a district that serves primarily upper middle-class families in which the parents are often highly educated professionals. The other three teachers worked in two more heterogeneous but primarily middle-class districts. All three districts had reputations for good schools and community support for education. Unfortunately, our efforts to identify appropriate interviewees working in urban schools were not successful.

Once potential interviewees were identified to us, we contacted them by phone and talked to them to ascertain their suitability for the study and willingness to participate in it. We explained that the interview involved tape-recording their responses to several sets of open-ended questions about

their background and preparation for teaching, their general philosophy and approach, their views on the purposes and goals of elementary school in general and social studies in particular, details of their social studies teaching, and their opinions on current issues relating to elementary social studies. Interviewing would be done in their classrooms after school, by scheduled appointment. We would schedule as many appointments as it took to complete the interview. Teachers would participate anonymously and would receive a transcription of their own interview and a copy of the report of the study, along with a modest honorarium of $50.00 in partial compensation for their personal time.

The seven teachers who participated were given the interview questions in advance of the first appointment, so that they could study them and make notes if they wished to. They also were invited to show us curriculum guides, curriculum materials, or anything else that might be helpful in responding to certain questions. We wanted them to be as complete and specific as they could be. The participating teachers invested considerable time and thought into our interviews, which ranged from about 6 to about 15 hours of tape-recording in the seven classrooms.

In presenting the findings, we will refer to the two first-grade teachers as Teachers 1A and 1B, the two second-grade teachers as Teachers 2A and 2B, the third-grade teacher as Teacher 3, and the two fifth-grade teachers as Teachers 5A and 5B. In presenting the data, we do not quote the teachers verbatim because responses often were long and sometimes rambling or interrupted while side issues were pursued. Instead, we summarize the gist of what each teacher said in response to clusters of related questions. The interview questions are given verbatim at the beginning of each section.

We introduce the seven teachers through their responses to the first set of questions.

Teacher's Education and Teaching Experiences

1. Formal education: Bachelor level (major, minor), master's or other advanced degrees.

2. Significant nondegree educational experiences that have affected your approach to teaching (independent reading, inservice activities, professional organizations, etc.).

3. Years of experience at various grade levels.

4. How did you happen to develop your special interest in social studies?

Teacher 1A has a bachelor's degree in child development and teaching, with a minor in social studies. She has no master's degree but has taken several graduate classes. She has taught for 11 years in Grades K-2 and currently teaches first grade in a middle-class district.

Teacher 1A's interest in social studies was stimulated by a former student whom she taught in kindergarten who knew the locations of all of the states. This made her realize that she could be using maps and teaching about geography. Experimenting, she found that kindergarten children loved maps "if you keep it in perspective" by just exposing them rather than seeking mastery of a great many details. She seeks to create an initial interest in geography and expose her students to maps and globes, continents, nations, and states. She enjoyed geography and history as a student, but did not have that strong an interest in it. Consequently, she traces her current emphasis on social studies (especially geography) to her experience with the kindergarten student.

Once she began experimenting, she found that her students responded well to certain lessons. She also visited a Montessori school that did a lot with geography and acquired some materials from them. From a colleague in another school who has done a lot of traveling and is fluent in French, she learned that first graders were interested in hearing about European countries and seeing the things that she brought back from her travels.

As she began pursuing this interest, she began collecting National Geographic magazines and other resources, and she eventually got involved with the Michigan Geographic Alliance. She has attended their seminars and is planning to take a summer session that will certify her as a consultant for the alliance. This blooming interest in geography has fueled her interest in social studies generally, leading her to accept the position of social studies chair for her school district, to join the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), and to begin reading publications in the area.

Much of T[illegible]r 1A's interest and background in social studies was just emerging at the time we interviewed her. To the extent that she had acquired specialized knowledge it was mostly knowledge about geography teaching acquired through workshops sponsored by the Michigan Geographic Alliance, not knowledge about social studies generally acquired through reading or participation in NCSS meetings.

Teacher 1B was an elementary education major with social studies as the area of concentration. She also has acquired a masters of arts in classroom teaching plus 15 credits of miscellaneous classes past the master's degree. She has taught for 13 years in Grades 1-4 and currently teaches first grade in a middle-class school district. She could not point to any particular reason why she chose to emphasize social studies in her course work or her classroom teaching. She enjoyed the courses, especially sociology, although she does not get to use much social science content because she teaches very young students.

Teacher 1B has incorporated ideas about reading comprehension instruction, especially KWL,[2] into social studies and other subjects "so the kids can see consistency across subject areas with methods of attacking the subject." District-sponsored inservices on effective instruction and cooperative learning have helped her realize the importance of stating objectives so that students

know where they are going and for what reasons, then pulling this together again at the end. During the previous year, she was on sabbatical and spent a lot of time reading research reports and collecting instructional materials as a member of a committee that revamped the district's social studies program. Instead of going with a single K-5 textbook series, they opted for "general materials" for kindergarten, kits that emphasized hands-on activities for first and second grade, a set of nonfiction books for third grade, and texts for fourth and fifth grade.

Teacher 1B is a member of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies and attends their annual meetings. She also frequently goes to conferences or workshops that deal with multicultural aspects of teaching.

Teacher 2A majored in elementary education with minors in science and social studies. She later completed a master of arts in classroom teaching. She has taught for 23 years in Grades 1-3 and currently teaches second grade in an upper middle-class district. She says that she was always interested in social studies, especially history. She enjoys reading and learning about life in colonial times especially, partly because in her youth she frequently visited Williamsburg because a good friend of hers lived there and she visited her each summer. She has collected many colonial artifacts that she uses in her teaching, along with materials from the Family of Man unit on the topic (Mitsakos, 1978).

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[2] KWL is a technique, based on schema-theoretic views of reading comprehension processes, for promoting learning by helping learners to retrieve relevant background knowledge and learn with metacognitive awareness of purpose and accomplishment (Ogle, 1986). Learners fill out KWL sheets in two steps. As they are about to begin study of a topic, they write down what they already Know (or think they know) about the topic and what they Want to learn about it. After completion of the unit, they describe what they Learned about the topic. The KWL exercise generates useful diagnostic and assessment information about students' knowledge of and interests in the topic prior to instruction and about which aspects of what they learned are most salient to them following instruction.

Concerning influences on her teaching, she mentioned a workshop in special education that emphasized the importance of clarity and simplicity in explaining things to children, experience with her own two children who had different learning needs, and encouragement by the district to experiment and exchange ideas with colleagues. She is not a member of any social studies organization and has not had any special preparation in social studies beyond what the district has provided when new guidelines or curriculum materials were adopted.

Teacher 2B also was an elementary education major with minors in science and social studies. She has not pursued a master's degree. She has taught for 27 years in Grades K-7, 24 of these in K-3. She currently teaches second grade in an upper middle-class district.

Teacher 2B traces her interest in social studies to the influence of her father, who read broadly, was interested in current news of the day, and frequently shared things with her. When she got to college, she enjoyed learning about history, geography, people, and change (i.e., changes over time in how people have lived).

Teacher 2B has not taken many courses or workshops, preferring to learn from interacting with and observing fellow teachers, visiting other schools, and reading journal articles. An inservice program that involved forming a study group in which teachers met to discuss research findings was particularly valuable for her. Also, a workshop on cooperative learning led her to use this method much more frequently in her class. She is not a member of any social studies organizations and has not had any special social studies preparation beyond that provided by the district when new curriculum guidelines or materials were adopted.

Teacher 3 has a bachelor of arts in elementary education with a major in social studies and minors in English and German. She also has accumulated 55 hours toward a master's degree in reading. She has taught for 15 years in Grades 2-6 and currently teaches third grade in a middle class district.

Teacher 3 was always interested in social studies, loving travel and interaction with people in other countries. She channeled that into a social studies major at the elementary level. She also would love to teach social studies (history or government) in middle school. She has thought about getting a secondary certification but has not attempted to do so.

Her graduate training has focused on reading. She has participated in inservices on general aspects of teaching, but nothing specific to social studies. She does not belong to social studies organizations or know much about current trends or issues in the field.

Teacher 5A majored in elementary education with a focus on language arts and minors in science and social science. She later received a master's degree in elementary education (no special focus). She has taught for 25 years in elementary and middle schools, primarily in Grades 5 and 6. She currently teaches fifth grade in an elementary school in an upper middle-class district.

Teacher 5A grew up in an east coast town that was steeped in colonial and revolutionary history, so that history was an exciting part of her life as far back as she can remember. She grew up hearing stories about historical events that happened in the area, finding arrowheads and musket balls, visiting the Liberty Bell and the Betsy Ross house, and so on. Many families had historical stories and souvenirs, so that history was something that you could see, touch, and feel. Because of this background, she has always found history and social studies fun and interesting.

Teacher 5A said that she has been affected by the things mentioned in our question (independent reading, inservice activities, professional organizations) but that what affected her most was her experience as a mother, realizing the different devel opmental stages and the idea that children might not be ready to learn all of something now but can absorb what they are ready to absorb and learn more about it later. She believes that this made her more humane as a teacher, less focused on subject matter and more on students. She does not belong to any social studies organizations.

Teacher 5B majored in English with a social science minor. At the time she was a Catholic nun, so she began teaching even before completing her bachelor's degree and got her initial pedagogical training through summer workshops run by her order rather than through courses at a university. She left the order more than 20 years ago and has since completed a master's degree in social studies teaching. She has taught for 26 years in Grades 1-5 and currently teaches fifth grade in an upper middle-class district.

She has always been interested in people, perhaps because her parents were friendly and outgoing. Her mother was a "free thinker" who modeled social consciousness by refusing to allow racial epithets in the home and by shaming a woman who came to the house seeking signatures on a petition to exclude a black family from the neighborhood. Teacher 5B says that she has always had a sense of being different that makes it easier for her to identify with minority students or students with various learning or behavioral problems. In the 1970s she was active in peace marches and civil rights demonstrations.

She credits her early teachers for developing an her interest in historical fiction and biography. Later contact with an enthusiastic university social studies instructor and opportunities to work with him as a cooperating teacher demonstrating the MACOS (Man: A Course of Study) curriculum materials

(Education Development Center, 1970) also influenced her. In and out of school, she was always interested in people, including history, anthropology, the dinosaur age and cave men, and other cultures.

Discussion

All seven of the teachers are elementary school generalists who happen to enjoy learning and teaching about social studies topics, not social studies specialists. Only Teacher 1A is a member of the National Council for the Social Studies, and even that membership was very recent and linked to her assumption of the role of social studies coordinator for her district. Teacher 1B attends meetings of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies and other social studies-related workshops, and Teacher 2B does some journal reading on her own. None of these teachers has been involved in social studies leadership at the national or state level, however, although Teacher 1A might become so in the future through her involvement with the Michigan Geographic Alliance.

For purposes of this study, we viewed the relative isolation of these teachers from the scholarly literature in social studies as a positive factor. It helped to ensure that their responses to our questions were based primarily on their personal teaching experiences and on opinions developed in collaboration with peers at the local level, free of direct influence by scholars or organizations such as the NCSS. Although these teachers have special interests in social studies and devote more preparation and classroom time to the subject than most elementary teachers do, they responded to our interview questions primarily as elementary teachers drawing on their experiences, not as specialists applying well-formulated social education theoretical rationales.

General Philosophy and Approach to Teaching

1. What is the role of elementary level (K-6) education? What should it accomplish with students?

2. What are the key features of your role as a teacher at your grade level (in general, not just in social studies)?

3. Describe your approach to teaching (in general, not just in social studies). What themes, theories, or descriptive labels will help us to understand how you approach your teaching and how you differ from other teachers?

Teacher 1A. Children grow at their own paces. In the elementary grades, help each individual child become the best that he or she can be in order to build a solid foundation for future learning. Nurture their natural curiosity and joy for learning.

As a first-grade teacher, provide a stimulating environment where children can learn at their own pace, and make them aware of that. Follow the curriculum guide and try to accomplish the goals established for first grade in our district. Make sure that their next teacher knows where they are and can begin there. For those who are behind, provide support through extra help suited to their needs. Work with children wherever they are at the moment, but get help from resource teachers too.

First-grade teachers should allow for a lot of active participation and exploration experiences, sensorimotor experiences. Emphasize hands-on experiences that allow for movement, centers, and cooperative learning. Have a variety of activities going on in the room, some at the same time, for at least some time during the day. Allow children to make choices of activities. Have large-group and small-group teaching but do not focus too much on whole-class instruction that emphasizes teacher talk and student work with pencils and worksheets. Minimize the time that students are expected to sit quietly in seats. Young children learn better if they use all of their senses and do something active rather than just listen to you. There are some bad hands-on activities and I do use a few dittos, but I emphasize hands-on learning. I get help here from parent volunteers.

I judge activities both by student interest and by whether they appear to be learning something that will help them meet the goals. Blowing bubbles is hands-on, but there isn't any purpose to it. Sometimes you have to try things to see if they will work with your students. I keep a folder of activities that have worked well in the past and I might use again in the future.

I enjoy teaching themes for a week, two weeks, or even a month. As first-grade teachers, we as a team decide on themes for the year, picking an overall theme and then adding elements from art, geography, science, and other subjects. Some themes are myself, my family, safety, neighborhoods, staying healthy, earth and sky (including maps), moving things, weather, plants and animals. The themes are basically science and social studies, and we integrate art and other things into them. However, it is important not to get carried away with themes so that everything you do for a month is connected to the theme. Also, maps should be used frequently throughout the year, not just in the one unit on the earth and sky theme.

Centers are helpful. I have an art center, a geography center, a listening center. Each week there might be two required centers that children have to accomplish tasks in, as well as optional centers. This is another way to provide children with choices.

Teacher 1B. Especially in kindergarten and first grade, show children how to play the game of school--to learn its institutional practices and procedures. When I moved from fourth to first grade, I learned the need to take the time at the beginning of the year to establish procedures before concentrating on subject-matter teaching. Another major goal is to give children general information about the world around them, filling in gaps in their background experiences. Teach them how to get along with other people in groups

and to begin to accept responsibilities for managing materials, bringing in things on time, and so on.

Tries to be well organized to be a model for students and to call this to their attention (has materials ready for lessons, etc.). Also models problem solving and flexibility when plans must be changed. Teaches responsibility for self and avoidance of behavior such as tattling or disturbing others' learning. In general, teaches social roles and expectations along with Golden Rule morality as the rationale.

Has built up file of tried-and-true activities but tries to be creative and never teaches anything exactly the same way from one year to the next. Often incorporates students' ideas. Tries to keep learning fun, interesting, and varied. Often thinks back to her own favorite teachers and asks how they might have done something, and then tries to apply this to herself. Her emphasis on high expectations for students stems from this.

Teacher 2A. The primary grades are for grounding in basic skills and establishing school as a happy place that supports students' personal growth and learning efforts. Once these foundations are developed, the middle grades then can concentrate more on content teaching. Role is to get students off to a good start in their personal and group adjustments and in their basic skills. Teach school awareness, positive attitudes, acceptance of others, liking school and feeling successful there.

Tries to involve students in active forms of learning. Second graders are eager learners but do not respond well to a steady diet of passive, read-and-recite experiences. They learn through experiencing more than through reading.

Teacher 2B. First, give them basic skills to go on for learning, especially reading and math skills, in K-3. This sets the stage for more

conceptual teaching later. Second, get them ready to go out into the world and be able to get along and get a job and understand other people.

My role is to be facilitator in helping children take responsibility for their learning. I help and guide them, but they have to turn on, be willing to listen, study, and work together. Help them understand that they are working not just for me but to help themselves become learners. I want them to take responsibility for their learning and become self-directive. This also minimizes discipline problems.

Get them to think about the kind of person they want to become and what it will take to do so. Be clear about the purpose of each lesson and activity, so they know what they are doing and why. Encourage them to help one another and take some responsibility for the classroom, to realize that books are in the library for them to read for their purposes, not just mine, and so on.

Observation of a professor teaching math lessons has led me to a shift from being a teller of information to a facilitator of self-regulated learning, not just in math but in all subjects. I now encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, as well as use techniques of discourse such as wait time, sustaining interactions when students do not respond correctly at first, seeking to improve responses, emphasizing that it is OK to be wrong and that you can change your answer if you revise your thinking. I also emphasize keeping parents informed of what is going on via conferences, plays, videotapes, newsletters, sending home a homework copy book twice a week for parents to inspect and sign.

My teaching is very structured. I like to know how the day is going to march along and what is going to happen. I teach everything I am supposed to teach whether I want to or not, because that is my obligation. I am fair but decisive with students; they know they will not get away with anything. I

explain what I expect and why, and if I don't get it, I will take away some recess or gym from them. My major rationale is that I will not allow them to interfere with one another's learning. I am kind and caring and here to help them, but I won't allow them to interfere with others' learning.

I get to know the children and their parents and I am open to input, but I have my ideas about what is best for them and tend to stick with them unless I can be convinced that I am wrong. I try to know the curriculum well, spending a lot of time studying it so that I can present it well. I want my students to be able to get along well with others, to be able to disagree but say "Here's why," and to be willing to listen to others' views.

Part of my emphasis on structure involves keeping students focused on some particular learning. I include variety and sometimes change my established routines, but whatever I do, I want the students to exchange ideas and learn, not just to interact for no particular purpose.

Teacher 3. Teach the whole child, not just academically but socially and emotionally. Prepare them for life's goals by developing personal responsibility and readiness to be a productive citizen and individual. Help them understand the world around them and themselves within that world, to take pride in their personal traits and accomplishments, and to get on well with others as a neighbor or co-worker.

Be a guide, model, and facilitator. Encourage but let students progress with whatever skills have been introduced, so that they can go on and draw their own conclusions.

Think of teaching as a cooperative effort, and cooperative learning as part of that. Also, provide each individual with a chance for exploration.

Through guidance and information, give children a chance to explore, grow, and learn in an active approach. I - n between a traditional, lecture-and-recitation teacher and an open, Montessori-type teacher, but leaning more toward the latter. I teach the district's curriculum but also question children about their interests and get them learning actively and cooperatively, working with partners to draw conclusions and discover things through their own research. Especially in social studies, where the curriculum is "not exactly benign neglect," but there is a lot of latitude for individual teachers.

I emphasize student self-esteem, approaching things in a positive way and encouraging that with the children. I want them to be successful in their learning and try to make it interesting for them and relate it to their experiences.

Teacher 5A. Turn them on to learning. In this last year of elementary school, develop a zest for learning in at least a couple of subjects, along with confidence that they can learn on their own independently. Help them to know that they go into middle school possessing the needed tools, but also that people and resources are there to help them if they need it. Help them to think of school as fun and exciting, but also as something that requires effort from them. Students need the tools--reading, math, and learning skills--but unless they have zest for learning it will become dull, done only because it has to be done. Teach them to like subject-matter learning and to care about the learning itself, about taking a risk, about other people, about communication skills.

Role includes giving students basic skills along with confidence and strategies for managing their own learning and getting help if they need it. Teach problem-solving strategies: assessing what you have, where you need to go, how you need to do it. Realize that if a problem seems confusing or

difficult at first, you can use strategies to attack it rather than just give up. Teacher must have enough knowledge about students to affect how they think about themselves and their school work. I want to know that my students are prepared for middle school when they leave me.

It's important not to have every year be the same, so I will shift unit themes or introduce games or other variety in response to students' interests. As long as I accomplish my ultimate goals, I am willing to use a variety of content and methods. Many successful lessons pick up on themes of what is going on currently. If we are talking about interest rates, mention what is happening to certificates of deposit and get the students to talk to their grandparents about investment issues. Relate social studies to relevant current events in the news. Also, use humor and things that interest students. You need to get to know your students personally and be able to relate your teaching to their interests, but also to teach them the subject matter effectively.

Each child is an individual and we need to respect that. Build from where they are rather than trying to make a homogeneous group out of them. Show students that you care about them and want to know them well enough to be able to give them the ability to be themselves and to appreciate their unique qualities. Make each think that he or she is her favorite.

Often model tasks that students are asked to do, both as a way to teach and to show solidarity with them by experiencing the same frustrations. Welcome their corrections and invite their input when trying to solve problems. Do the same writing assignments that they do, and judge my success levels publicly. This helps to convince them of the importance of taking risks and to realize that making mistakes is part of the learning process. It also helps build a spirit of learning community in the classroom.

Have periodic personal conferences with individual students, independently of the one with their parents. This includes telling the student what I intend to say to the parents, giving the student a chance to provide me with feedback and perhaps change my plans. Also, ask students to state personal goals for the school year and review these periodically.

Teacher 5B. Give them the basic structure for reading, math, sociability. In the process, weave science and social studies in and out, build community, build social awareness of the world, acceptable behavior in society, readiness to cope with everyday life even though life isn't fair. Give them a structure in which they can feel safe and learn in an exciting learning atmosphere six hours a day. They should walk out of here feeling confident.

It is a misinterpretation to say that learning should be fun--then it becomes "Sesame Street" or a song-and-dance routine. What is exciting to me is the awe and wonder. That's what learning is about and I want to see it at least once a year in every student.

Help students acquire a love of learning or recognize the excitement of learning. Give them structure, understanding, patience. Help them become confident in their skills and ready to accept their responsibilities, willing to take risks about learning and to reach out to one another. Help them to become independent and prepare them for middle school. Getting assignments in on time, doing their homework.

I'm up-front with kids and have high expectations of them, which they must live up to or there will be personal consequences. I'm high on personal responsibility--I want everyone's attention and involvement in lessons. I also want their opinions. They don't need to agree with mine, but I want their participation in the dialogue.

I try to relate the school curriculum to the students' experiences and to current events.

Discussion

The teachers differed in the kinds of teaching and learning activities that they favored, in their degree of concern about establishing rules and routines, and in the degree to which they had a clear-cut set of expectations to which they socialize their students versus being willing to adjust routines and teaching methods to suit this year's students' apparent needs and interests. Some differences were connected with grade level. Teachers in the primary grades tended to emphasize socializing students to school routines and student role expectations and to talk about the need for hands-on learning experiences in addition to (or in some cases, primarily instead of) textbook-based learning. The fifth-grade teachers talked about getting their students ready for middle school, not just in terms of equipping them with content knowledge but also with the skills and metacognitive control structures needed to engage in successful self-regulated learning. They conveyed the sense that their students were in their last year of the friendly and protected elementary school environment and needed to be gotten ready for the more impersonal, less supportive middle school.

Along with these differences, there were many commonalities across the teachers. They all emphasized their responsibilities to follow the district's curriculum guides and to equip their students with basic knowledge and skills, not only for learning but also for cooperating and getting along well with one another. Here or elsewhere in their interviews, the teachers tended to talk about fulfilling their responsibilities not just to the district but to society in a broader sense, by preparing their students to function effectively in work

settings and in everyday life generally. They seem to be aware that employers are looking for employees who not only possess basic knowledge and skills but also can get along well with others in the workplace.

The teachers also tended to mention developing or reinforcing positive learner self-concepts and attitudes toward school and learning. They wanted students to value learning and engage in it with a sense of purpose and accomplishment, free of impediments such as resentment or fear of failure. For these teachers, subject-matter content and pedagogy were means of accomplishing their larger goals, not goals in themselves. The main goal was to get students off to a good start as learners and social group members, not to ensure that they learned a fixed corpus of subject matter.

General Approach to Teaching Social Studies

1. How do you think about social studies as a school subject? What is it, why is it taught, what are its main purposes and goals at the K-6 level?

2. Describe in detail your general approach to teaching social studies (given your grade level) in your own words. Please explain not only what you do, but why you do it.

3. What factor have influenced you to adopt this approach?

4. What are your main goals for students in teaching social studies?

Teacher 1A. She and other teachers developed the following statement of social studies purposes and goals: to help students acquire knowledge about themselves, their community, state, nation, and world from the social sciences and develop skills of critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, researching, and organizing that will help them to apply this knowledge for the good of themselves and someday society. I want them to realize their need for information and to have interest in it, so as adults they can solve problems,

pick up a newspaper, know that voting is important. I am building a foundation, creating an interest in geography and other aspects of social studies so that they will want to continue to learn.

Her approach is summed up in the proverb: I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand. General approach is to introduce geographic ideas to lay a foundation--create a sense of what geography is that can be built on later, as well as the reasoning behind introducing geography. The students also work on self, family, and Michigan awareness (during Michigan week). Other than that, her social studies is basically geography except for an introduction to map skills. Another part is teaching students to get along with one another and fulfill the student role. Her emphasis is on centers and hands-on activities. Her room includes the "mystery country of the week" bulletin board. This features a map, photos, and artifacts (stamps, coins, flags, etc.) from the mystery country that students are to use as clues to guess what the country is by the end of the week. Around the room are posters of international flags and a variety of different types and sizes of flags, globes, and maps. Students each have pretend passports that gradually get filled up as they "visit" each mystery country. She wants students to be able to see Michigan and the United States within the larger world context.

There is a map center, a reading center, and a geography center. Reciting the states and capitals occurs almost every day, but just for three minutes or so. She refers to maps briefly when geographical locations come up in reading or other subjects.

The incident with her kindergarten student who knew all the states got her started along these lines; she picked up techniques from visiting the Montessori school and from workshops sponsored by the Michigan Geographic Alliance.

Main goals are to create awareness and interest, so that students light up when they hear the word "geography." Expose them to basic ideas such as that there are seven continents, but don't push them to memorize the names or test them for mastery. First graders still confuse states with continents and have limited abilities to deal with time and abstractions. Still, the more they hear the terms, the more they will retain. Useful things can be accomplished by introducing students to things that they do not yet understand fully, but there are limits on how much they can understand and how quickly they can move forward.

Teacher 1B. Social studies is often slighted in the early grades, so I try to include it every day, at least to some level. A lot of early social studies is giving kids social skills, citizenship skills, knowledge, and just starting to get them interested in the things around them. First graders often get excited with interest if you pull down a map of Michigan or the United States or the world. They have heard of maybe 5 or 10 places but don't know whether they are cities or states or countries or what. They are very curious. Some can pick up a state map, read it, and tell you how to drive from one place to another because they have had that background from their parents. Others will look at the map and not know why some things are red or what the blue is the yellow dots are. It is hard to explain to kids who have never been out of the city. Some have difficulty understanding that a map is a schematic view from above, not a picture from the side.

All kinds of information are important to teach kids. They need to know about the history of where they live, their state, the basics of America. It will increase their appreciation and understanding of the things around them. When they hear about the state capital or their parents talking about laws or taxes, they will need a knowledge base of how these things happen, why they

happen. Especially things that they will have to deal with in life, such as taxes. Also, multicultural things. The population is changing and kids are going to come into contact with people very unlike themselves but need to get along with them and respect them.

I try to do a little bit of social studies every day. One way is to use trade books and read to kids at story time. Books that show different groups. When we did history of Thanksgiving, my goal was for the kids to come away realizing that there might be a Native American sitting right next to them and they wouldn't even know it, because today, unless they are at a pow wow, Native Americans do not run around in leather and headdresses and live in tepees and so on. I try to break down stereotypes. Many trade books are built around kids, a day or a week in the life of a modern child in Alaska or Japan or somewhere else.

When I introduce a subject, I do KWL to see how much the kids know already. I question them to get oral responses, then write them on the board or on chart paper. We go back to it at the end of the unit to make sure that they have found out about the items they wanted to learn about.

I average 20-30 minutes a day for social studies. The kids can't do a lot of content reading by themselves, so I look for media, movies, or filmstrips. Also hands-on projects. We also work on cooperation and getting along.

My approach changed drastically when I moved from fourth grade to first grade. I can't assign detailed content reading or have students do much research here. I have been influenced by training in cooperative learning and effective instruction. I know that kids need to be actively involved, not just sitting and listening. I got interested in the multicultural aspect because we had some problems in the district recently leading to a parent-teacher group

being formed and I was part of that group. I learned the need to teach about appreciating and respecting differences. I read about eight books on multicultural things in general and acquired some materials for use with first graders. I also became more conscious of avoiding language that might promote stereotypes and about not allowing ethnic slurs by students. I had to do a lot of trial and error when I moved down to first grade. I got help from my old social studies methods text and from my neighbor first-grade teacher.

I make sure to cover the district's main goals and objectives for first grade. Some of these are tied to the Michigan Health Model (interpersonal skills, problem solving, decision making), so I teach conflict resolution and negotiating solutions to interpersonal problems. There are seven units in social studies: interpersonal skills; problem solving and decision making; history of Thanksgiving; school, home, and personal safety; families and feelings; geography; and current events. Three of these are more like strands that continue throughout the year rather than units taught for a set time. We do safety in October to cover school bus safety, fire safety, and Halloween safety. We do more on maps toward the end of the year when students are more ready for it. My main social studies goals are tied in with these units, along with the multicultural aspect that is stressed throughout the year.

Teacher 2A. Her approach to social studies follows district policy, which she endorses in any case. Content focus is on map skills, self, families, and communities in second grade. There is a unit on Native Americans of Michigan and material on feelings and autobiography (linked with language arts, in which students write their own biographies). The emphasis is on commonalities among people and the acceptance of different cultures in food, shelter, family life, affection, and learning.

She uses a variety of materials instead of the textbook. She has been influenced by a social studies specialist in the district and especially by the Family of Man kits used earlier in her career. She favors these kits and similar approaches because they feature artifacts, hands-on material and experiences, photos, and other data sources. She briefly tried but soon abandoned the textbook approach when she found that students did not enjoy or respond well to it.

Her unit content matches closely to what is in the textbook series and district guidelines, but she doesn't follow any particular linear sequence. Unit scheduling often depends on the timing of opportunities for field trips or other outside experiences. She teaches social studies for 45-minute time periods, alternating with science by teaching social studies for a week or two, then science. Averages 20 minutes per day across the school year. Occasionally there are whole- or half-day special events such as trips to see trees being tapped or to spend the day in a one-room school house re-creation.

The major influence on her was using the Family of Man materials early in her career. They felt natural and effective. This has been reinforced by the attitudes and experiences of other district teachers, which generally favor a kit-based approach. Students both like it more and learn more than the textbook approach.

Her goals are essentially the ones in the district's policy statement (which features the expanding communities curriculum and goals similar to those stressed by NCSS). Also, the world is getting smaller all the time, and students need knowledge of and acceptance of different cultures. She teaches that people are basically alike even though we are different. This grew out of an early emphasis on families that began to get into the different cultures that the families came from.

Teacher 2B. Social studies is a method of helping children accept one another, get along, find out about one another and about people that influenced the history of our nation. We do a lot of studies on famous people that impacted the nation's growth. It's important for children to begin to get a sense of history. We also do a unit about Michigan history. We take a trip to the old-time school house so they can get a feeling of what school was like years ago. Geography is important too. We mostly study about maps, how they are made, maps of Michigan. We discuss current news in the morning and they are very interested in that, especially with the current Gulf War. One thing we cover in social studies that they are not much interested in is the community. The people and government of a small community don't interest them much.

We use the materials published by Graphic Learning for map studies. They each get a map that they can draw on and then wash off. We study about the districts in a city and why they are set up, the trade-offs involved in living near malls or in living in an apartment versus a single-family home. They learn map-reading skills. There is also an "All About You" display on the bulletin board in which a different student is featured each week. In our building, we emphasize unit studies but try to coordinate them across grades so that we cover all of the district's objectives and do not keep repeating the same content.

Social studies is fun to teach because you can include other disciplines, especially art, and because there are lots of hands-on things and field trips. But it can be exhausting to get all of these things together and plan all of the activities. I enjoy the processes involved in many of these activities--dressing up and being part of a powwow, dressing in old-fashioned clothes and reenacting the old ways when we recreate the old schoolhouse, doing soap carvings. When students come back to me later, that is what they remember.

I consult our curriculum guide and make sure to cover certain units and objectives as we go along during the year. We usually do a Native American unit in the fall. We talk about famous Americans (Martin Luther King and various presidents) throughout the year. Our units are hooked to the district guidelines and ultimately the state guidelines. We work with map skills and do the "All About You" activity in which children bring in pictures, birth certificates, and things about themselves and their families to display on the bulletin board. Every morning we have news (current events). Children bring in news clippings and tell about what is happening in the news. I often refer to maps at this time.

Much of the curriculum was developed by a fifth-grade teacher, another second-grade teacher, and myself. We looked at what we had been doing in the past and at what kinds of filmstrips and movies we could use, units we had developed or other teachers had developed, finding materials and hands-on activities. We have collected sets of these into kits that are shared by teachers in the district. We favor kits and hands-on experiences over textbooks. Even when we study famous Americans. We did Jesse Owens one time by showing a video, doing art projects afterwards, and making a neat little diorama that included an audience and a movable Jesse Owens. Students in that class still remember it. When we study George Washington Carver, we make peanut butter and other peanut things. We do use some worksheets, but only with a clear objective in mind, related to our goals.

You can't give young children materials to read, so you have to think about ideas you want them to come to grips with and how to accomplish that. Ultimately, the approach is determined by the students themselves--you try different things and find out what works. I keep a big file of all things that I have done that have been successful, but I keep trying to improve it. I want

social studies to be interesting and fun for them and for them to remember what we did. If the subject does not naturally appeal to them, you might make it more appealing in some other way, such as by using cooperative learning. In our map studies, instead of giving a map to each child, I often give one to four children so that they have to make decisions about where roads are going to go and why, and so on. We try to get them to communicate their thinking.

Social studies is not what is in books, but what is all around you. You have to be aware of that and share it with the children. I couldn't come in here and teach without doing the news. That is what life is all about and what the children are talking about. Teaching kindergarten for 14 years was a big influence on my current approach. Learning is a hands-on thing at that developmental level, so I became accustomed to hands-on activities and working without textbooks.

My social studies goals reflect my general goals: student awareness and curiosity about the topics, learning about and accepting people with different cultures. These goals match up well with the district's goals, which I helped develop. But my main goal is for the children to have an understanding of people.

Teacher 3. Social studies is not stressed as much in the elementary grades as it should be. Our students should know much more than they do about the world, other languages and cultures. We need both to teach it more and to integrate it into language arts as part of a whole-language emphasis, such as by getting out maps to talk about countries that pop up in literature readings. Also, elaborating on important people that we write biographies about, helping students to see why they were important in history.

Social studies is people in the community, the world, living with each other, working with and learning about each other. Also, a sense of history

and how it plays a part in the present and future. Helping students to understand the world, whether at a map or differences in language. It is more than just subject matter in that it needs to be made real to students, something they become actively involved with and can apply to their lives.

I emphasize cooperative learning, keeping children actively involved, integrating their interests and experiences with the concepts and skills I'm teaching. Frequent work with groups or partners. I emphasized cooperative forms of learning even before they became popular, but I also was influenced by an intensive three-day workshop on it that we had a few years ago.

Often we start with brainstorming: Write down all that you know about the capital of the state or about what a capital is. Then assign groups to research different aspects of the topic.

We also have whole-class discussions and I impart information to students. Also debates. Part of our emphasis at this school, along with self-esteem and responsibility, is mediation training in which students learn to act as mediators of peer problems on the playground or elsewhere. We carry that through into the classroom by having them make choices about behaviors or rules. We call these "time to talk" sessions. There is a variety of ways to get into the objectives you want children to achieve, but I stress cooperative learning and working together.

I have found that if I can keep them involved and thinking I can make it meaningful to them. For example, some aren't much interested in government or how it influences them, but if you talk about laws that affect them personally you can make it real to them.

Give them skills relating to mapping and terms for the environment, recognizing continents, learning to think as individuals within the community and within the world as a whole. Learn to participate, make decisions, be

responsible and follow through, work and live together in their small world and in the larger world. Make them more aware of the choices that they must make as individuals. I want them to go into the world with some social studies knowledge and be able to make positive choices for themselves as individuals and community members. Have them know why we have certain rules and reasons for doing things. Learn to address conflict by communicating, negotiating, compromising.

Teacher 5A. Most teachers call it social studies because it's a subject we teach, but inside that phrase, we have different responsibilities. My responsibility is teaching history, although I refer to maps and blend in geography or other social studies content when it fits. I think that history is important for background. We need to know where we have come from in order to know where we are headed. Also to know what mistakes have been made along the way and appear to be repetitive, so that we might use that knowledge to avoid them in the future. Kids are interested and very able to talk about mistakes of history such as slavery or the Nazis. We also talk about aspects of history that provide background, such as why cities got to be where they are or why people chose to do what they did in the past. I try to get them to begin analyzing why things happened--why events worked out the way they did or why the people didn't do something differently. Why the same mistakes appear frequently.

I can't cover all of U.S. history so I emphasize certain parts and try to teach them interestingly enough so that students will want to learn more on their own. Sometimes I will change my plans in order to capitalize on something like a student bringing in some information or some family connection to history. I emphasize the social in treating the subject, how things have

worked for people, how they have interacted with their geography and with one another.

Develop enough of an interest to read and learn and delve into it more deeply without me around to push them. I can't teach everything of importance from the land bridge to Watergate, but I can make it interesting enough so that they will want to learn.

Teacher 5B. Social studies is taught for knowledge and awareness of the society, the world, and its geographical and physical makeup. It's the world that students live in. It's their life. This includes getting along with others that you interact with socially, as well as history (you bring all of your background with you into your social interactions).

Another aspect is awareness and acceptance of other cultures. This starts at the grass-roots level--acceptance of one another. Then it can go out of acceptance of different cultures. I talk to the children about the Netsilik Eskimos' customs which may seem bizarre to them but which are understandable from the standpoint of Netsilik culture. I know about that from MACOS. I also know a lot about Native Americans from reading, so we talk about them and also about ancient primeval man learning about tools and stuff like that.

Also, environmental awareness, not only of geography and land forms but environmentally safe practices and conservation. There is all of the history that I teach too, but that is just part of social studies.

Discussion

Without using many of the technical terms that social education scholars use, these teachers nevertheless conveyed agreement with NCSS policy statements emphasizing the unique citizenship education purposes and goals of social studies as a school subject. They spoke not just about building knowledge and

skills but about preparing their students to fulfill their social responsibilities, initially in peer groups but ultimately as citizens. Most of them spoke about teaching their students to get along well with others, work cooperatively, solve problems through negotiation, and appreciate cultural diversity.

Following district guidelines, all seven teachers taught content that the expanding communities scope and sequence traditionally assigns to their respective grade levels. However, they augmented that curriculum significantly. First, except for the fifth-grade teachers who had so much history to try to cover, these teachers taught additional content. The additions took different forms in different classrooms, but they tended to emphasize geography and map and globe work, discussion of current events, and activities related to social skills and interpersonal problem solving. Second, they used a variety of teaching methods and materials in addition to or even instead of a textbook. Children's literature, hands-on activities, field trips, and a variety of media and materials were featured in their responses.

The teachers appeared conscious of their roles as elementary teachers building for the future. The first-grade teachers in particular emphasized that they often were developing initial ideas in students who had no background knowledge about a topic. More generally, the teachers talked about their roles as including developing appreciation and interest for social studies that would motivate students to seek to develop their knowledge of the subject in the future, both in and out of school. They emphasized getting students off to a good start. This was true even of the fifth-grade teachers, who were exposing their students to chronological U.S. history for the first time and who also emphasized their role in preparing their students to leave elementary school and cope with the challenges of middle school.

Although a couple of teachers referred to adult citizenship activities such as voting, the citizenship focus of these elementary teachers was on social knowledge and skills that their students could apply right now in peer groups, not on civic aspects of adult preparation for citizenship roles. In fact, the two second-grade teachers agreed that the one thing they have difficulty engaging their students' interest in is government, including local government. Nevertheless, they did not tend to join critics who call for junking much of the expanding communities content and replacing it with an emphasis on history. Their concerns about what their students needed to be learning in social studies focused not so much on history but on geography and culture, especially developing multicultural awareness and appreciation of diversity.

Special Social Studies Goals

1. Other than the particular knowledge content covered in each of your units, are there more general knowledge goals that you address in your social studies teaching across the school year? If so, what are these knowledge goals and how do you address them?

2. Are there general skills goals that you address in teaching social studies across the school year? If so, how do you address them?

3. Are there general value or attitudinal goals that you address in teaching social studies across the school year? If so, how do you address them?

4. Are there general citizen action goals or other goals that involve building dispositions (i.e., dispositions to take action in certain situations) that you address in teaching social studies across the school year? If so, how do you address them?

Teacher 1A. Knowledge goals. Geography: continents, countries, oceans, directions. Map and globe: understanding and purpose of maps and globes, identifying the U.S.A., knowing that the country is made up of 50 states that vary in size, an initial understanding of the capital, use of map keys. Michigan: recognize name of state, state bird, flower, rock, tree. State

capitals, locations and information about mystery countries. Also, myself, family, neighborhoods, safety, classroom rules, appreciation of diverse cultures and family configurations.

Skills. Map and globe skills.

Values and attitudes. Enjoyment of and interest in geography.

Citizen action dispositions. Getting along with one another and other citizenship behavior suited to the grade level. Also, things like tree planting and recycling. Gives "I'm so proud" awards for students who pick up litter, help others with assignments. A helper of the day takes attendance and lunch money, passes out papers.

Teacher 1B. Knowledge. Just general knowledge if the situation arises, such as discussing ethnic groups represented in the class. Bringing in parents to show and tell about cultural customs and foods. Elaboration to provide background on current events. This year, we talked about the Gulf War and looked at maps, showed how it is near the equator and how it is hot there, talked about reasons why their relatives might have been over there.

Skills. General inquiry skills. Learning something about where to go to get information, using the nonfiction section of the library, encyclopedias. Map reading and use of the globe. General people skills of getting along, solving conflicts.

Values and attitudes. The values involved in learning to get along with others and respect other groups. Respect for the flag and the anthem. Accepting other individuals and ethnic groups.

Citizen action dispositions. We send one student every two weeks to the student council, but I don't think first graders have much idea about why they are there or what they are doing. This year our building theme is "Care About Planet Earth," so we have tried to raise consciousness about picking up litter,

recycling, and so on. The students frequently vote on such things as what kinds of food to have for a party.

Teacher 2A. Knowledge. Nothing beyond what has been said already.

Skills. Learning to infer, to look at something and draw inferences from a picture.

Values and attitudes. None beyond the affective goals mentioned earlier.

Citizen action dispositions. None beyond what was said earlier.

Teacher 2B. Knowledge. None beyond what was already mentioned.

Skills. Study skills--how to get information and be a learner, solve problems, get help. Also cooperative learning--not just getting along, but sharing information and helping one another.

Values and attitudes. Acceptance of people from different cultures and wanting to learn.

Citizen action dispositions. I push patriotism, although a parent helped me see that we need to learn to identify with the whole world and not just our own country. If students are to make good judgments in voting and what they want for their lives, they will need a respect and love for our country and a knowledge of its history. I try to build a sense of responsibility for voting, laws, caring about and helping one another. Also, social graces, saying "please" and "thank you." We get into social policy issues through mock elections and discussions of news of the day, such as debates about whether we should be in the Gulf War. There are occasional school-wide elections about things such as titles for the school T-shirt or the mascot. In the spring there are clean-up and plant-in campaigns that the whole school is involved in.

Teacher 3. Knowledge. Make social studies meaningful and important and alive, through current events or whatever. Relate what you are teaching to the community and the larger world.

Skills. Mapping skills, problem solving, decision making, drawing conclusions.

Values and attitudes. Critical thinking and reading, problem solving, decision making. Cooperating together. Realizing that they can make decisions that make a difference.

Citizen action dispositions. I use Scholastic News throughout the year to focus students on current events. As a community we do things such as vote, recycle, or address environmental concerns. Also, recycling activities and an international dinner to increase appreciation and awareness. This year, activities connected with the Gulf War (decorating the door to show support for the troops, listening to presentations by parents about the Middle East or the war).

Teacher 5A. Knowledge. The humanistic quality of it. How things in the past worked, how the people felt, how the student feels when reading about it. Getting them to think about how people could have done it differently or avoided the problem. Engage their emotions to have feeling about what they are studying. If you ran into this situation, how would you handle it? Seeing both sides of the Revolutionary War and how both thought they were correct, for the same reasons that people always fight wars.

Skills. Working in groups, fulfilling your responsibilities. Study skills such as skimming and scanning for needed information. Metacognitive awareness of your purposes in reading.

Values and attitudes. Developing interest in history and wanting to learn more on their own. Learning to analyze their attitudes--they already have attitudes about many things they are learning about, but they do not know why. Often this involves making them more tolerant or questioning, rather than taking things for granted.

Citizen action dispositions. How to handle situations where they feel they have been unfairly treated, such as run-ins with lunchroom personnel or the principal. Developing a plan of action before approaching the person, trying to see it from their point of view and to anticipate their reactions to your arguments. Negotiation and problem-solving skills. Helping them to see parallels to the two sides in the American Revolution in their own lives, in conflicts with parents, in differing points of view on issues such as hostages or the Gulf War. Realizing that there are at least two sides to conflicts and issues and that you need to be aware of the different sides in order to communicate effectively about them with other people. Preparation for life decision making.

Teacher 5B. Knowledge. Sexism. Tolerance of likes and differences in other people. Knowledge that democracy is not worldwide. Appreciation that social studies is used daily in your lives--maps, graphs. That events like the conflicts that led to the American Revolution have parallels today. The meanings and implications of the *Constitution* and the *Bill of Rights* for your everyday lives. How the past has led up to the present.

Skills. Latitude, longitude, other map skills. History time lines. Topographical aspects of the world. Critical reading and other content area reading skills. The life skills mentioned earlier. I used to do economics units such as the Bottle Cap Economy from MACOS, but I can't seem to fit that in anymore.

Values and attitudes. Patriotism and love of country, tolerance of differences, avoidance of sexism. Appreciation for social studies (they tend to see it as dull and boring). We do a fifth-grade pageant based on social studies, in which kids represent all the highlights starting from the trek

across the Bering Straits right up to the present day. This helps them recognize that they are part of a continuing flow of history.

Citizen action dispositions. In the past, I have gotten students involved in ecology projects and in gathering food for the homeless. We don't have student government here. At the beginning of the year, I engage them in thinking about and developing classroom rules, but I keep it simple with just two main rules--respect for one another and safety. I often talk to them about problems that come up between them and me or between different students. This often leads to spirited discussions of fairness issues. In general, though, in this grade we concentrate on U.S. history rather than on community things.

Discussion

In elaborating on their knowledge goals, the teachers mentioned a variety of things that they wanted their students to learn besides the content taught in each curriculum unit. However, their emphasis was not so much on additional content as it was on appreciation goals that accompanied their knowledge goals; that is, the teachers emphasized that they wanted their students to understand why the social studies knowledge they were learning is important and to be able to relate it to their lives outside of school.

The teachers' statements concerning skills goals emphasized content reading and study skills, other inquiry skills (observing and gathering information, drawing inferences), and various problem-solving and decision-making skills, along with map skills.

Statements concerning values and attitudes emphasized developing interest in the subject matter, acceptance of diversity, avoidance of sexism, and other values that promote tolerance and getting along well with others.

Statements on citizen action dispositions emphasized acceptance of one's social and civic responsibilities, recognition that one can make a difference, and dispositions toward serving the community and nation and protecting the environment. Again, these responses indicate an emphasis on social studies as citizenship preparation, not just as content to be covered.

Familiarity With Published Social Studies Policy Statements

1. Have you seen statements about social studies purposes and goals or suggested curriculum guidelines that have been published by the National Council for the Social Studies or other social studies organizations? If so, what do you know about them? Do they affect your teaching?

2. Have you seen goals statements or curricular guidelines published by the state of Michigan? If so, what do you know about them? Do they affect your teaching?

3. Does your district have social studies goals or curriculum guidelines? If so, what do you know about them? Do they affect your teaching?

4. Does your school have social studies goals or curriculum guidelines in addition to those of the district? If so, what do you know about them? Do they affect your teaching?

5. Do you know anything about the philosophy that went into the development of the social studies series that you use, such as the authors' thinking about the purposes and goals of social studies? If so, has this knowledge affected your teaching in any way?

6. Are you aware of contrasting views about the nature and purposes of social studies or how social studies should be taught? How would you describe yourself as a social studies teacher or contrast yourself with teachers who take different approaches?

Teacher 1A. Not familiar with NCSS guidelines. Studied state guidelines two years ago when district reviewed the social studies curriculum. They tried to bring the school's social studies guidelines more in line with what the state was suggesting, although this was difficult with regard to teaching about the state because it was difficult to find materials suited to certain grade levels.

The school is working on early childhood guidelines just for the building, but this hasn't been done yet, and in any case they will mostly flesh out the existing guidelines. So, the state has some effect, mostly through potential testing in social studies, but the district is where the real effect is.

The textbook is not used except as a resource. The series talks about hands-on learning but does not provide it, and its content seems too limited to be of much value. She prefers "big books" such as the ones she uses now about children in different cultures. Rather than just talking about self, family, and neighborhood, she would like to see these concepts treated in cross-cultural comparisons. Along with big books, she would like tapes that could be used at a listening center. The focus would be on a child of the same age whom the students could identify with and follow through his or her everyday life experiences.

Concerning controversies, she knows that some people are happy with expanding communities but others would like to see more history or more themes or more global awareness in the early grades. She does not mind the expanding communities concept but thinks that we need to expand on it along the lines mentioned above. More geography, more use of maps, more global awareness. She realizes that she is different from most first-grade teachers because she includes so much geography.

Teacher 1B. We read the NCSS recommendations when our committee revised our curriculum. Our new guidelines emphasize geography and current events, trying to get away from the tourist approach of visiting a country without keeping track of what was being done, so that students don't get the same basic unit on Mexico or Japan for several years in a row just because someone put together some good materials or went there on vacation. We put in some very specific geography skills in the upper elementary grades that hadn't been there

before, and we assigned a continent to each grade level for current events to minimize overlap.

We also read a number of journal articles. One that produced long hours of debate concerned the expanding communities sequence. We read different points of view but couldn't see any support one way or the other, and eventually we decided to keep that sequence. I know that the other point of view is that lower elementary social studies is kind of rinky-dink and the kids already know it anyway, so you should get into great long discussions and theories and historical perspectives and things like that. We don't think kindergarteners and first graders could really appreciate history for a true sense of history, because it is beyond their realm of time concept. But we did make changes in geography and current events and some of that was based on test data showing that American students were lacking in geographical information.

For multiculturalism, we adopted James Banks's model of the four levels of infusion as a guideline. We had an inservice and explained that we have been in Step 1, the tourist approach, and we are trying to get to Step 2 by incorporating multiculturalism more throughout the day and not just do holidays or special weeks. Later, we will try to get to higher levels. I think we are between Step 2 and Step 3 right now. I bought two other books of his to develop my personal knowledge.

I am also familiar with the state guidelines because as a member of the curriculum committee, I went to a state-sponsored session to review and give feedback before they were finalized. I feel that we have an obligation to address the state guidelines, especially if they begin to test in social studies. I haven't looked at them recently, however.

I am very familiar with the district guidelines because I was on the committee that put them together. Before that, we really didn't have district

guidelines beyond the textbook series we adopted. We tried to rationalize and beef up the curriculum. For example, rather than just do a little bit about holidays at each grade level, we got more specific. First grade was assigned history of Thanksgiving to include not just Thanksgiving but pioneer life. The thinking behind this was not so much to emphasize history but multiculturalism, and especially to get rid of stereotypes often connected with what students learned about Thanksgiving. Students now learn about pioneer children and all of the jobs they had to do, about the roles that Native Americans played, about stereotypes of Indians in the past and today, stereotypes in the depiction of clothing and activities of the pioneers. We describe stereotypes as images of people that are not fair to the people, and the students can understand it in those terms of fairness.

The new guidelines created some adjustment problems, especially for fourth- and fifth-grade teachers who didn't think that they could cover it all in the available time. Everyone became more conscious of multiculturalism and avoidance of stereotypes. They were influenced by the anti-bias curriculum put forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, especially its emphasis on approaching holidays in ways that avoid reinforcing stereotypes. We ordered more multicultural books and kits and materials from Graphic Learning and Nystrom. We adopted a Michigan text for fourth grade and a U.S. history/geography text for fifth grade. We decided to stop history at the *Bill of Rights* so that early history could be gone into depth in fifth grade, saving later history for eighth and eleventh grades. (This is the plan recommended in the report entitled Charting a Course, but Teacher 1B did not mention this report as an influence on the district's curriculum planning).

In the new curriculum, second grade is communities and careers, third is communities with a focus on Lansing and with comparisons to a city in another

country. Also a big unit on Native Americans for which they use New True books that include great photographs. They cover eight tribes from different parts of the country, comparing and contrasting transportation, shelter, food, clothing. Very good for teaching about Native Americans and breaking down stereotypes. Fourth grade is Michigan and fifth grade is U.S. history and regional studies. We are trying to increase the level of integration in teaching this curriculum, such as infusing more historical fiction into the reading list for language arts.

The district goals are the primary guidelines. The district makes it clear that teachers are expected to follow these guidelines, although they can do their own thing if they wish to go beyond them. The school does not have additional social studies guidelines, although it does emphasize the multicultural theme. Last year when it was instituted, there were efforts to make the staff conscious of it in their teaching and speakers were brought in, assemblies were held, and materials were acquired. Now this has been institutionalized within the revised social studies guidelines.

We don't use a series now. We just didn't see much point in having first graders get out books, open them up, and just look at and discuss pictures. You could address the content in better ways than that. Even worse, we didn't want them doing workbook pages. The textbook series are more appropriate at higher grade levels, but not in the early grades, where we need kits and hands-on activities. We use the Nystrom and Graphic Learning materials. Students enjoy working with all the little maps and markers, but their focus is narrowly restricted to geography. We are looking for a broader range of materials, such as on careers, where appropriate materials are hard to find for the early elementary years. The Graphic Learning materials include bright and colorful desk maps that allow you to do a number of different things that are

related to their kits, but their maps are just of the U.S. and the world, and the activities suggestions didn't seem very exciting.

I am aware of current controversies because my sabbatical year was spent reading and working to revise the curriculum. I think that the expanding communities sequence makes some sense although I am not totally sold on it. I don't accept the idea of starting with teaching history in kindergarten or first grade. I am emphasize hands-on activities, working with maps, not many worksheets.

Teacher 2A. Not familiar with NCSS guidelines. Does not know the state guidelines specifically, but knows that district guidelines are based on them. Does attempt to fulfill the district guidelines. Does not consult them much because they have not changed much in some time, but goes back occasionally to make sure that she has not left something out. Feels little or no conflict between these guidelines and what she views as appropriate social studies teaching at her grade level. Earlier in her career the district had guidelines that were much too long and detailed, but they have simplified them and rendered them in more practical language. The earlier guidelines were more like social science objectives than social studies goals for young children. The school does not have its own guidelines independent of those of the district.

She does not use a textbook series so is not specifically familiar with the philosophy underlying it, but she does not believe that these series are effective. She liked the Family of Man series that she used in the past and believes that the underlying philosophy is that children learn better from hands-on experiences than from a textbook. Her thinking on this has been influenced by the district's social studies coordinator, who has been a leader in social studies education and was involved with the Family of Man series.

She is not aware of current controversies in social studies. In fact, she assumed that most elementary teachers probably taught much like she did and was surprised to find that many of them depend on textbook series. Her main themes are an emphasis on affective as well as cognitive goals, sensitivity to students' developmental concerns, and use of a hands-on and experiential approach rather than a textbook.

Teacher 2B. Not familiar with NCSS guidelines. Familiar with state guidelines because she worked on the committee that developed the school's social studies guidelines. She does not see any conflicts between the state guidelines and what the teachers at the school are doing, although she thinks that many students in this school already are past many of the guidelines for the grade level, especially those relating to knowledge of the community. The district goals do guide her teaching. They are flexible enough to allow different teachers to approach them in different ways, but she takes them seriously and tries to accomplish them. The school does not have additional social studies guidelines.

She does not use an elementary social studies series and thus cannot comment on its philosophy. She does use Graphic Learning, endorsing it as a system for teaching mapping without having students look up a lot of information themselves. It addresses things appropriate to the grade level (how districts come about in cities, comparing city with country living, trade-offs of living near a store or a mall). It calls for children not just to work on maps but to get together in groups to solve problems and then have debriefing sessions afterwards. A few early lessons were too easy for her students, but most of the curriculum is appropriate. The local philosophy is that if we do not have good materials, we will find a way to get them or make them ourselves. The district supports this.

Compared to other teachers, she views social studies broadly to include current events rather than just material in a book or just history. It is important for children to realize that history is happening now and they are a part of it. She favors more hands-on, experiential learning, whereas some teachers are satisfied to use a weekly reader and an occasional holiday project.

Teacher 3. Not familiar with NCSS guidelines, but believes that she is affected indirectly because the social studies curriculum committee members for her district keep up with what is going on in the field. Has not seen state guidelines, but has attended a workshop on a possible new state test in social studies. She would be affected by this as a third-grade teacher, because the test would be given early in fourth grade. The district goals are her primary guidelines. According to them, she teaches about the concept of community as a place to work and play, government and citizenship, the geography of the community, the state of Michigan. She does not emphasize farming and resources as much as some other third-grade teachers might, but she adds things that are not required, such as the calendar and current events based on Scholastic News. The calendar activity involves researching events that have happened on that date in the past. The school does not have separate social studies guidelines, although the principal emphasizes the need to relate the curriculum to the local community in specific ways. Also, the principal gives a value word to be emphasized each month (e.g., trustworthy, cooperation, caring).

She does not know anything about the philosophy that went into the text or about the people who wrote it. She does not like the text much but feels required to use it because the school wants a sequential treatment of social studies. She does not know much about debates occurring within the larger community beyond her school district. Her emphasis is on making material

meaningful to students, relating it to their experiences, keeping them actively involved within the community through things such as recycling, increasing their international awareness, and making social studies something that they can relate to. Other teachers might be more oriented toward textbooks and subject matter or to Montessori-like approaches that call for children to make choices of what to study and how to study it.

Teacher 5A. Not familiar with NCSS guidelines or state guidelines. Focuses on district guidelines and has worked on committees to put them together. They are broad enough to make her comfortable with them. She tries to make sure that her basic responsibilities are fulfilled but in ways that fit her larger goals and style of teaching. The fifth-grade guidelines include maps and map skills, U.S. history, ethnic group contributions, world awareness, introduction to the western hemisphere, and economics, but neither she nor any other teacher actually does all of that. In fact, they do not even get through the textbook to teach history alone. Consequently, she has never taught units on Mexico or Canada or the other topics. However, she introduces a lot of current events and world geography through her newspaper unit and quiz bowl activities once a week. She suspects that some things are on the list because particular teachers focused on them in their travels or on sabbaticals. She does do an economics unit in the spring if she believes the class can succeed at it, although this is done as a real-life application project rather than as textbook study of a social studies topic. She believes that most fifth-grade teachers in the district focus on American history and basically ignore the rest of the guidelines, due to tradition and the textbook adopted recently.

The school currently has no additional social studies goals, although they are looking into multicultural emphases. They have been bringing in

speakers and trying to figure out how to integrate more multicultural awareness and content into the school environment.

The text was chosen by a committee that she was not a member of, so she is not familiar with its philosophy. She preferred an earlier text because it had more diary excerpts and included more content about women and other cultures, black regiments in wars, and so on. She sticks to the format of the book because this is the easiest way to proceed, but she often supplements it with films or materials from earlier texts. She also sometimes criticizes the material in the book in teaching the students. The old book was better at presenting controversies. The new one is boring, presenting a bland and uncontroversial version. She prefers more original sources such as diaries and more attention to diverse points of view that help her to make students understand that history is interpretation. She works to raise their consciousness about slighted or omitted groups in history texts, about how the winners tend to write history, and so on. Students often are shocked and outraged about the inequities that they hear about from her.

She contrasts herself with teachers who are mostly interested in covering subject matter, giving a test, and seeing if their students scored well. She is more interested in getting good discussions going, hopefully leading to student involvement in the material. She sees herself as a social studies teacher who is humanistic and emphasizes thinking about feelings and learning to solve social problems. She often asks students how they would fit into something they were studying or what they might have done at the time. She does not want them to just memorize and spit back on tests, but to think about the content.

Teacher 5B. Not familiar with NCSS guidelines. Familiar with state guidelines because she worked on the committee to correlate the district

guidelines with them. They do affect her teaching because the district guidelines incorporated the state guidelines and expanded on them. The district offers a detailed guidebook that expands on the state guidelines for each level and suggests lessons, resources to consult, and so on. It is extensive and very helpful. She feels duty-bound to follow the district's guidelines, although she endorses most of them anyway.

There is no school policy beyond the district guidelines, although there are district guidelines limiting what teachers can do if they want to go beyond the district curriculum guides. Any additional materials that they want to bring in need to be cleared. In practice, the principal signs off on most of these materials, but anything questionable will be submitted to the board for permission. The district has had enough complaints from parents lately that they are trying to head off potential problems.

She has not read the authors' introduction to the text and does not know anything about the philosophy behind it. She defers to leaders in the district knowledgeable about social studies who have been involved in working with publishers. She was comfortable with the previous (Scholastic) series. Her first response to the new Silver Burdett 1988 series was "while this is comprehensive" but she also noted that it should be easy for the students to read. When she went through the text, she liked it a lot. It provided an overview of key concepts that she thinks need to be introduced in fifth grade, but without getting into depth about things that are too minute or complicated to get into at that level, such as the whys and wherefores of the Germans helping the Americans in the Revolution. Silver Burdett also has more visuals and good use of time lines. Some of the vocabulary is a little difficult, but she would rather challenge than underchallenge. She believes the text will give her students good initial ideas of American history that can be built on later.

She is not aware of current controversies in social studies, again deferring to leadership within her district about what to teach and how to teach it, except for her own preferred general approaches to teaching that cut across subjects. The labels that she would apply to herself as a teacher are generic ones rather than anything specific to social studies.

Discussion

Only one of the teachers has seen the NCSS guidelines, and that was because she was a member of her district's social studies curriculum committee. Several of the teachers have seen state social studies guidelines, although again, this was because they looked at them as members of curriculum committees rather than because they and other teachers in their districts do so routinely. The guidelines that all of the teachers were familiar with were those developed by their districts, which they take very seriously. They feel responsible for addressing the goals and covering the content emphasized in these district guidelines. A couple of the teachers mentioned that they would feel the need to inform themselves more fully about state guidelines, or at least about the content of the test, if the state began testing student progress in social studies. As it is, the ones who are not familiar with the state guidelines assume that the district guidelines have taken the state guidelines into account, so that attention to the district's guidelines is sufficient.

Individual principals or schools do not tend to develop additional social studies guidelines beyond those developed by districts. Thus, principals do not attempt to influence social studies teaching directly by circulating their own social studies curriculum guidelines. However, they do affect social studies teaching indirectly through such mechanisms as encouraging teachers to place more emphasis on multicultural understanding and circulating yearly or

monthly goals, slogans, or key concepts to single out for special emphasis. Most of the goals, slogans, and key concepts reported by the teachers dealt with citizenship values and dispositions and thus connected with the citizenship education purposes and goals of social studies.

Most of the teachers did not use their text much if at all, and even those who did were unfamiliar with the philosophies that went into its development. In any case, the first- and second-grade teachers do not believe that a textbook is an appropriate basis for a social studies curriculum at their grade levels. The third- and fifth-grade teachers do use the text, but only Teacher 5B had primarily positive things to say about it. In general, even the teachers who do use a text emphasized the need for discussion and a variety of activities to make the material more interesting and meaningful to the students. They also mentioned a variety of other materials to be used in addition to or instead of a textbook.

Except for Teacher 1B, who recently had been reading in social studies as part of her sabbatical and her role on the district's curriculum committee, the teachers were not aware of current controversies among social education scholars. Nevertheless, they had developed some of the same concerns about the expanding communities framework and about the textbook series as those that have appeared commonly in the scholarly literature. The primary grade teachers' preferred solution to the thinness and redundancy of the content in their grades was to augment that content, although mostly with increased emphasis on geography and cultures rather than on history. Their preferred solution to the problems with textbooks was to get rid of them and replace them with multiple media, children's literature, kits, and other materials.

The fifth-grade teachers had the opposite problem of too much content in the texts to cover well in one year. They responded in different ways.

Teacher 5B adopted a primarily positive view of the text and used it as the basis for her curriculum, although she supplemented it with literature selections, maps, photos, and videos. She tried to get through its entire contents, making only relatively minor adjustments in emphasis placed on particular historical periods based on her experience with fifth graders' needs and interests. In contrast, Teacher 5A was much more critical of the text. Although she required her students to study it, she treated it as one among several sources of input that included literature selections, copies of original source materials, and historical artifacts. Furthermore, she went into depth in teaching five or six historical periods but skimmed quickly through the others.

Selection of Content

1. Time for social studies teaching is limited, so that you cannot both address all of the many topics that may be worthy of consideration and also address each topic in sufficient depth to develop good understanding. How do you manage this depth versus breadth dilemma?

2. What criteria do you use in deciding what social studies content to include or emphasize and what content to omit or deemphasize?

3. Do you include certain content because of external pressure rather than because you think the content is important? (i.e., pressures from state or district policies, testing programs, parents, etc.) Do you exclude certain content because of such external pressures?

Teacher 1A. You don't need to develop everything in depth. Many things can be done for just a few minutes at a time but built up across the year. If you are reading a story and it mentions a location, you can briefly refer to the map or globe. If you have a few minutes before dismissal, you can take out the beach ball globe and play a game where you toss students the globe and then have them tell you the country that their pointer finger is on, then all look at the big wall map to locate that country. The social studies curriculum is

so thin in first grade that finding time to cover everything is not a problem like it becomes later.

I hope to learn more about criteria for content selection through activities with the Michigan Geographic Alliance and other learning in social studies, because I am new to it. For now, I try to include things that are concrete and that I think a young child will be able to learn. In geography, things that they can actually look at, like globes and maps. I haven't been exposed to resources in other areas like history or civics. In kindergarten they have a unit on pioneers that I think is a good one, and there are books on Amelia Earhart and other famous people in history. The main thing is that the activity be age appropriate.

I haven't encountered pressures to include or exclude content.

Teacher 1B. I exchange with another first-grade teacher: She teaches science to both classes and I teach social studies. This reduces my planning time. Also, I am concentrating on the units and objectives that we just put into place in our new curriculum, avoiding expanding to deal with other things. The new curriculum is more substantial than what we were doing before, but there still are no problems fitting it all in at the first-grade level. If I had to cut something in social studies, I probably would keep all of the topics but not go into as much detail. For example, we spent over two months on families and did a lot of creative things--drawing and writing, sharing personal experiences and ideas and favorite things, questioning parents at home and bringing the information to class for discussion. If I had to cut back, I would do fewer of these activities. Also, there would be less follow-up with things that students initiate and fewer activities that take a lot of time. I wouldn't move to worksheet activities but I would use fewer hands-on activities. I would pick the ones that were most important for meeting the

objectives and that had worked best in the past. But I wouldn't leave out whole units. I have spent five years developing this curriculum and I feel committed to it.

Concerning criteria for content selection, I emphasize the objectives in the district guidelines. If time were a problem, I would reevaluate the objectives to see if I could streamline the activities and still meet the objectives but in less time. I would look to developmental level to see what kids are ready to handle. Anything dealing with past history I would want to relate to their current lives. Our curriculum committee initially had four strands that we thought were basic to first grade, but we ended up adding current events, geography, and the Michigan Health Model (a curriculum sponsored by the Michigan Department of Education). We emphasize things that the group consensus favored, but it is hard for me to say why we think these things are more important than other things or are particularly suited to first grade rather than other grades. Part of it is tradition--what teachers had been doing and what was in the textbooks used earlier.

The district adopted the Michigan Health Model and trained us to use it, so that was an inclusion pressure. If the state began testing in social studies, I would feel required to cover that content, although I don't think we should be teaching to a test. Because of publicity about poor geography knowledge in U.S. students, there is a press for teaching more geography, which was why we decided to beef up in that area.

Because of some unfortunate incidents in our high school, the district has become more concerned about multicultural education. We basically have been told to emphasize that, but it has been left up to us to decide how to do it.

In terms of avoiding content, a small group of parents opposes the Michigan Health Model as teaching values. They don't like the way we handle problem solving, decision making, and responding to peer pressures. However, no one has specifically forbidden me to teach anything in particular.

I don't know of any books being removed or stories no longer being read to students, but this may have occurred as sensitivities have been raised. I have inspected and rejected a few books because they were stereotypic of, for example, Hispanics.

Teacher 2A. One way to allow for depth is to teach in big blocks of time--do all social studies for awhile and leave science out, then vice versa. Also, occasionally use a whole day for a visit to the one-room schoolhouse or some other field trip, then come back and write about it the next day to tie in with language arts. We also do that for old-fashioned days and for Native Americans.

Another thing is to go along with students' interests. If they respond better to certain topics, spend more time on those topics.

So far, I haven't had the problem of not being able to fit in what I wanted to fit in to social studies, but this could change if they start a state test in social studies. This happened in science, where we used to use the SCIIS materials (Knott, Lawson, Karplus, Their, & Montgomery, 1978) but had to switch to a textbook because our kids were not doing well on the content knowledge items on the state test. Social studies is more manageable for some reason. It's easier to pull it together and teach to several different objectives in one or two experiences.

In deciding what to emphasize, I give more stress to content that students show interest in. I teach the topics addressed in the texts but I don't always use the texts (example: leading the students in walks around the

neighborhood rather than reading about neighborhoods in the text). She does skip a suggested unit comparing Michigan to Hawaii, feeling that she teaches contrasts through studying early New England or old-fashioned days and does not see much point in studying Hawaii, having luaus, or comparing Hawaii to Michigan. She believes that "understanding where we've come from" is more important than studying Hawaii. Also, studying why people live where they do, the geographic influences that cause them to settle there (addressing issues such as if one is a farmer moving to a new country, what would one be looking for?). She can "make more generalizations" out of such content than when considering why people would go to Hawaii. With her background of experience in colonial Williamsburg and her interest in colonial times, it is easy for her to make that period real to her students, but she has never visited Hawaii. Also, it is hard for second graders to understand the idea of states or countries, and Hawaii is not very relevant to them right now. It is easier for her to make old-fashioned days relevant because she can bring in concrete things such as a butter churn.

She has not yet included content because of external pressures, but this could begin if the state institutes a testing program in social studies. The state objectives that would lie behind that test would then constitute a more powerful pressure than they do now. Content has been excluded in the area of holidays. Due to concerns expressed by a local religious faction, she avoids Halloween, ghosts, and devils. They have what they call an Autumn Fest celebration in which children come dressed up and there is a parade and party, but they do not put up Halloween-type decorations or talk about witches. They also do not celebrate Christmas or any other religious holidays. In the social studies curriculum, they talk about how different holidays are celebrated but do not actually go through any rituals.

Teacher 2B. One way to allow for depth is by teaming with my neighbor. We do it for many reasons, such as to get children interacting with peers in other classes as well as their own, but also because we only have to make half as many preparations. Also, we try to do fewer things but do them better, reducing the scope by eliminating things that are taught over and over again. We are studying Washington and Lincoln this year but I only had them to do a project and make a booklet about Lincoln. We are covering Washington just by talking about him and comparing him with Lincoln, but not doing the booklet.

I have an independent study time when I am working with reading groups and don't want to be interrupted. During these times I include a lot of social studies activities. Also, game-like review activities such as a bingo game in which they fill in key words about whatever famous American we are studying. This is more enjoyable and less time consuming than having the students prepare a booklet or engage in some other review activity.

Concerning what to include, I deemphasize things that the kids know already or will be touched on several times throughout the year. Our curriculum guidelines identify certain topics for just brief introduction, other topics for thorough development, and still others just for review, and I take these guidelines into account. I spend the least time on review. I spend more time on things of interest to the children and perhaps their parents, such as Operation Desert Storm this year. If I have students from a foreign country or who have traveled extensively elsewhere, I take advantage of that by adding a brief unit on it or giving it more time than I would ordinarily. Or bringing their perspective into the regular topics. I have a Polish child this year and recently asked him to tell us about the trolley system in Poland as part of our unit on transportation.

I haven't had the problem of getting to the end of the year and not being able to finish the scheduled coverage. I have the year well-scheduled out in advance, including movies, field trips, and special projects. I make sure that I do the things that are "must" things, then fill out with other things as time allows. This year, for example, we have several children who do not celebrate the Christian holiday of Christmas but do celebrate religious holidays or New Years in unique cultural ways, and I have called on them and their families to share that with us.

Concerning content inclusion pressures, I haven't felt much, but there is some. Jewish parents want their religion represented as well as the Christian religion during the holidays. Now I make sure that all religions that are represented in the room are represented in our holiday activities and decorations. Also, in response to African Americans concerned about representation of black culture in the curriculum, we have tried to include more African Americans, Native Americans, and Asians among the famous Americans that we study. I try to present role models of all groups and do this throughout the year, not just segregate it into Black History month or whatever. State testing will be a pressure if it is instituted, although I hope that it is not instituted at the second-grade level. This seems inappropriate to me.

I have not stopped teaching anything because of pressures, although I do address certain issues differently. Certain books and materials aren't used anymore because they included racial or other stereotypes. Most pressures to change are centered around race and religion. Also, if you switch grades, you may have a favorite unit that you like to teach but should not if it is earmarked for another grade level. Lately there have been parental concerns about meditation and visualization exercises, but I don't do these things anyway. I

try to be open to parental concerns and avoid doing anything that I wouldn't want teachers doing with my own children.

Teacher 3. Our district established a kind of core curriculum but then basically said "OK, we really want you to teach community, government, Michigan, and skills in depth. If you get to the rest of it too, fine." So I concentrate on those core areas. Also, I try to integrate as much as possible within reading, writing, and math. Doing graphs, time lines. We put those into time capsules that the children make and bury, so we are covering the skills but in a different academic area. How much I go into depth depends in part on how students respond to an activity.

You need to follow through on your plans rather than put things off, or you will never get to them. It is too easy to lose social studies time. For students who get behind, I get help from parent volunteers and from resource teachers, including help in teaching social studies concepts.

The integration helps. I can say "Think back--do you remember when we did the time line on your person for your biography? Well, we're going to do one on ourselves now." The section on farms and resources I do mostly as resources because I can integrate it with science. We study animals and plants and talk about how both of these things are important for us and are used in the community. Then we will talk about farms. I do science early in the year, mostly the solar system, then get into Thanksgiving in November. This ties in with calendar work and current events that I do, although we also talk about the Pilgrims and the Indians, including Michigan Indians, stressing that they were farmers. I emphasize mostly social studies for awhile, and then from January to June I do both science and social studies. So the calendar and the Scholastic News are ongoing activities, but the rest of social studies doesn't start until November and then increases through the rest of the year. This way

it is easy for me to integrate either science or social studies, whatever I am emphasizing at the time, into the reading and writing activities. I teach science five days a week early in the year, social studies five days a week toward the middle, and after that two days science and three days social studies. We integrate it a lot with writing activities such as why they think a law is not appropriate or working with a friend to write down laws that they would use to start a new community.

My content selection criteria focus on the district's curriculum guide, especially the content identified as key for my grade level. Beyond that, I can add in things that I enjoy, such as current events. I think that kids need to relate their learning to the world around them. This year, we tied into concerns about the rain forest, relating that to what we were learning about plants. We also wrote letters to the President suggesting how to make other countries aware of the problem. I use the text, but I pick and choose from it and don't feel that I need to cover everything or give equal emphasis to different topics.

I haven't made content changes due to external pressures. I include certain content because it is earmarked in the curriculum guides for our grade level. I exclude some things because I don't see much point in them, and I have substituted things I would prefer to emphasize, such as current events.

Teacher 5A. Breadth is a major problem because I am supposed to cover the Vikings through Watergate. I treat certain chapters as background with just discussion and some paper work, but no testing or major activities. We develop the end of the exploration unit and the beginning of the colonial period in more depth and with a variety of activities. Also the Revolution and independence. Other stuff farther down the road I don't have time to get into in depth. Then we put more emphasis on the Civil War, the Roaring 20s, and the

20th-century wars. Much of this is experience with what interests the students (girls as well as boys). Many of these are topics that they have heard about at home or elsewhere, and they are eager to learn about them, in part because they think that they are supposed to know about them. I also emphasize the period of inventions. The students are interested in how they were able to patent and to find out what worked and what didn't work. Probably because of their exposure to Cheaper by the Dozen (written by Frank B. Gilbreth and Ernestine G. Corey and published in New York in 1949 by Crowell), the industrial period holds more interest for this group than it used to. They get real involved in assembly lines, time and motion studies, and so on. I allow them to skim and scan in covering periods that I treat more as background information, but I give them discussion questions and an occasional essay question about something I want them to think about. I don't have them simply copy information out of the book because I find that demeaning, for me and for them.

I put more emphasis on things that the students are interested in and able to relate to, and on things that I can connect to larger generalizations or higher level thinking. If a particular class shows an unexpected interest in a topic or an especially worthwhile discussion gets started, I will change plants to accommodate that, even if it means that I ultimately don't cover history all the way up to Watergate. I also try to maintain the chronological linkages. When I taught in earlier grades I could skip around if I wanted to, but teaching chronological history requires you to stay in sequence and at least touch lightly on everything that students will need to know in order to understand what comes later.

I haven't been bothered by pressures. I close my door and quietly do what I feel is right. We often get into controversial things, but I have never gotten any flack for it. We get into Nazi atrocities, hatred of Jews, witch-

craft trials, people claiming that the Holocaust never took place, racial and religious news and issues, prejudice, the current conservative wave in the nation, government blunders and cover-ups. I don't think we should hide these things from fifth graders. Besides, they need the opportunity to speak their minds and to get irate about things. I also teach reproductive health and other controversial things. I haven't had much problem because, basically, the parents trust me. We don't use the Michigan Model in this district, so we haven't had flack over that. My veteran status and reputation help. Parents know what to expect from me and don't give me the flack they might give a new teacher.

Teacher 5B. In general, my coverage reflects the space devoted to topics in the text. However, I will do more on western expansion this year because the reading coordinator is going to do language arts lessons that coordinate with that period. I give the Revolutionary War extra attention because it is interesting to the students and should be part of their patriotic and social studies background. I may back away from westward expansion a bit because I don't want to bring up cowboy and Indian-type things or treatment of Custer as a hero. Today's kids get less of that and have movies like Dances With Wolves, and that's good.

My main criteria are the district's curriculum guidelines for my grade level, adjusted according to the factors mentioned above. You can't cover all of the history in the text with fifth graders.

Concerning content inclusion pressures, this year for the first time I am doing a special unit on black history, a unit on Martin Luther King, Jr. sponsored by the Michigan Education Association. I am doing it partly to accommodate them but also because I think maybe we need a little extra attention to race these days in view of recent problems. So it's partly external pressure

and partly my own sense of need. Tests are not particularly a pressure for fifth-grade teachers (because this state does not test at fifth or sixth grade).

I do exclude some issues because of parental concerns, especially things connected with reproductive health. There is also a book (War Comes to Willy Freeman, written by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier and published in New York in 1983 by Delacorte) about a girl who dresses up like a boy to get through the lines, including a scene in which they frisk her. You have to be careful what child you give that to, if you know that the parents will object. I also tiptoe around evolution because there has been trouble about that in the past.

Discussion

The teachers reported several strategies for dealing with the depth/breadth dilemma. One is to develop specialization arrangements with other teachers at the same grade level so that, for example, one teacher might teach science to both classes and the other teacher might teach social studies. This reduces preparation time pressures and allows teachers a degree of choice in emphasizing subjects that they prefer to teach over subjects that they may feel less prepared in or that they do not enjoy teaching as much.

In the primary grades, where time allocated to social studies averages only about 20 minutes per day, teachers often alternate their teaching of science and social studies. Instead of teaching both subjects each day for 20 minutes or so, they will teach just one of the subjects for 40 minutes, perhaps alternating subjects on a daily basis, or more likely, teaching a social studies unit for one or more weeks while withholding science and then teaching a science unit for one or more weeks while withholding social studies. These

alternation arrangements create 40-minute periods that allow the teachers to conduct more sustained instruction in these subject areas and to engage their students in activities that would be difficult or impossible to implement under the daily 20-minute periods format. Such arrangements are not necessary for fifth-grade teachers because schedules for the middle grades typically allocate 40 or 45 minutes for social studies each day.

Several teachers also mentioned expanding the scope of the social studies curriculum by including social studies activities during other parts of the school day besides that which is allocated to social studies. These include time spent discussing current events, activities prepared for independent work during seatwork or learning center times, and quick review activities done during brief "leftover" times prior to recesses or dismissals. Teachers also reported extending the social studies curriculum through integration activities, especially through children's literature readings and writing assignments focused on social studies content.

Accepting her responsibility to follow district guidelines, each teacher said that she concentrates on material earmarked for emphasis at her grade level. However, most added that they touch much more lightly, if at all, on content that is listed only for exposure or for review at their grade level. This was especially the case with fifth-grade teachers, who do not have enough time even to get through the U.S. history content that is earmarked for in-depth development at their grade level.

Working within what they viewed as appropriate responses to their districts' guidelines, the teachers also spoke of placing greater or lesser emphasis on particular units or content in response to student interests or their own views of the importance or interest value of the material. Certain

topics are deemphasized because the teacher believes that students are already knowledgeable about them or that they will not find them very meaningful or interesting, and other topics are given greater emphasis because students respond well to them or the teacher views them as important basic knowledge for future school success or for citizenship education.

Two main sources of pressure for content inclusion were mentioned. One, not operating now but looming as a potential major pressure, especially at certain grade levels, is the possible institution of social studies testing by the State of Michigan. Teachers who brought this up all stated that they would feel obliged to familiarize themselves with such tests and related learning expectations, but they also stated the belief that such tests would be counterproductive, leading to more of an emphasis on memorizing disconnected facts and less on developing and applying powerful ideas. A second inclusion pressure, felt noticeably in recent years, has been an emphasis on multicultural education and acceptance of diversity. The teachers who mentioned this described it as a pressure that originated with the district administrators or with parents in the community, but also as one that they shared and did not find problematic in planning and implementing their curricula.

Exclusion pressures focused on avoidance of stereotypic or otherwise objectionable representations of minority groups, avoidance of religious rituals or other implications of religious favoritism, and avoidance of practices (centering around the teaching of values or the use of techniques such as meditation) that small but vocal parent groups objected to on religious grounds. The teachers differed in the degree to which they accepted these various content exclusion pressures as valid and thus felt obligated to honor them. All teachers agreed on the need to avoid promoting stereotypes or favoring particular religions, but in the areas of teaching values or teaching critical thinking,

decision making, and interpersonal problem solving, some teachers distinguished between parental objections that they considered valid and worthy of honoring and other parental objections that they did not consider valid and believed should be resisted. On the whole, however, the teachers were keenly aware of their responsibilities to the state, the district, and the parents, and were oriented towards going along with pressures from any of these sources unless they had what they believed to be a very persuasive rationale for doing otherwise. Even then, only a minority of the teachers clearly expressed a willingness to resist such pressures deliberately.

Content Organization and Sequencing

1. What is the basis for the organization and sequencing of the social studies content that you will address during the year?

2. In addition to the structure of content within units, is there any spiraling or other organization of content that involves sequences or linkages across units?

Teacher 1A. There is a sequence to my geography. I start with the globe as a model of the earth, then locating land and water, then continents and oceans, then smaller units. We begin with a focus on the United States and the first state we locate is Michigan. Then other big states, and gradually the rest throughout the year. If I have students who used to live in other states, we will give them special attention earlier. With nations, I start with the ones they have most likely heard of. Also, I usually have resources and pictures for these countries from National Geographic or from parents.

There is no special sequence to the material taught the rest of the year. The expanding communities piece is done in the fall and the Michigan piece around Michigan Awareness Week in the spring, but there is no linear connection between them. Around Thanksgiving, we do a unit on Thanksgiving and the

Pilgrims and Indians. Students work in pairs to make an illustrated book about what they learned and we also have a reenactment. My classroom is usually the Indians and we go into another class who are the Pilgrims and have a little feast. At the beginning of the year I try to keep things simple and ask fewer questions, increasing the level of demand on students as their expertise develops across the year.

Teacher 1B. There is no particular sequence. We tend to alternate Michigan Health Model units and social studies units from month to month, but in no special sequence. The history of Thanksgiving is in November, of course. Safety is in October because of beginning school and in connection with Halloween safety. But nothing connected with the content.

Across the year, interpersonal skills and problem solving and decision making from the Michigan Health Model are reemphasized. Maps are used periodically along the way until you get to the map unit. We save that until spring because first graders have better reading and writing skills then.

Teacher 2A. There is no strict sequencing of my units, although there is linkage across them. Studying maps helps students learn where places are and begin to understand the hierarchies involved (cities within states within nation). This helps them to understand more about Michigan when we get to the Michigan unit. Or, where the Pilgrims and pioneers lived.

We work within the expanding communities sequence, but there is no special sequence to the units within second grade. Often it depends on when we can get out to the arboretum for tapping of maple trees or schedule a visit to the one-room schoolhouse. We like to do Native Americans of Michigan to tie in with Michigan Week in the spring. Map units in the winter months because it can be done inside.

Teacher 2B. Early in the year, we emphasize reading and study skills, because students are just learning these and have been away from school over the summer. Throughout the year, we try to correlate school content with other factors that might relate to it. We study Michigan around Michigan Week in May. Sometimes we take up a topic when we can schedule a related field trip or bring in speakers. At second grade, you plan primarily in terms of where the children are, where their interests are, and how you can motivate them, not according to a schedule that seems more logical to disciplinary specialists. It doesn't pay to try to make students learn things that they are just not ready to learn. If it is something that has to be taught at the grade level, I will work on it, but keep trying to find ways to teach it that succeed better with the students. You may have to spend more time with it if it is something they are struggling to learn, and you may not have that much time.

Across units, we probably do more spiraling now than in the past, about things such as Native Americans that come up repeatedly across the year. Also in working with maps, when we get them to talk about current events. The children have learned a lot about location of states and nations on maps and globes, more this year because of the war. Drawing comparisons is another way to spiral back, such as in talking about famous Americans that we are studying now and comparing them to ones studied earlier.

Teacher 3. Our curriculum guides are aligned to the textbook, so they are organized in that way. I emphasize science before getting into social studies because social studies is skills-oriented in the first chapter and I want other things in place first. (The first chapter deals with map, globe, and other social studies tool skills.) I don't always follow chapter after chapter in the text. I do the unit on communication before the unit on government because it fits better with what is emphasized in other subjects at the

time. I combine Michigan studies with Michigan Week in May. So, I move government to just before that because we visit the capitol and talk about Michigan government in the Michigan unit. We try to build as we move across the year, looking back to and using things we learned earlier, especially skills. When we talk about communities other than our own, we get out maps to identify places in the world that we are talking about. In the process, we repeatedly mention the equator, latitude and longitude, and so on.

Teacher 5A. The material is necessarily sequential because it is U.S. history. You can't jump around, and I don't do any significant deletions that would leave gaps and cause trouble later.

One way we spiral is to use social studies content in other subjects, by asking students to write in language arts about topics such as putting themselves in the place of a particular explorer. Our music, art, and gym teachers often will accommodate us with these connections as well. We do square dancing when studying the colonial period. We do patriotic singing or art projects such as quilting at that time as well. Novels and stories that we read for social studies are often connected to American history.

Teacher 5B. This is history, so it is automatically chronological. As the year progresses, I have them use skills that they have been developing but also hark back to comparisons or connections, such as factors that led up to different wars. A lot of emphasis is on linking causes and effects, because this is an important objective not only in social studies but in reading. There is a lot of linkage of language arts, such as letter writing while pretending to be a historical figure.

Discussion

In the primary grades, there are few if any hierarchies or linear sequences that link knowledge content across units and require one unit to be taught before another. Some units are scheduled for the end rather than the beginning of the school year because they involve heavier application of skills that will be developed during the year. Otherwise, the order of units often is determined more by the calendar (teaching safety early in the year and teaching about Thanksgiving in November, teaching about Michigan during Michigan Week) or by matters of convenience such as the availability of a kit or an opportunity to go on a related field trip. In contrast, there is a linear sequencing of units at fifth grade because the content is chronologically organized U.S. history.

Little or no deliberate spiraling in the form of planned curriculum units was mentioned. However, several teachers mentioned informal spiraling that occurs when something studied earlier crops up in a later unit or when students are asked to compare and contrast or in some other way to bring to bear their knowledge of something studied previously as it relates to something being studied now. Frequent reference to maps (and in fifth grade, to time lines) is another form of spiraling, or at least of reference to previously studied material in the context of the current unit.

Representation and Explanation of Content

1. What sources of content do you use to provide input to students (your own explaining or storytelling, a textbook, other print sources, films or other media, direct experience with artifacts or other objects of study, etc.)?

2. What sorts of props (photos, maps, diagrams, material on the overhead projector, artifacts, etc.) do you use to illustrate or provide examples of what you are explaining?

3. What principles do you follow when presenting content to students via explaining or storytelling? Do you do anything to focus the students' attention on key ideas or to help them organize the material around these key ideas?

4. Do you ask questions before, during, or after your presentations? If so, what kinds of questions, and for what purposes?

5. Do you teach skills as well as knowledge in social studies? If so, do you teach some of these skills directly rather than just provide opportunities for their development through work on activities and assignments? If you do teach certain skills directly, which skills are they?

Teacher 1A. Sources include the textbook when appropriate, mostly for the expanding communities part. Lots of maps, not only wall maps but maps that children can take to their desks and study. I read books like The Oxcart Man that is good for talking about land formations and has pictures of them. It covers history too, and trading, needs and wants. We have a few valuable filmstrips and we have visitors such as woman who lived in China who comes in to talk about that. A friend from India let me borrow clothing and artifacts from there that I used during our mystery country week on India. I also have a fictional book about a bird going on a trip through India that shows pictures of where the bird stops. For each mystery country, I collect postcards, coins, photos, stamps, and so on. UNICEF calendars are good for pictures of children from different countries.

For states, we compile a state book containing information about each state on a separate page--a map outline, the capital, the motto, the nickname, and other facts. There are international and state flags around the room and we do things like use large maps of continents and place animals on them, such as a kangaroo on Australia.

I use maps, photos, diagrams, word webs, desk-top maps, wall maps. Lots of puzzles--puzzle maps. I don't use the overhead much. A big floor puzzle of

the U.S. A game called "State to State" which I adapted as a way to teach students about the names and locations of the states.

To help students learn I use KWL and also a web where you put the key word in the middle. I interact with students orally about these and put the information on the board visually. Otherwise, I use a lot of visuals (props, photos) and try to keep things simple using words that my students will understand.

I ask questions to expand on prior knowledge as part of KWL. With a story, I ask them to predict what might happen next. Afterwards, we compare their predictions with what did happen. I also ask questions to motivate them and check on their comprehension as we go along, and at the end, to see what they have learned. Questions such as "Can you name three things we have learned?"

I teach beginning map skills--the four main directions, finding things on maps.

Teacher 1B. I have used all of those things. My students can't read many books but I read to them, stopping to discuss along the way. Films and filmstrips are good although some need updating. You might order a film on families and find that it is from the 1950s, so it is more history than families, at least in the students' eyes. I don't do as much storytelling as explaining and discussing. I will show a photo or poster and ask if they know what it is, and then get into a lesson about it, but I was not happy with the textbooks that called for students to all look at the same picture and discuss it. They weren't ready for that and had difficulty staying on task or on the right page.

I use photos, magazines, pictures where appropriate, maps. Not much use of the overhead. Not many artifacts because I don't have access to pioneer

tools or special artifacts for the Thanksgiving unit. I use three kits that are mostly maps and geography materials. A National Geographic kit on the history of Thanksgiving that has little books that the students follow along with a cassette tape. There are filmstrips on safety and families.

We did a quick overview of Alaska that used magazines, photos, slides, books, and whatever else I had or the students brought in. In the family unit, we used a lot of library books because there were good current stories about different kinds of families that I could read to them.

I often use KWL. I also ask them to predict, especially for stories (How is the family going to solve this problem?). I may give them a question and ask them to listen for the answer as I read. Instead of predicting, I may ask them to listen for the problem and how it was solved. For movies or filmstrips, I may ask them to find one or two items of information that they didn't know before and then contribute these to a discussion. In general, I give them some cue or mind-set prior to the experience and then follow up afterwards.

I often ask them to compare or contrast what comes up in the reading with their prior experience. Also, with different kinds of maps, such as maps that have trip routes marked on them. As their reading skills develop, I use lists on the board, word webs, concept webs, or story diagrams for concepts such as "family."

I ask prediction questions, KWL questions, compare and contrast questions, comprehension questions about reading. Much of my teaching time involves reading or explaining and then asking questions. Review questions following presentations of main ideas.

Prediction questions give them a focus for their attention as they read or listen, and help them to draw on prior knowledge. Compare-and-contrast questions get them to think about similar experiences they may have had.

Summarizing questions allows me to see if they can summarize a main idea in a sentence.

I teach map skills, research skills, and getting information. I actually teach and model the skills. Also, the steps in problem solving and skills in getting along with others. I spend a lot of time demonstrating classroom procedures, lining up, handling materials. For things like sharing and solving conflicts, we did some role playing and analysis of better and worse ways to handle situations. In safety, teaching them to dial 9-1-1 and what to say.

Teacher 2A. I do all of those things. A lot of reading to them because at this grade level it is still important for them to hear language. Fewer than half can read for content with much efficiency. I also emphasize direct experiences through field trips or people coming to the classroom. Also trade books and visual media.

My methods vary with the topic. Stories are perfect for teaching about the old-fashioned days, but not for teaching map knowledge and skills. You can use games and simulations when teaching maps, but you can't read a good story about that topic.

I use all of the props that you mentioned, although it varies with the topic. Experiential learning and props and visual aids are basic to my approach.

When presenting content, I ask questions to see if they understand key ideas, such as to tell it back to me if it is a story or to cite support for their claims or inferences. A story like Little House in the Big Woods is good for descriptions of how pioneers lived and prepared food, so I ask questions like "Do you know what it means when they say 'tan the hide?'"

I don't review vocabulary words before starting. I stop to explain as we go, maybe acting it out or showing a prop. I don't directly say things like,

"This is the most important thing you need to know," although I suggest that indirectly through my questions. Where possible, I use stories rather than textbooks, and that in itself makes it easier for children to follow and remember. Most students prefer fiction or biography to encyclopedia-type text descriptions, although some do prefer the latter.

I ask questions before, during, and after. Before, KWL-type questions. What do you know already and what do you want to learn? During, questions to make sure that key ideas are coming across (what happened, and why). Afterwards, questions to find out if I have gotten across what I needed to. The purpose is not just to evaluate them but to evaluate myself.

I teach map skills and cross-curriculum skills like observing, describing, and discussing. Problem solving lends itself well to social studies and science things, and comparing and contrasting seems easily taught in social studies. I introduce skills through direct teaching, not just provide opportunities to practice them.

Teacher 2B. We use the Graphic Learning series plus a lot of library books and films. Right now we are studying transportation and we have books about every form of transportation for students to read on their own, plus I read selections to them. When we studied Native Americans, we probably had a hundred books in here. Some informational, some stories, some myths. All about the Woodlands Indians because we were talking about Michigan Indians. Recently, videotapes on barges for transportation.

We also use kits that we have assembled in the district. The Family of Man materials on early American life in New England that contains artifacts and suggested lessons. A Native American kit that I developed that includes powwow slides and a lot of artifacts. I am not a storyteller, but I weave baskets, dress up in colonial clothing, do soap carvings, play games that

children played long ago or that Native American children played, reenact old-time school in the one-room schoolhouse, have an authentic powwow right here at school.

We use a movie called People are Different and Alike that looks at kids all around the world, taking them through typical days in their societies. It is good for introducing commonalities and differences in how people meet basic needs and also their needs for affection and friendship. We do a lot of field trips, such as an old mansion, a historical museum, the old school, and the nature center. When I present content, I first try to make sure that whatever I represent is in fact true and authentic and that there is a sense of acceptance and fairness in my representation. I also try to project interest in the topic and a desire to learn more about it.

I use all of the types of props that you mentioned, as well as the projector. We are fortunate to have good materials and media assistance in this district.

I try to check on prior knowledge and address student misconceptions. I do an oral form of KWL and then write down their responses. When we finish the unit, I come back to the list and ask the children if they want to change anything about their original statements of what they "knew." This helps reinforce their learning and also the idea that learning involves change and it is OK to be wrong. During the unit, I address any misconceptions that came up initially. Checking on prior knowledge helps students learn better and helps you plan better because you know what things will require greater or lesser attention.

The skills I teach are mostly in the Graphic Learning and map skills. How to read and use maps of the city and other maps. Knowing and finding directions. Also, skills of getting along with people, resolving conflicts,

having discussions, working cooperatively, using good manners. We have a unit on this in the fall and then reinforce it throughout the year. It includes some direct instruction as well as activities such as discussions or writing about how to get along or make friends. You have to be careful when you get into value things here, such as noting that maintaining eye contact is commonly considered a proper way to pay attention to someone but that some cultures have different customs. We do a lot of work on generic skills such as reading for comprehension, observing, comparing, categorizing.

Teacher 3. I use many of the things on your list, including props, field trips, and bringing in speakers. Depending on the content, a lot of discussion either as a whole class or within small cooperative groups. In developing a concept, I encourage the children to get into what it means and to develop ideas. I use films, but not to a great extent. Many hands-on things. Also storytelling, the text, other print sources from library books. Whatever is suited to the content.

I use diagrams, maps, material on the overhead, globes, some artifacts that we have purchased. We could use a lot more of those. Photos of Michigan, including historical people and places. When talking about the past, props such as costumes or food from the times. Field trips and resource people for topics like careers. Trips to the nature center and through the township offices and state capital. We used to go to a dairy farm. Also, the Huckleberry Railroad, which gives them a feel for Michigan transportation of the past.

I always try to get students to recall prior knowledge by asking them to think about what we talked about yesterday, and I always state what I am going to introduce to them today. Through teacher effectiveness training, I have adopted a design model that includes the elements of talking about past

lessons, connecting them to what we are going to learn today, stating today's objectives, and brainstorming with children about how they think they might do it. I have pictures showing things that the children might do and I use small groups to discuss and compare and contrast. I use the text and other resource materials to get students actively involved, then set up a sequence of what they will do and what different group members' roles might be. When teaching new words, I do concept mapping.

I use KWL and concept mapping questions, but I especially like to get them to compare, contrast, think about what we have learned previously and link it to the new knowledge, and analyze. They love to play Jeopardy, although my questions emphasize comparing, contrasting, and drawing conclusions about what we study. I want them to stay actively involved and think about and evaluate what they are learning, not just regurgitate details.

I teach skills directly through modeling but also give them application opportunities. Skills include familiarity with maps and related concepts, graphing, the compass, orienting oneself according to the sun.

Teacher 5A. I do all of those things. It's important not to just use a text. I use filmstrips, tapes, collected stories and anecdotes, materials that parents have brought me, children's literature, educational games. Whatever works for engaging them in the content.

I use a lot of props which can be useful for embellishing storytelling or explanation (Just think--this hunk of wood was in the ceiling when Ben Franklin was speaking during those deliberations at Independence Hall). I have letters from the Revolutionary War and lots of other historical props, many of them from my east coast family origins. Others were given or lent to me by parents.

I used to spell out everything for them, but now I will ask them how the story pertains to what we were studying or what the main point of it might be. I do less explaining and more questioning.

Initially, I will ask questions to get them involved and create introductory interest. As they work, I question them to keep them on task. I definitely ask questions when they are done, to help them take the concepts a little further. If they are reading out loud or having a discussion, ask questions to reinforce and extend learning and maybe get it into a different form for students who have trouble with reading comprehension. Before filmstrips or other special input, I will ask questions to set a theme and focus their attention. I try to be varied and unpredictable in my types of questions so that students don't psych me out.

I directly teach skimming and scanning skills which are perfect for social studies because there is too much information. Also, reading charts and graphs, marshaling evidence to support your arguments, time lines and chronological order. I emphasize time lines over memorizing dates because I want them to know not only when things happened but also why. I teach decision-making skills at the beginning of the year, along with discussion and problem-solving skills such as listening to everyone's opinion and supporting your own with arguments and evidence. I teach critical thinking skills more in literature than in social studies, although I touch on it in all subjects. Sometimes I will teach something that contains a blatant error just to see if they can pick it up.

Teacher 5B. I use all of those sources except maybe the artifacts. I have used artifacts in the past and taken students to historical museums, but mostly I use books. It would be nice to have a hands-on museum for history. I have used filmstrips but not many movies recently. I probably should use more

movies, but so many of them are so outdated. Historical fiction books from the library, PBS videos on the Civil War, and other recent video materials.

We use maps which are real good, time lines from the text, the text itself, photos, library books on the period, and historical fiction. I don't use artifacts as much as I should, mostly because I do not have easy access to them. The district has kits that include a big box of artifacts and materials on colonial life, but these are pitched more for the lower elementary grades and most of my students have already worked with them in those grades, so I don't repeat it.

I try to organize material around key ideas, such as the struggles of the early colonists or contrasting views on taxes that led up to the war.

Beforehand, I ask questions to find out their level of understanding and where they are coming from. During, I ask clarification questions. Afterwards, questions to find out if they understand, beginning with easier questions and progressing to ones that call more for inferences.

I teach social studies tool skills and study skills. Primary and secondary sources. Pictures, maps, globes, all that. I teach certain things directly--latitude and longitude--and back it up with workbook pages and things. This is all at the beginning of the year. We also study maps, charts, and graphs of the United States, elevation maps, different ways of presenting information. Sometimes I have them make maps, such as a map of Paul Revere's ride.

Discussion

All seven teachers use a considerable range of content sources and props in addition to textbooks. The first- and second-grade teachers build their curriculum around children's literature, unit kits, and map-based activities

more than around textbooks. The third- and fifth-grade teachers use the texts but supplement them with a range of additional content sources and props. This is one of the most obvious ways in which these seven teachers are exemplary for their social studies teaching, even though most of them have had limited contact with leading social studies scholars and professional organizations.

The teachers also use a rich variety of techniques for stimulating and guiding students' attention, helping them to focus on key ideas and organize the material around these ideas. The primary grade teachers are familiar with the KWL technique and often use it, at least informally, as a way to elicit relevant background knowledge and learning interests when introducing a new topic and to summarize learning when concluding. The fifth-grade teachers did not appear to be familiar with the KWL technique specifically, but they were aware of the value of asking questions to elicit prior knowledge and stimulate students to synthesize their learning and connect it to other learning.

All of the teachers spoke of asking many questions before, during, and after lessons, and most of them made a point of stating that these questions were designed to develop understanding, not just to assess memory for factual information. They also spoke of using word webs and other graphic organizers designed to emphasize key terms and show their connections to one another and to other content. Prediction questions were often mentioned as ways to stimulate students' learning from storytelling; "set induction" questions as ways to stimulate their learning from media presentations; and compare-and-contrast questions as ways to help them develop their understanding of a new topic and appreciate its connections to other topics. The teachers have become knowledgeable about these techniques through workshops on effective teaching generally or on the teaching of reading comprehension specifically.

All of the teachers mentioned providing direct instruction and modeling of newly introduced skills, along with opportunities to apply skills learned previously. Some teachers mentioned only map and globe skills and other skills specific to social studies content, but others mentioned more generic study or inquiry skills; skills relating to critical thinking, problem solving, or decision making; or skills involved in solving interpersonal problems.

Teacher-Student Discourse

1. What forms of teacher-student discourse are emphasized during whole-class lessons and activities (e.g., recitation over facts and definitions; checking for understanding; discussion or debate of alternative explanations, predictions, or policy positions; brainstorming solutions to problems or issues; discussion of linkages of content to the students' lives outside of school)? Do certain of these forms of discourse appear mostly in particular types of lessons? Are there changes in the kinds of discourse that occur as you work through the unit or through the school year?

2. Do students sometimes interact with peers in pairs or small groups to engage in cooperative learning activities or in discussions, debates, or other activities that feature student-student discourse? Explain.

Teacher 1A. We have recitation every morning after we do the calendar. I point to states and we recite the name of the state and capital. We are learning the "Fifty Nifty United States" song and practice that every morning because they will sing it to their parents in the last week of school. It is just the state names in alphabetical order set to a tune.

I use questions to check for understanding during lessons. We have discussions but not debates, on topics like recycling or protecting endangered species. We do brainstorming a lot. No specialized lessons where unusual discourse occurs.

Students often work with partners on puzzles or other activities in the geography center. In art, they often collaborate on projects. In the Pilgrim

unit, they made a big book on the Pilgrims summarizing what they learned, working with a partner.

Teacher 1B. We do some recitation, although more on ideas than just facts. Certainly review questions. Some definitions, such as nuclear and extended families, although I don't expect them to write these down or recite them with precision. A lot of checking for understanding, especially at this grade level where you don't do much paper-and-pencil testing. A lot of discussion, but not much debate. We are still introducing basic knowledge so I don't see formal debates as appropriate yet. A lot of predicting and brainstorming, making charts where they state as many things as they can think of about a topic. Sometimes I have them do this in teams (their desks are arranged in clusters of four students who act as teams for certain activities). Many of my questions are intended to get them to make connections with their lives by asking things like whether this has ever happened to them. Most of my classroom time is spent in discourse.

Over the year, discussions get longer and more students participate. It takes some of them a while to get comfortable in the group and see how to handle the situation. I call on reticent ones to answer nonthreatening questions and try to make participation a positive experience for them. As they develop better reading and writing skills, they can do more complex and creative activities. I often have them try to write and read to me what they have been writing. I have them do this right away, because if you wait too long before asking them to read it, they may not be able to decipher their own invented spellings an hour later.

I have them work in groups frequently, more as the year goes on. They work in pairs on laminated maps, taking turns to cooperate and check on each other. With the desks arranged in clusters of four, we often have informal

cooperative learning. Sometimes I will specifically tell them to work together but I usually don't mind if they do it on their own as well. Actually I do less cooperative learning in social studies than in some other subjects because social studies is so much more discussion than activities. Also, I am still feeling my way with cooperative learning and I am not always comfortable with it. I worry about certain students just sitting back and letting a partner or other group members do the work for them. I try to pair them with different students as the year progresses because I want them to know and get along with everyone, although I often pair struggling students with better students who can help them.

Teacher 2A. We do a lot of recitation, talking about things they have read. Simple kinds of research, like biographies, reciting back to the class an interesting fact that they learned through their reading. Checking for understanding by asking, rehashing, discussing. I don't know that we debate, but we discuss alternative ideas. Whole-class interactions with the teacher that combine recitation and discussion, plus small-group activities that feature student-student interaction. Different groups might each research a different topic and then come back to report to the class.

Across the year, we do more research and small-group things as children become more responsible working with each other. I have to first teach them about being polite and sharing without hurting others' feelings. We start out with short lessons and short answers, but these get longer and students begin to do more of the leading. I pull back and act as a facilitator.

I have not had special training in cooperative learning but I do use the small-group research activities and other activities that involve cooperation by students who have differentiated roles in the group. If they are making a map of the room, some will draw and some will study the room to give

instructions to the drawers. I don't have them work in pairs, although students might talk to each other on their own about an assignment or common interest.

Following students' suggestions, we shifted from rows to clusters of four for a brief time. However, after a couple of weeks the students asked to return to rows. They liked their privacy and found that they lost it when they were seated in the clusters.

Teacher 2B. We do all of those things, although recently we have been pushing for more discussion, interaction among students, and getting information and then talking about it rather than just listening to lectures. However, they often need information from me or from a movie or filmstrip to get them all on the same level and provide a basis for understanding.

Many lessons begin with a check on prior knowledge and listing of that and talking about it. Maybe a mini-lesson in which I give information and then they work in groups to get more information, go to the library, then come back to talk some more and reassess their prior knowledge. Most of my lessons are like that. We don't have formal debates or panel discussions, although a lot of debate occurs, especially when we talk about current events. Discussions are often lively.

Discourse does change as we work through the year because students become more capable and can do more things on their own. They work in groups more often and more independently and they get started on activities with less initial structuring from me. Whole-class discussions get longer and students get into them quicker because they have learned what discussion is all about. Also, you get more efficient as the year goes on. Today I spent 10 minutes introducing an activity, had the students work in groups for 20 minutes, then

spent 10 minutes debriefing. We couldn't have done all that in that amount of time back in the fall.

We do a lot of work in groups. Also in pairs, which is a good way to mix children of different abilities together to get some things done that you couldn't do otherwise except through one-to-one interactions with students. A good reader can be paired with a less good reader to help that child understand task directions. Most group and pair work is in the activities that follow lessons, but sometimes during KWL or prior knowledge aspects I will have them work in pairs to gather information about what they already know.

Teacher 3. I do many of those things. To keep the children actively involved, I check for understanding by asking them to demonstrate or write things down. I do recitation in the sense of having them communicate to me or to their neighbor the gist of what we have been talking about by putting it into their own words, such as the definition of a continent. We discuss pro and con aspects of an issue. I question them before and after to note change. We have debates, make predict' .s, brainstorm (about how the world might be different if Edison hadn't invented electricity). KWL questions and related discussion. Occasional voting on how many think this or that. Occasional role play, such as the legislature. Much of my social studies teaching is discourse with students.

They work in small groups at least three times a week. The district has emphasized small-group and cooperative learning, partly in response to concerns from the business community. Sometimes it is just discussion within groups, but sometimes they have particular goals and different group members have different roles. Student-student discourse is especially valuable when we are examining predictions or comparing and contrasting, especially with values

(comparing people of the past with the present, discussing why we pledge allegiance and stand while we do it).

Teacher 5A. I am always trying to engage students in thoughtful discourse about the content, especially in recognizing and elaborating diverse points of view or putting themselves in the place of different sides to an issue and recognizing how those people would feel. I often play devil's advocate or ask questions designed to call attention to the other view if the class has only emphasized one. I will push them to support their opinions with arguments and evidence. I am trying to teach them to think.

Discourse gets more sophisticated as the school year progresses. They learn to discuss the pros and cons of things and take broader and more sophisticated views, not just give "this is the answer" responses. This kind of discourse is crucial for giving them chances to think and communicate about what they are learning, which is far more important than me giving them facts and having them recite the facts back to me. It is more important for me to act as a facilitator of good discussion than as an authority.

I have emphasized cooperative learning strategies for a long time, although I am learning about it more formally now, often from interacting with my student teachers. You don't want to overuse it and you want to have three or four different forms of cooperative learning activities, but it is a useful tool. Often I will structure a task so that they have to discuss and then negotiate agreement on something that requires compromise or problem solving. My ultimate goal is to step back and listen to them interact with one another.

Teacher 5B. I do all of the above, although not much student-student discourse. Because of time constraints, I don't get into a lot of having the kids argue about rights and wrongs. I had them do debates in the past and it worked really well but I don't do it anymore. I don't know why. We do the

Jeopardy game for vocabulary and they like that. Other games to promote learning of basic facts.

We try to link our teaching to their lives outside of school, such as connecting Valley Forge to the snow outside right now. I use a variety of types of discourse depending on the content and situation. It does change as we move through a unit because their knowledge changes. They get more verbal and you can have more discussion.

I use a lot of small-group and cooperative learning and games, and I encourage them to consult one another about assignments and help each other learn. However, I emphasize the importance of explaining things, not just giving answers. I put more emphasis on teacher-student discourse than on student-student discourse because I want to control what they learn, address their misconceptions, and so on, although I do use student-student discourse too.

Discussion

The major portion of the social studies time in these classrooms is spent in teacher-student and student-student discourse, and the teachers mentioned using most or all of the forms of discourse identified in the questions. Recitation is frequent in the early grades, not only as a form of teaching and learning but as a way for the teacher to find out if the students remember and understand what has been said so far (teachers at higher grade levels do not have to depend so heavily on recitation for the latter purpose because they can use tests and written assignments as well). Teachers stimulate discourse through a variety of types of questions, as noted previously. Many of these are designed to encourage students to think and communicate about the content by making predictions, drawing comparisons, or brainstorming ideas. Formal

debates do not occur except in one of the fifth-grade classes, but several teachers mentioned that they frequently engage students in debate-like discussions of issues.

Cooperative learning and other forms of student-student discourse occur in each of these classrooms, sometimes through activities and assignments that have been deliberately structured as cooperative and sometimes through informal (but teacher-approved) consultation with peers. Several teachers mentioned that they have been increasing their emphasis on cooperative learning lately and are still experimenting with different versions, seeking to find activities and forms of cooperative learning that work effectively with their students and to avoid problems such as students being unable to get along or work well together or certain students remaining passive while others do all the work.

Through various forms of exposure to whole-language philosophies, constructivist notions of teaching and learning, workshops on KWL and on cooperative learning, and other aspects of the current zeitgeist in pedagogical theorizing, most of the teachers have been increasing their emphasis lately on stimulating a great deal of discussion (i.e., not just recitation) during whole-class lessons and on encouraging students to work together in pairs or small groups. They seemed aware of and in sympathy with the notion that students need to communicate about what they are learning in order to solidfy and synthesize it.

Activities and Assignments

1. What purposes or roles do activities and assignments play in your social studies teaching? What kinds of activities and assignments are included, and why?

2. What principles or criteria do you use to decide on what activities or assignments to include? What makes good activities better than the alternatives?

3. Are there particular processes (artistic construction, discussion, debate, writing, research, simulation, etc.) that you include frequently in your activities and assignments because you think that they are especially valuable for promoting learning? Explain.

4. Do you try to integrate social studies with other subjects? If so, how does this influence your activity or assignment choices? What advantages and disadvantages does such integration entail?

Teacher 1A. The purpose of assignments is to provide students with opportunities to practice and extend knowledge and to use that knowledge. I introduce some information, then they practice it or use it. Each unit or segment has some culmination activity to pull it all together. There is a lot of work with maps, the Thanksgiving pageant in collaboration with the teacher next door. At the end of the year, our state celebration in which we invite parents to watch us name the states and capitals and sing the "Fifty Nifty United States" song.

I will often have children come to the map to point out some of our mystery countries. Or, find a state, outline it, name the capital, then go to their seats and find the page in their state book and enter some additional information about the state. I show the state bird and flag so that they can draw those in. As the year progresses, they end up with a page for each state giving this information and illustrations.

For the self, family, and neighborhood unit we mostly follow the text, reading the chapter and asking the questions at the end. I also have them put together "A Book About Me," containing pictures and information about favorite colors, favorite things to do, and so on.

Activities have to be age-appropriate, not just worksheets where they fill in blanks. I use a few worksheets, but I emphasize activities that might be art-related and more creative, where the students have some opportunity to

determine how it looks when it gets done. Or, taking a puzzle and tracing it and making their own map rather than cutting and pasting a map from a worksheet. Open-ended activities. For map work, let them decide how to color the different parts and whether to label them. I think this gets more out of them than just saying "I want you to color the oceans blue and the states red."

In the geography center, they have a choice of what they will do there and how it will end up. They can make a flag book by copying blank flags, deciding which ones to do. When they make their books on Pilgrims, they decide how they are going to illustrate them.

We use science and social studies themes to emphasize for a week or two or even a month. We integrate art, geography, science, and the other subjects into our treatment of these themes. When a location comes up in reading a story, I will stop briefly to refer to a map or globe. I read them selections from children's literature that develop social studies topics.

Teacher 1B. I think children need to do something to make it theirs, to create more understanding, to have something to show for the hours they spent in a unit. They will end up with a report or the answer to some question or with some product. Today we were doing map symbols and I had them make their own maps, not just listen to an explanation.

Many activities are open-ended ones. We just finished a family book where everyone could participate and be successful. If I had done something else such as have them graph the numbers of members in each family, the kids would not have been as actively involved. However, when I lead them in lessons, I usually end up with a chart, graph, or some other activity. I will get them started on something and then have them work on it at their desks.

For personal skills and problem solving, we do more discussion and role play. Also for the safety unit, where they use the play telephone to call 9-1-1 and role play emergency situations. Postdiscussion activities are important because children need to have some ownership and be involved or it will not be important learning to them and won't stick with them. Also, to provide some fun and enjoyment for the students. Activities allow them to be active learners.

A good activity gets everyone involved and helps students to leave with a good understanding of what you are trying to teach. Also, it allows them to be successful, it is not too difficult for them. My own personal preferences are also part of the criteria, I won't do something that I don't enjoy doing with the kids. Also, activities have to meet my goals and objectives. Finally, I wouldn't use activities that were stereotypical or prejudicial, that simply took too long to set up and do, or that required materials that I didn't have access to.

Concerning processes, I try to make sure that kids have chances for artistic expression. Instead of scheduling art once a week, we try to integrate art into the teaching of other subjects, with the help of the school's art enhancer. In our families unit, the students had a choice of three projects: make a name badge, make a banner with their name on the computer, or do a stitchery project with their name. In our last unit, a group of students did a salt-flour relief map of Alaska and constructed a big model of a generic Alaskan city. Then we talked about how most of those cities are surrounded by mountains. We laid out streets and used boxes for buildings. I think they learned some basics about constructing maps and about what you'd have to think of in building a town, such as, if the town is on the water and surrounded by

mountains, how will people get around and get the supplies they need? This led to inclusion of boat docks in the model.

Processes that promote learning include interaction between teacher and student, and at times between student and student. They don't do much research. Some activities involve cutting and putting together pictures or making graphs or displays. Some of that is for general skills beyond social studies, such as following directions or organizing their work. Some of it is basic paper-and-pencil skills on which they need practice, because I don't use many worksheets. Often it is creative expression, such as doing a page depicting their favorite activities and deciding on a title for the page. For graphs, they need to learn to read graphs and may have to create them, so they need to learn about that. Family books are a way for them to show ownership without just filling in preorganized ditto pages. Also, it creates something they can take home to show and discuss with family members.

Activities have to take into account interest level and attention span. These kids can give short bursts of attention to information, but then they need to do something active.

For integration, I have tie-ins with language arts, math, and science, as far as inquiry methods. Integration is important. Kids should see ties and carry-overs across subjects. Also, the time factor: Integration helps you cover more. I include a lot of reading and writing opportunities within social studies, especially as the year progresses. I prefer writing activities that allow students to create and respond in open-ended fashion over workbook and ditto activities. Math enters through graphing and mapping activities. Often we will build a graph by doing a lot of counting as well. Science relates with inquiry activities and certain overlapping content such as pollution or recycling.

Teacher 2A. I emphasize hands-on experiences like churning butter. Their multisensory aspects make possible levels of understanding that students cannot get from just reading or even watching a movie.

For learning maps, we might have them just do worksheets, but beyond that we would want some creative activities where they can extend and use what they have learned, such as drawing a map of their favorite ice cream concoction that included a color-coded map key. I favor hands-on activities because I see students enjoying them, being involved, talking and sharing with enthusiasm. This tells me that they are learning. The ice-cream sundae map isn't just time spent fooling around by kids who already know all about maps; it gets into the hierarchy of thinking skills. If you really understand, you can transfer what you learned and create something new based on it. It helps students to understand in a way that they can relate to. They can't get excited about reading a map of Michigan, but when they work on kit activities involving "Map Man," they get engaged by the humor and get into the activities.

My main criteria are that I want activities that appeal to students' imaginations and get them actively involved, wanting to learn more and to talk about what they are learning.

Processes that I emphasize include hands-on learning in general, artistic construction, maps. Such things as working on a paper quilt as part of study of life in the past. I usually try to build in arts or crafts activities because they enhance the learning.

For neighborhoods, I use worksheets and maps. This more realistic topic doesn't lend itself well to imagination. If I had space in class, I would construct a huge map or diorama of the neighborhood on the floor, using buildings made from milk cartons. This helps them get the idea of space and how things relate street-wise, direction-wise. You could ask, if they were at

Jimmy's house, what direction would they have to go in to get to Johnny's house? In this class, I have a large map of the neighborhood that we study, putting on dots to represent students' houses. For older students this might be as good or better than a large diorama on the floor, but I wish I could do the latter at this grade. In general, I believe that multisensory experiences and appeals to the imagination help make activities more memorable and lead to better learning, not just more enjoyment.

We do a lot of discussion and writing. Writing gives them a chance to reflect, and then they can share it with one another. Sometimes we will create a book that everyone can read and then take home.

We do as much simulation as we can, as a substitute for going somewhere that we can't get to or as a way to role play to get into feelings. The district's curriculum guide has a lot of suggested activities for each main topic.

I include a lot of reading and writing in social studies, and some math. I don't make up activities just to integrate, but if something strikes me as useful to turn into a graph or a measuring activity, I will. Read a recipe and follow it to make applesauce as part of the pioneer living unit.

I don't plan with integration in mind but I do it as much as possible because I think it is important. Reading and writing in social studies will help students become better readers and writers, and these language arts experiences will increase their social studies understanding. Also, students will work hard to read books that they care about, such as The Little House on the Prairie series, even books that are above their grade level.

Teacher 2B. I use reporting assignments where they gather information and then write a report, such as creating a little book about Abraham Lincoln. Many are independent projects, such as making a Michigan flag during the Michigan unit. Often they work in pairs or groups. I emphasize projects

because the more hands-on things that children do, the more they retain and understand. When we visit the old school and spend the day writing Roman numerals and doing other hands-on things, history comes to life for them. When we study Native Americans, we make wampum belts out of beads.

Reporting and writing assignments have several purposes. Many are about famous Americans and we want them to read biographies and talk about it with one another, usually in small groups. This is a good way to study famous Americans without taking whole-class time to do it. Writing a report is important not only for the usual reasons but because some children cannot easily make oral presentations to a group but can write a report. Also, there is the satisfaction of knowing that they can put a report together. You don't have time for hands-on things for every topic, and report writing is a useful activity that takes less time. [This teacher does not accept the "writing to learn" arguments as valid for this grade level when children are still learning to read and write and thus working on punctuation and mechanics. She views writing assignments as important because they allow the child to communicate about the learning.]

I don't use ditto-type worksheets, although I have a set on Washington, D.C., that is useful because it contains good information about the capital and I can have students work in small groups to discuss and answer the questions. But I would rather do projects or artistic kinds of things than pencil-and-paper things in social studies. We do use more paper-and-pencil or crayon activities when studying maps, though.

I do have criteria for choosing among hands-on activities. I emphasize ones that help me make a point that I am trying to make. I wouldn't give a child a project to do just for its own sake. The project should support your objectives and be representative (for famous Americans, be sure that all the

ethnic groups and both genders are included and make sure that the information is accurate--some materials, especially older ones, have inaccuracies or content that will offend some people).

Often, activities change in response to new information. We still make Indian villages, but now we emphasize longhouses over tepees. I like activities that give children a sense of history, make it real for them, bring them into contact with historical preservations or artifacts, especially local ones that they can identify with. If I had to choose between going to the old one-room school locally versus going to colonial Williamsburg or Plymouth Plantation, I would go to the old school because it is right here in Michigan and it really did exist right there where it happened. Earlier children went there, and my students can relate well to things that involved those children in the past.

Another criterion is that children feel excited about the activity, especially projects that yield some product that they can be proud of. You don't want anything too difficult that will frustrate them.

For processes, I like discussion and research. It is amazing how much discussion and comparing and contrasting goes on as children work on projects. Research often means going to the library when they don't agree on something in order to look it up, learn about it, and then come back and report on it. We do simulation, especially in plays, such as about George Washington. Usually historical. Also, role playing about cooperating and getting along. Also, pretending to be a famous person that they have been studying, perhaps while wearing a little paper hat or clothes.

Integration is easy for social studies, which is hard to separate from other subjects except maybe from math. Teaching students to get along overlaps

into recesses and lunch hours. Discussions of news and studies of famous Americans are social studies, as is cooperative learning.

Sometimes I include processes being learned in other subjects in my social studies. One reason I had them make books about Abraham Lincoln was that we had been studying about books in language arts. Along with facts about Lincoln, the books included a title page, an author page, and so on. For writing, I have them write about social studies topics as a way to make their writing practice meaningful. Sometimes we integrate science too, as in safety units.

Teacher 3. Activities are important because they get children to participate actively, make material meaningful, and let them apply what they learn. Older students might be able to do a project after three weeks, but we need to do mini-projects all along the way, whether it's making a map of your bedroom or a key for that map or designing a new school or school bus or the rules for the school bus. Activities provide them a chance to practice and put their ideas into a project, and they serve as an evaluation tool for me as well.

It could be murals, dioramas, two students debating a topic. It can depend on the class because sometimes children are very opinionated or very reserved. Sometimes we role play, such as pretending to be the President and someone else that he is interacting with. We don't do much research-based debate. We do more sharing things with another class, writing letters, such as to the President (this year, about natural resources), having speakers come in. Later in the year, a class newspaper.

I have criteria for selecting activities, but it often becomes trial and error because what might sound good to me will bomb with the kids. I try to pick things that will interest them and I preassess their interests on each topic. Due to time limitations or lack of materials, I don't use many of the

activities suggested in the text. Worksheets are difficult to use with these kids and often not well suited to the objectives. For goods and services, rather than using worksheets, we might brainstorm or go around the school to identify goods and services in their environment. Often I don't have a particular reason for picking one activity over another unless I already know that it works well.

One activity that they love is a time capsule in which they do a time line of their lives and predict where they will be two years into the future in fifth grade. I keep these for two years and then give them back to them before the leave the school as fifth graders.

In general, good activities are meaningful to the children and their experiences, and the children are enthusiastic about them. They fit the objectives that I am trying to teach and are feasible for use in the classroom. We can't afford a trip to Washington.

The processes I emphasize at this level include artistic construction, whether murals or maps or graphs of our heights or our birthdays or our family sizes. Limited amounts of research, although students love to get into encyclopedias and library books. They are still working on sticking to an objective and separating important information from the rest. A lot of graphing, map work, murals. Not much debate. A lot of writing activities such as "If I could . . . " assignments or comparing and contrasting. For social studies, my most frequent activities are probably artistic construction and discussion, more within the cooperative learning groups and drawing together for us to draw closure and ask "What did we decide?"

Artistic construction is important because kids this age like to draw and it is a way for them to put ideas on paper in an artistic way. For dioramas,

they can get actively involved and their products will give me an idea of how much they understand.

I definitely try to integrate, using activities suited to my objectives. When we talk about how newspapers are a source of service to a community, we write a newspaper and this ties in with our writing instruction. We teach topic sentence, supporting details, closing sentence, and other things that fit well with writing newspaper stories. The "Who Am I?" reports in January connect to calendars and ongoing current events. When holidays bring up famous people, the children may do some research and write about that person. Learning about biography in language arts is connected with writing biographies in social studies. Graphing connects math and social studies. We do current events for a few minutes each morning and this often ties in with social studies. In general, integration is a good thing, but you have to keep your objectives in mind.

Teacher 5A. We do some book work, reading with skimming and scanning. We have slides and filmstrips, cooperative groups, lots of discussion based on whether they could internalize what they read. Sometimes an essay question. An occasional worksheet if it is something I like, such as one containing true-false questions on what Abigail Adams and her husband were trying to say to each other and what each understood the other to be saying. However, they turn off if you give too much workbook, textbook, or discussion. Variety is the key and careful monitoring of the class to make sure that they are with you.

We do a lot of debating, usually over pros and cons of some broad statement that I put on the board. I don't assign them sides to the debate until after they have done their reading, so that they have to read carefully enough to learn both sides. I encourage them to put themselves in the places of the

people at the times, to understand the British versus the American point of view on events leading up to the Revolution, for example. I try to get them to see the complexities involved in difficult decisions such as whether or not to go to war.

For integration, I am fortunate to have help from music and art teachers, for example, to do dances and songs relating to historical periods. We do square dancing when teaching the colonial period, as well as patriotic singing or art projects such as quilt. I also try to integrate literature, especially related novels such as My Brother Sam is Dead (written by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier and published in 1974 by Four Winds Press, New York). Good novels usually are well researched so that historical or other social studies details will tend to be accurate even when characters and plot are fictional. Jack London's stories, for example, are good for conveying life in the old west. I also use social studies content in other subjects, such as by asking students to write in language arts about topics such as putting themselves in the place of a particular explorer.

I don't integrate as much as a lower elementary teacher might. When I taught the colonial period in second and third grade, we churned butter and made crafts, but I don't do much of that now because it has been done in the earlier grades. I think social studies was taught better in those grades several years ago using kits than it is now using textbooks.

Teacher 5B. The purposes of activities include instruction, reinforcement, and personalization or individualization of learning. Also, making it part of yourself--ownership, synthesizing, all of that. We do the writing assignments, discussions, games and simulations, and other stuff we have already discussed.

I go for activities that sound interesting, are feasible for use in the classroom (they won't disrupt or take too much time), and can be done simply and effectively to get the group to the point that you are trying to get them without a lot of frivolity. You have to know your kids. I would do the MACOS paper-clip hunt with my class this year, but another class might go after each other with the pencils and turn it into a free-for-all. The activity is designed to show how society can degenerate without rules and laws, and some classes would get out of control in it. Even if I did it with this class, I would take the most likely offenders and assign them to be observers who sit at the edge and report on what is happening.

Even with criteria, selecting activities can be hit or miss. Sometimes you think an activity will go well but it flops, or vice versa. Sometimes an activity that went well in the past bombs with this year's class.

Concerning processes, I emphasize a lot of writing because fifth graders are sophisticated enough to use their language arts. Also drawing and murals because this gives students who are not good writers a chance to shine. Also games, including having them build or design their own game. This year, the students developed elaborate board games to illustrate the explorers' treks. Much of the work was done outside of class time. I wouldn't have done it with another class that did not work well cooperatively.

Ideally, you would integrate by doing thematic learning. I'm getting my feet wet with that this year, using trade books, library books, incorporating reading and language arts into social studies and vice versa, using themes such as war, liberty, or survival. You can extend it into math and science too. I could imagine using survival as a theme for the first nine weeks of school, then courage or other attributes of human nature, then slavery (because this would fit the progress of topics in U.S. history).

Discussion

The teachers identified several purposes to activities. First, they provide opportunities for students to practice and apply what they are learning, as well as opportunities for the teacher to assess what they are learning. Second, activities provide a means for extending or enriching the learning through applications that involve hands-on or multisensory experiences. The teachers believe that these experiences make the learning more concrete or real to the students than it would be if left at the level of verbal formulation. Activities were also seen as vehicles for enabling students to "make it their own"--to process the material in a personal and active way and connect it with prior knowledge, to construct their own understanding. Finally, especially in the case of culminating activities at the ends of units, activities were seen as opportunities for students to synthesize what they had learned.

The teachers' principles and criteria for selecting activities were matched to the ones identified by Brophy and Alleman (1991) as supported in the scholarly literature on teaching and learning. Brophy and Alleman suggested that all activities should meet each of four necessary criteria (goal relevance, appropriate difficulty level, feasibility for classroom use, and cost effectiveness in time and trouble given the anticipated learning outcomes), as well as several additional criteria that are desirable if not absolutely necessary (enjoyable or at least interesting to students, adaptable to a range of student abilities, allows students to complete some whole task and reach closure or produce some product, provides a natural application of the learning). Different teachers mentioned different criteria, but what they said was compatible with the list suggested by Brophy and Alleman. Various teachers emphasized that activities should support progress toward their goals or objectives, that the difficulty level should be such that all students could achieve

success, that the activity should be feasible given the constraints under which the teacher had to operate, that the time and trouble involved in implementing an activity would have to be taken into account in considering it, that students would find it interesting and engage in it with enthusiasm, that it would help them to pull together the learning or result in some product, or that it was naturally suited to the content (discussion of the application of rules or values, map work for applications of learning about directions and maps, role play to apply learning about interpersonal problem solving or handling of emergencies by calling 9-1-1). In addition, the primary-grade teachers communicated enthusiasm for hands-on and multisensory experience activities and several teachers added the qualification that activities should not promote prejudice or stereotypes.

The learning processes that teachers emphasized in their choice of activities were focused around oral and written discourse, simulation and role play, artwork and construction projects, and development of portfolios of products created in response to the assignments made during a curriculum unit. Oral discourse was mentioned as important by all of the teachers, and written discourse by all except the first-grade teachers whose students were still learning the fundamentals of writing. The teachers differed in the forms of written communication that they favored, with some emphasizing written reports of the results of inquiry or research activities but others favoring more "applied language arts" assignments such as biographical book reports or writing letters while pretending to be a person involved in some important historical event or era. All but one of the teachers emphasized artwork and construction projects (murals, dioramas) as important processes for promoting learning (i.e., not just as activities that their students enjoyed). The teachers who placed the most emphases on these processes were those who believed that multisensory

experiences were important for deepening students' understandings. Whatever the particular processes favored by individual teachers, they all emphasized the importance of open-ended tasks that allowed their students opportunities to express themselves creatively, and they all disparaged the value of fill-in-the-blank worksheets and other closed-ended tasks that require students to supply highly specific and disconnected bits of information.

All of the teachers do at least some across-subjects integration, viewing it as a desirable thing so long as it supports progress toward their major goals and objectives. They emphasize natural forms of integration that would occur anyway in good social studies teaching (use of mathematics in graphing social studies data, use of children's literature that relates to social studies topics, writing assignments that incorporate language arts principles but are designed to develop social studies knowledge). They do not seek to integrate for its own sake, independently of their larger goals and objectives; nor do they distort the social studies curriculum in order to integrate social studies into language arts or to make it conform to some overall theme for the month or the year.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that they were identified to us as exemplary for their social studies teaching, these teachers think in terms of integrating other subjects into their social studies teaching rather than in terms of covering social studies by integrating it within language arts or something else. Their integration activities have the effect of expanding the scope and power of their social studies curricula. The opposite approach to integration, which involves attempts to "cover" social studies by integrating it into language arts or into a whole language, "integrated day" curriculum, tends to produce a spotty and trite social studies curriculum that is not likely to accomplish major social education goals (Alleman & Brophy, in press).

Assessment and Evaluation

1. Do you assess students' entry level of knowledge about unit topics as you begin units? If so, how do you make such assessments and how do you use the information in teaching the units? Explain.

2. Do you assess progress during units? If so, how? Do you adjust your teaching in response to the assessment information? Explain.

3. At the end of a unit, how do you assess the extent to which you have accomplished your unit goals with the class as a whole? Why do you prefer this method to other methods?

4. How do you assess the performance of individual students to provide a basis for accountability and grading? Why do you prefer this approach to alternatives?

5. Do you try to assess progress toward general goals that cut across units? If so, give examples of such goals and how you assess such progress.

6. What would your students tell me if I asked them in June what were the most important things they learned in social studies this year?

Teacher 1A. No information (missing transcripts)

Teacher 1B. Beginning a unit, I use KWL to assess prior knowledge. During, I use oral questioning and try to keep track of participation and quality of responses, because this is a basis for grading. We don't use tests at this grade level. I do quick reviews to make sure that students have gotten what I was trying to teach. At the end, I don't do official or formal evaluation. Testing is not appropriate at this grade level and I don't have time to do individual interviews. It would be nice to be able to do that or have an aide who could, but it is not feasible. The nearest thing I have to a test is a written review activity that I do at the end of the map unit to see if students can answer questions about maps. Depending on the unit, there may be a culminating activity that provides assessment information as well, but the main purpose is not assessment.

I assess individuals for grading by keeping track of the frequency of their participation and the quality of their responses to my oral questions, as

well as whether they take initiative to bring in things from home relevant to the unit or to respond to my suggestions about following up what we are learning. Grading is at four levels: consistently meets objectives, meets them most of the time, meets them some of the time, or meets them not at all. For social studies, they are graded on activity and discussion, understanding the subject matter, and making an effort/having a good attitude. Each of these is graded on the four-point scale. Typically, this class gets about one-third top grade, one-third second grade, and one-third third grade. I don't recall giving 4s in social studies.

Grading is a problem because I don't have concrete evidence that I can show to parents when I speak to them. Assessment is important and I would like to do it better, but I don't see how to do it without having someone else interview students or handle the class while I did. Written tests are not the answer at this grade level.

I don't have specific assessments or record keeping on more general goals. We do work on interpersonal and problem-solving skills throughout the year and grade them on the report card, but there is no specific assessment on it.

First graders' concept of time is still such that they wouldn't remember back for a long time. They probably would tell you something about the unit they are working on now or maybe the one we just finished. I don't know if they would talk about big ideas. Ability differences would be involved. The class next door would give you better answers than my class would, even though I teach both classes. I think they could name the units, or at least come up with a fact or something they remember from the unit. It might not be knowledge as such--it might be memory of an experience or something that was personal for them. Activities they did or something they found out such as that

they were the smallest baby in the class. If you asked about Alaska, they could tell you the project they worked on but you probably would have to press for information or conclusions. They probably wouldn't give you a paragraph's worth of "Alaska is our biggest state and it's far north and it's cold . . . ," but they could give you some of these facts if you asked leading questions. For Thanksgiving, I hope they could give you a summary statement saying something about how everything you see at Thanksgiving time isn't true or that another name for Indians is Native Americans or that not all Indians run around with headdresses and leather skins. If you asked them specifically for the story of the first Thanksgiving, they probably could respond.

Teacher 2A. At the beginning, I don't give pretests but we sit down as a group and talk about the topic. I ask what they know about it and solicit responses from everyone. During the unit, assessment is informal. I observe them and monitor their written work to discover if several of them have obviously missed the point or need to ask questions about it. A lot of experience lies behind much of what I teach but if it is something new, I will need to assess for whether the topic is suitable for the students, whether I seem to be explaining it in words that they can understand. With this age group, that is usually very obvious. On activities, I will go with student preferences up to a point. Some groups work better with discussion and pencil-and-paper activities, but others need more hands-on activities. At the ends of units I don't assess formally through tests because I don't see them as appropriate for second grade. We might do some culminating activity where they would have choices, such as reading a book on the topic and making a report about it or working as a group to construct a diorama, but that is really a culminating activity rather than an evaluation. I assess whether I have met my goals more through ongoing evaluation as the unit unfolds.

For grading, we use excellent, satisfactory, and needs to improve. I don't use the latter. Instead, I put an asterisk on their report cards and say that they are working on this area. We also grade effort as high or low. Most kids get graded high in effort unless they really go out of their way to require a low grade. I grade achievement according to how much they contribute to discussions, their daily work, and whether they bring in materials from home or pick out a book to read. For assignments, I use stars or "very goods." Activities are selected so that students should be successful if they put forth effort, so differences in grades on report cards are based more on differences in levels of initiative and effort than on differences in quality of product.

I don't try to assess progress toward general goals that cut across units.

If you questioned my students at the end of the year, they might not respond directly to the term "social studies" because I don't use it a lot. I refer to "the map unit" or whatever I think students would not necessarily understand some of the more subtle units like appreciating likenesses of people around the world, because they might not realize that they had been studying those things deliberately. I don't use the term "social studies" when we talk about feelings and how they might react to situations or listening to one another. But they would respond if you asked if they had learned anything about feelings. So, you would have to ask them about the key terms we talked about. For maps, about two-thirds could tell you about the cardinal directions and find a spot on a map if you gave them the coordinates. They would know about the compass rose. They might or might not know scale. For old-fashioned days, they would recall the activities and probably talk more about what they did than what they learned, but at least some of it will stick with them and they will learn more the next time the topic spirals around. I favor the spiraling

tion over attempts to teach everything just once, because you might miss people who weren't ready to learn that thoroughly the one time you taught it.

Teacher 2B. At the beginning, I almost always try to assess prior knowledge. We make charts and every child has an opportunity to say what he or she knows about the subject. I keep the chart so that as the unit progresses we can cross out the questions we have answered and talk about changes we might make in some of our prior knowledge statements. For shorter units I might not develop a chart or go into as much detail, but I will conclude by reviewing prior knowledge and how ideas have changed from before. I don't give formal or written pretests because second graders do not yet have strong enough reading skills.

During units, I refer to prior knowledge charts, as described above. I take notes for future reference as I go along, such as that I didn't prepare the students well enough for a movie. As misconceptions come up I address them but do not change my total unit plan in order to get into them in great depth. Occasionally I will use little tests as part of the assessment, or short writing assignments.

At the end, we go back to the prior knowledge chart and review and talk about it. Have we changed our ideas? How do we feel about that? It's more subjective than objective. I don't see paper-and-pencil tests as appropriate at this grade, so I test through oral questioning and written assignments. I don't always know what each individual child knows or doesn't know, but I know how the group as a whole is doing and have at least a general sense of each individual's levels of knowledge, effort, and initiative.

One criterion for grading is participation, both in lessons and in projects. When children work in groups, I circulate and take notes on their involvement. The grades are excellent, satisfactory, and needs to improve.

The few who get graded excellent add a lot of detail when they are explaining what we are working on. The ones graded satisfactory show that they understand and recall information and maybe do some reasoning with it, but do not go too far beyond. The ones graded as needing improvement need a lot of prompting and maybe can only give one- or two-word answers.

I do not assess progress toward general goals that cut across units.

If you asked my students at the end of the year, you would have to make sure that they understood what the words "social studies" meant. They would talk a lot about cooperative learning and about some of the units, especially about memorable activities that they particularly enjoyed. They would emphasize activities more than what they learned. The news in the morning, projects, field trips. They would remember making Indian longhouses or tepees, but might not remember learning that different tribes lived in different kinds of homes. That is more abstract. They would remember visits to museums, the old school, other things that touch on many of their sensory areas. You have to look at what children can learn at different ages. We study Indians at this level and they study them again at fourth grade, but with a different point of view and different objectives. We just introduce the topic but they get into more detail with much more knowledge. We introduce them to basic ideas about history in ways that they can understand meaningfully, using units on Native Americans and life in Michigan at the turn of the century. We know from experience what kinds of activities and field trips are appropriate for second graders, and they fit with this content. I don't think that approaching the history of Michigan by talking about the state's part in the Civil War would be appropriate for second grade because the students don't have the background knowledge or attention spans for that yet. You have to stick to topics that are amenable to 20-minute rather than 40-minute or longer lessons. We're not

trying to teach chronological history but just help them understand about how people lived in the past and how hard life might have been at the time.

Teacher 3. At the beginning, I do informal assessment. It might be written or just brainstorming or "tell me what your neighbor thinks the prime meridian is." Some text series come with pretests but I never use them. It is worth taking time to assess, because kids often know more than you realize or perhaps don't know anything at all. It depends on the group. I haven't used KWL, but I can see where it would be valuable. In a sense, I do use part of it because I often ask them to write down or say what they know about a topic. I don't usually ask them what they want to learn. During units, I assess informally through projects or assignments. If I see someone is really not understanding, I might ask resource teachers to help with that concept or skill. If the whole class is bogged down, I know that I have to come at the topic in a different way.

I do assess at the end of units because children are evaluated for report cards. Assessment varies with the objectives. For skills, probably paper-and-pencil tasks such as drawing a map that shows what a map key is and includes a compass rose. I rarely use multiple-choice tests, even though they come with the texts. The questions at the ends of units are better than the ones at the ends of lessons because they are open-ended ones that allow students to apply their knowledge.

In grading a test, I use percentage scores. For projects or assignments, I use looser criteria. If a child has general knowledge and shares constantly during discussions but is limited verbally, I will take this into account. Also the effort that they put into activities such as building dioramas. Grading runs from letters A through E, with 90% and above being A, 80% and above B, and so on. However, we are going to change this year, partly because of

whole-language philosophies, to VG for very good, S for satisfactory, and N for needs improvement.

For goals that cut across units, I do try to track reading and writing skills. Also developing abilities to think critically, get along with others, accept individual responsibility. However, I don't assess these things formally.

Last year, during the last week of school we had the students write about the school year to two friends who had moved during the year. The thing that came up most often was the trip to the Huckleberry Railroad, about how much fun it was, how they stepped back in time and saw kids in school "back then," and talked about their foods and about whether they had to do recycling. They also talked about going to the capitol. They were impressed with the building but disappointed because they didn't get to see one of their representatives. They also remembered the trip to the township where they learned about how the town came to get its name among other things. There was no mention of latitude or longitude, but I did see enjoyment of mapping their bedrooms and designing them. They enjoyed a game of moving people around the room to reach a goal using five or fewer directions that included terms such as north or northwest, but no one mentioned that game in their letters. Nor did they mention the Native American center, but that was the first trip of the year. So, mostly they remembered field trips. But if I asked them specifically, I would hope that they also would have ideas about getting along well with one another, being responsible, being a good citizen.

Teacher 5A. I used to give pretests and feel that they are valid, but I find an unbelievably wide breadth of differences in background knowledge in the students in my classes, and gathering data about these differences can be more discouraging than helpful. In any case, I can find out quickly through

discussions who has a lot of background knowledge and who hasn't, so I don't think I lose much by not doing formal preassessments. In effect, I have to teach as if the students were all at about the same level of entry knowledge, even though I know that they aren't. There is no time to determine individual differences and attempt to remediate them before going on with the unit.

During a unit, I adjust my teaching constantly because I watch and listen to the students to see how many are responding to what I am saying. I may need to spice it up or ask questions. I don't always call on people who have their hands up. Sometimes I pull names out of a box or use their assigned numbers and call on them by number. This avoids having the class taken over by the more talkative ones and it involves the ones who wouldn't participate otherwise. When things are not going well, I know that I have to reteach, come at it a different way, or let it go because it really isn't worth it. Maybe spiral back to it later. I also frequently ask them to explain their answers or opinions, pushing for rationales. You learn to read your kids and pick up when they are not acting like themselves and maybe faking it.

At the ends of units, I use different assessment methods. I'll test maybe every five or six units with a standardized book-type test. I'll use a quiz bowl or some kind of culminating activity. I'll sometimes give them a blank piece of paper and ask an essay question that is a little off the wall, along with two or three things on the main concepts I emphasized. Sometimes I will have them suggest appropriate test questions to me, giving them a fixed number of questions that they think would be quality test for the unit, or, we might have an open-book test. I like to use different methods, any that will allow me to assess whether students have picked up on the main things I tried to teach.

I grade using a combination of a straight scale with opportunities for bonus questions. With some kids, I will interview them and allow them to talk about what they might know that might cause me to add to their score. With special needs children I might come up with a variety of other things, but they still would have to give me the information. I have minimum expectations that everyone must achieve. It is easier for me because we are nongraded and I don't have to assign letter grades. If I did, I would emphasize effort along with achievement and some students who scored lower on a test might get higher grades than some who scored higher.

General goals that cut across units include fairness ethics and the ability to put oneself in the point of view of another person. I am always emphasizing democracy, making decisions, recognizing that events and decision opportunities involve trade-offs because you rarely get instant satisfaction and you need to struggle for things that are worthwhile. That we all have responsibilities. However, these are not assessed formally.

At the end of the year, I would expect my students to say that history wasn't as boring as they thought it would be and that they learned things that were interesting. That they learned to question, could enjoy their heritage a little more than before, could appreciate differing points of view, and had learned how to support their own points of view.

Teacher 5B. I preassess sporadically. Sometimes KWL, depending on the unit. You don't always have to do it formally; you can lead a discussion on the topic to determine what information they know. I keep track of who is proficient in what areas and assign special projects or ask for additional help from the resource teacher accordingly. I also know how heavily or lightly to go over subtopics based on this information.

During units, I use spot quizzes and games such as Jeopardy to review vocabulary words. I also use a red light-green light game in which they hold up green to signify agreement with a statement and red to signify disagreement. This is a way to get responses from all class members simultaneously. Sometimes we do the chapter check-up questions or the unit review tests.

At the end of a unit, I usually use the unit test from the text, sometimes with a review first. I prefer that because it's already been done and gives you an idea of what the textbook writers think are important points to remember. I also use it as a teaching tool, going over it afterwards to discuss it. Also, it's preparation for next year when they will begin getting letter grades. We give percentage grades here rather than letter grades, but we do want them to acquire test-taking skills.

Grades are excellent, satisfactory, or needs improvement. I don't transfer test scores directly into grades because I also take into account effort and factors such as test anxiety. Also the amount and quality of participation in class and work on assignments.

For goals that cut across units, I require a lot of writing that includes personalizing and integrating, but I do not assess formally.

At the end of the year, average students probably would tell you about the land bridge, Native Americans, Pilgrims, the Revolutionary War, westward movement, the Civil War. World War I and the Depression if we got that far. About the Revolutionary War specifically, they might be able to talk about the French and Indian War and taxation without representation as causes, about the *Declaration of Independence*, and about the *Constitution* as a result.

Discussion

Except for Teacher 5B, the teachers emphasize informal over formal assessment. None of them use tests to preassess prior knowledge when beginning a unit, but all of them preassess informally through oral KWL exercises or similar elicitation and discussion of prior knowledge about the topic. Teacher 2B does this relatively formally by developing a prior knowledge chart and returning to it at the end of the unit to assess learning and invite students to revise any earlier statements that might have been mistaken. The other teachers do not follow through on the prior knowledge exercise to this extent, but they use the information gleaned from it to adjust their expectations about the relative emphasis that different subtopics will need for this year's class and to identify misconceptions that will need to be addressed during the unit.

Assessment during the unit is primarily informal, based on teachers' monitoring of students' responses to questions, contributions to discussions, and performance on assignments. A couple of the teachers supplement this with tests or test-like review activities.

Assessment at the ends of units varies by grade level. In the primary grades, the emphasis is on culminating activities designed to encourage students to synthesize and apply what they have learned, not on testing for purposes of assigning grades. The third- and fifth-grade teachers, however, do test (or in the case of Teacher 5A, sometimes assess in other ways) to provide a basis for grading. Teachers 3 and 5A use combinations of assessment methods that include some but not many of the tests supplied with their textbooks, but Teacher 5B uses the supplied tests heavily. She believes that these tests focus on what the textbook writers believe is important for her students to learn.

All of the teachers seek to assess their own general effectiveness with the class as a whole, although they do so by monitoring students' daily contributions to lessons and work on assignments in addition to or instead of their scores on formal tests. Some make more attempts than others to monitor progress toward general goals that cut across curriculum units, but none of them assess such progress formally.

Only one of the seven teachers assigned letter grades on the report cards, and her district was planning to abandon this practice and shift to more general designations such as "excellent," "satisfactory," and "needs to improve." The teachers believed that an emphasis on formal testing and scale-based grading is inappropriate for elementary students. Even the fifth-grade teachers talked about testing and grading more in terms of preparing their students for what they will face in middle school than in terms of any inherent value that testing and grading might have in supporting student learning. Their preferences concerning forms of assessment were similar to their preferences concerning activities, tending to favor tasks that allowed students the opportunity to creatively synthesize and apply what they had learned over tasks that called for them to supply answers to closed-ended questions.

In assigning grades, the teachers spoke of taking into account participation in lessons and investment of effort in activities and assignments, not just quality of performance. This was especially true of the first- and second-grade teachers. The third- and fifth-grade teachers placed more emphasis on the role of test scores and quality of performance on assignments in determining grades, but they also spoke of responding to individual differences by providing extra credit opportunities, arranging for special testing of special-needs students, and taking into account participation and effort along with performance quality in determining report card grades. The teachers'

emphasis was on protecting self-concepts and encouraging students to do as much as they could do, not on determining who had succeeded and who had failed.

In predicting what their students would tell us if asked at the end of the school year what the most important things they had learned about in social studies had been, the teachers agreed that their students would emphasize memorable activities and experiences rather than abstract concepts or generalizations. In other words, they predicted that their students would talk about what they had done, not what they had learned, emphasizing salient events such as field trips, special activities, or activities that had some unique meaning to them personally.

Some of the teachers were puzzled, even troubled, by this question. They noted that one can only expect so much from elementary school children asked to summarize what they have learned across a school year in their own words, that some students would not be sure which of the things they had done were included under the term "social studies," or that one cannot always teach everything that one would like to teach to a given student at a given time, so that it is necessary to spiral back to topics periodically. Still, the teachers expressed confidence that most of their students would indicate that they had learned the major ideas that the teachers were emphasizing during the school year if they were asked questions that were specific enough to cue them to the appropriate learning domain. In other words, the students might not spontaneously remember certain ideas or generate them in response to the general question about what they had learned in social studies during the year, but they probably would respond creditably if asked specifically about, for example, the causes and consequences of the American Revolution.

As an aside, the responses of Teachers 5A and 5B to the question about what their students might emphasize as key learnings are interesting because

they are so reflective of these teachers' contrasting goal emphases. Although these two teachers are similar in many respects, the noteworthy difference between them is that Teacher 5A emphasizes critical thinking, policy issue debates, and other aspects of preparation for citizenship in a democracy in her teaching of fifth-grade U.S. history, whereas Teacher 5B places more emphasis on chronology, cause-and-effect linkages, and other aspects of the historical content itself (VanSledright, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c).

Understanding, Critical Thinking, and Decision Making

1. What does it mean to say that students understand something? Do you try to teach for understanding in social studies? If so, what aspects of your approach are included with this goal in mind?

2. What does it mean for students to think critically about what they are learning? Does your approach include features designed to teach students how to think critically about what they are learning or to provide them with opportunities for doing so? Explain.

3. Does your approach include features designed to teach students how to make decisions or to provide them with opportunities for doing so? Explain.

Teacher 1A. No information (due to missing transcript)

Teacher 1B. Students show understanding by responding to my questions. Usually, if they don't understand much, they don't say much in response. My questions are usually comprehensive and varied enough to enable me to determine that they really understand and are not just repeating something they have memorized. Where I suspect that certain kids are mimicking without understanding, I question them in various ways and come back to them periodically to make sure that they understand. I also periodically review things taught earlier which also involves checking for understanding. I want to see evidence that they understand the main ideas, not just an isolated fact or two. I try to check for understanding as I go along, especially when introducing new ideas. I will show some examples and we will talk about them. Often I will have them do

something with the information and then check again to see if they understand it. I direct questions to the class as a whole and give them time to think before calling on someone, and I don't always call on kids who have raised their hands. You can use tests with older kids, but it has to be oral at this age.

We try to get critical thinking into all aspects of the curriculum--a lot of compare and contrast as they look, listen, or read. We encourage them to ask questions about things they don't understand and to bring in related information they have heard at home or seen on TV. Critical thinking comes up a lot in our discussions about interpersonal problem solving. Rather than just tell students what to do, we ask them to evaluate what happened, consider whether or not they have made good choices, and talk about how they could have handled the situation differently.

Lots of decision making is involved in our problem solving and interpersonal skills teaching too, and this goes along with the Michigan Health Model. They also do decision making as a class or in small groups--narrowing down choices and then voting, with majority rule. They may have to choose or decide something such as how to answer a question or construct some response or product. There is also a lot of debate and ultimate decision making within groups about how to proceed with tasks. In our Thanksgiving unit, we ask them to think about if they had to go home and pick up from their house only the things that they could put into a trunk and move to a new country like the Pilgrims did, what would they put in the trunk? We talk about safety decisions too, choices they make and their probable consequences (or actual ones in the case of things that have actually happened).

Teacher 2A. I do emphasize teaching for understanding, especially for topics that I introduce at my grade level. I judge understanding by whether

they can produce a given assignment. If we have been teaching about the compass rose, can they show me the compass rose on maps, draw one and put the directions in the right places? Not understanding would be learning to say the four directions but not being able to answer correctly if I asked them what direction is behind them when they are facing north. At this stage, you often have to ask such application questions that require them to do something in order to assess their understanding, because purely verbal explanation questions might be beyond them due to vocabulary limitations. To me, the fact that kids can memorize something and not understand it is the best argument for not using a textbook at this level. It is too easy to look at words, memorize them, yet not know what you are reading about.

I also emphasize getting them to think critically, and this is easier to do with social studies activities than most others. Comparing and contrasting--how was this the same, was it different? Schooling in China versus here. Another way is to have them draw a picture or create a mural depicting things we have been learning about, and seeing if they have understood accurately. Can they look at a photo of a place and talk about whether or not this would be a good place to live or how one would live in that place? Occasionally we get into the kinds of critical thinking that appear more at higher grade levels, such as talking about advertisements on television. We don't often have debates on social policy issues, although occasionally something comes up in discussion. Students don't seem to be much interested in politics or elections yet. This year, an incident in a story about fishing with a gill net led to a long discussion about the legality and especially the fairness of this practice--fairness to the fish more so than to other people who fish without using nets! Some of the kids wanted to protest to government leaders.

Decision making is included daily, in lots of ways. Choices about what you will do with your free time, which center to go to, how to rearrange the room, how to design a soft drink that would be popular. In the map unit, choosing between a listening activity and a drawing activity. But we don't do decision making about public issues. I also use an old values exploration unit put together by a professor at the university. It involves "dilemma cards" that present dilemmas such as what you should do if you are playing ball in the neighborhood and accidentally break a window and all of the other kids run away, or whether or not you should cut a friend into a line.

Teacher 2B. Understanding means being able to paraphrase what has been said or to perform a task in ways that show understanding. I do teach for understanding and try to come up with projects that will help children learn. Also, cooperative learning allows them to talk more about what they are learning and begin to evaluate themselves. I have been redesigning lessons to allow for more of that communication with peers. I also try to cue them to learn actively, such as by reviewing prior knowledge and giving them questions of things to look for when they watch a movie, then having them work cooperatively afterwards.

Thinking critically means that if they have bits of information, they can put the bits together to solve problems or ask more sophisticated questions. Sometimes I can tell that they have been thinking about a topic because of the kinds of questions they ask. We also give them social problem-solving lessons and questions or problems to address in cooperative groups.

We talk a lot about decision making in reference to their behavior in the classroom or at lunch or recess. Also, in our mapping units we had them design cities of tomorrow and make decisions about where to put apartment buildings, malls, and so on.

Teacher 3. If they understand, they can apply it in some way such as in a hypothetical situation. This can be a problem in social studies because we teach so much at this grade and because there are so many different opinions brought from home or wherever. Especially in areas of getting along with one another and acting responsibly, some students will disagree with what we are trying to teach.

Thinking critically could be evaluating your learning and maybe applying it. Analyzing what you are learning and making judgments or predictions, drawing conclusions, noting cause and effect. Individually or in groups, I might ask them to respond to questions such as telling three ways that something might be done differently or explaining what changed from before to after some event. This is especially important in units that emphasize value judgments (government, current events, getting along with others).

I give them choices and allow them to make decisions about how they are going to work in the community of the classroom. Also, they often make curriculum-related decisions working in groups to decide how to think about a topic or to construct a response to a task.

Teacher 5A. To show understanding, they have to explain it in their own words, not just mimic a textbook--explain it to someone else and have that person be able to understand their explanation. I try to teach for understanding in social studies all the time. I give validity to their comments, making it clear that their opinion can be just as valid as mine or what is in the textbook. I encourage them to give reasons and add other information they may possess. Often they interpret my question in a different way than I intended, and if I realize that, I may say that I hadn't thought about it in that way and compliment their thinking. I also ask them to apply what they learn, to extend

it to something else and make connections, to support arguments. I continually ask them questions that among other things check for understanding.

To stimulate critical thinking you question them a lot, asking whether this was a good idea and why or what might have been done in the circumstances. Communicate that you expect them to think critically and value their opinions. Show that you really want their opinion, not just some particular answer, and that you will listen carefully to what they say. Sometimes play the devil's advocate to help bring out their thinking and make them see different points of view on an issue. I will ask questions to get them to clarify their thinking: Tell me what you meant. How is this similar to what you said? Can you justify what this person just said? Sometimes you reach a consensus and sometimes you don't, and sometimes they will disagree with my opinions. I am able to push for critical thinking in these ways because I emphasize depth over breadth, teaching five or six things well rather than trying to cover everything.

I emphasize not only making decisions but validating the decisions that they make constantly anyway. Concerning what information to include in a debate, for example, I push them to decide what information is important, what questions would be good test questions for this material. Thoughtful decision making is a main theme in my room and it extends to things like planning what to do at recess or a class party. I often require them to debate and develop specific plans. I try to teach them how to debate and negotiate, how to fight fair. I don't know if I would appreciate me if I were one of their parents. We also do decision making and role-play things concerning peer relationships and social behavior, how they might respond when a peer suggests doing something illegal or immoral. Decision making is important preparation for life, and I reject elements in the community that would have schools stay way from it.

Teacher 5B. Understanding means to own it, internalize it. I try to teach for understanding by giving varied assignments that require them to reconstruct what the book says, so it has to become a part of them. They have to recognize that what happened was a real event, not just a story. They need to have that sense of roots and patriotism that connects themselves today with past events. I think letter writing (in the role of historical figures) and similar assignments help with this internalization. Talking about the *Constitution* and government by the people, decision making about the *Bill of Rights*. Helping them to see that the Constitution is a living document that affects their lives today. Work in cooperative groups to list things that they do all day long and talk about how these are related to laws (packaging of cereals, crossing the street, going to school, riding the bus).

In thinking critically, they have to evaluate the events they learn about--what happened and how does this connect to today's value systems? Do we have revolutions today, or could we? I try to get them to think about the reasons for studying history (learning about their roots), the traditions behind our form of government, the different points of view about the Revolution and other historical events, social issues relating to the Constitution (such as gun control). Some lessons focus on getting them to think critically such as the one on taking their money away and other tax issues. In the Civil War unit, one on slavery issues.

A lot of decision making is involved in these same lessons and activities. I don't go into great detail about the decision-making process itself in social studies because that is done in conjunction with reproductive health. But we do refer back to it, including comparing personal decision making with governmental decision making.

Discussion

All of the teachers say that they attempt to teach for understanding and to monitor their success as they go along. They say that when students understand something, they can explain it successfully in their own words and can use it successfully in application tasks. The teachers report trying to promote and assess understanding by asking students a variety of questions, engaging them in activities and assignments that call for application rather than mere replication of what they have learned, and by engaging them in teacher-student and student-student discourse that encourages them to construct and communicate their own understandings and "make it their own."

These teachers also engage their students in a great deal of critical thinking, although the forms of critical thinking that they emphasize are somewhat different than the forms emphasized in most scholarly writings about social studies. Scholarly writings tend to emphasize forms of critical thinking that are used in evaluating public policy positions: assessing the relevance and logical consistency of an argument, detecting bias, determining the degree to which its empirical claims are backed by credible evidence, and so on. These elementary teachers did not make much mention of these forms of critical thinking that focus on policy debates. However, they did emphasize other forms of critical thinking: analyzing something that one has learned about and noting how it compares and contrasts to other things, evaluating whether the solution to a problem used by a person or group studied was an effective solution, generating ideas about how the problem might have been solved more effectively or about how one might have acted oneself if faced with the same situation.

Similarly, these teachers engage their students in decision making, but usually about personal and social choices rather than civic or social policy

choices. The students make decisions about classroom rules or what will be done during special events, about how they will manage their independent learning time in class, about which alternative activities they will engage in, or about how to handle real or hypothetical social problem situations. The teachers also engage the students in making choices that involve applications of what they are learning, such as what they would pack in their trunks if they were pioneers, how they would design cities of tomorrow, or whether the American Revolution was justified. Teacher 5B also engages her students in some critical thinking and decision making relating to social policy issues as they relate to the Constitution.

The emphasis that these teachers place on teaching for understanding and on stimulating critical thinking and decision making by their students is an important part of what makes their social studies teaching exemplary. It is these aspects of higher order thinking and application that enable social studies teaching and learning to function as significant preparation for citizenship rather than just as teacher coverage and student memorizing of disconnected content.

Social Studies Curriculum Units

At this point in the interview, the teachers were asked to talk through each of their social studies units, explaining what they did and showing or referring to content sources, props, and activities. They were asked to address the following questions for each unit:

1. What are your main goals in teaching this unit? What knowledge, skills, values/attitudes, or dispositions do you want the students to acquire as a result of it?

2. Is the unit built around certain key ideas? If so, what are these?

3. What do the students usually know about the unit's content even before you begin to teach it? Do the students usually have some accurate prior knowledge of key ideas or other topics in the unit that you can build on? If so, give examples and tell how you build on this knowledge.

4. Are there some key ideas or topics about which students usually have little or no prior knowledge, so that you have to help them develop an initial idea? If so, give examples and explain how you help them to develop initial ideas.

5. Are there key ideas or other topics about which students are likely to have misconceptions or other prior "knowledge" that is distorted or incorrect? If so, give examples and explain how you attempt to address and correct these misconceptions.

6. Are there any noteworthy activities or assignments included in this unit?

Teacher 1A. Teacher 1A taught four social studies units: a short unit on "myself" and a short unit on "family" taught at the beginning of the year, a short unit on the state of Michigan taught in May during Michigan Week, and her teaching on geography that took up the rest of the year. This corresponded to the four units called for in her district's social studies guidelines for first grade, except that her geography teaching went well beyond the relatively modest map and globe skills described in the guidelines.

The "myself" label for the first unit appeared to be a carryover from tradition, because it did not emphasize the self except for a book that the children make about themselves and the things that they like or that make them unique as individuals. Instead, it was about assuming responsibility for school property and classroom materials (participating in the making of classroom rules, understanding the reasons for rules and that rules can be changed, understanding that adults are responsible for enforcing rules and that an individual's rights may conflict with others' rights) and developing appreciation of values and of the ethnic backgrounds and cultures of others (identify things that people value, respect the rights of others to present different

points of view). At the beginning of the school year, Teacher 1A explains and models rules and expectations and engages the students in role play concerning how the rules should be followed. Throughout the year there is an attempt to follow up and reinforce by giving "I'm so Proud" awards to students who are noticed following the rules conscientiously or going out of their way to do something helpful for others or for the school. They might also be sent to the principal's office to receive various certificates and awards (partly to reinforce desired behavior and partly to attack the misconception that being called to the principal's office means that the child has done something wrong). There might even be a telephone call to the home to notify parents of their child's good behavior.

The values and multicultural aspect of the "myself" unit is not taught formally using any special materials. Instead, an effort is made throughout the year to honor diversity and to invite the children or their parents to show and tell things about their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The "mystery country of the week" activities that the teacher does throughout the year as part of her geography teaching provide other opportunities to introduce the children to diversity.

The "family" unit teaches that people everywhere live in families (in many different kinds of homes in many places), that families vary in size and structure (and that these change), that different family members play different roles, and that families have different customs and traditions. Teacher 1A believes that her students already know much of this material, although she feels the need to emphasize that there is no "right" type of family, that there may be one parent or two, that there may be grandparents or other relatives living in the home, and so on. In this unit she uses a lot of literature, reading stories about family living, including one about a grandmother who used

to take care of a little boy who now is older and taking care of the grandmother. Students also make books about their families, illustrating them with drawings, and bring in photos and other family artifacts to do show and tell presentations about their families.

In the Michigan unit, she teaches recognition of the word "Michigan," naming the state bird, flower, rock, and tree, understanding what a peninsula is, and beginning to recognize the names of major Michigan locations such as Detroit and Lansing. She uses maps and photos for this instruction, and the children make Michigan books explaining and illustrating facts about the state. There are maps calling for labeling of the two peninsulas and the lakes around them, material on various state symbols, illustrations of foods that come from Michigan, locations of major cities and the state capital on the map, and the Michigan flag. There is also material on the different land forms represented in the state. The students construct a diorama illustrating some of these land forms and as a culminating activity, they have a Michigan breakfast featuring foods from the state. The students sometimes forget to include the upper peninsula in their drawings of Michigan and they have trouble keeping the hierarchical relationships straight (cities within the state within the nation).

The geography unit includes the district's map and globe skills objectives: understanding the purposes of maps and globes, identifying the country as the United States and knowing that it is made up of 50 states that vary in size, understanding the purpose of a capital, understanding how to use a map key and to locate the cardinal directions. Teacher 1A teaches all of the states and capitals and many of the nations in the world, although she is not seeking mastery but exposure and creation of interest in geography. Most of the students do not know much about maps or globes when the year begins, but they learn eagerly and easily. There is a lot of work with globes and maps,

including maps that students can write or trace on and then erase later. The students compile a book containing a page showing a map and giving factual information about each of the states, as well as a book containing information about each of the "mystery" countries that they "visit" during the year.

Along with many different maps, the teacher provides books illustrating the flags and symbols connected with the various states, photos and other materials from National Geographic, and posters showing flags and cultural scenes. One of the Nystrom books includes photographs and information on each of 12 countries, including how one would count to 10 in that language, a recipe for a dish from the country, and so on. There is a large, panoramic view from each country showing, for example, a downtown scene in Nigeria, a ranch scene in Argentina, and an urban scene in China. She also uses large laminated floor maps on which children can use markers to outline the mystery country of the week or the state they are studying at the time.

Many of the maps and globes are simplified ones suited for use with young children. There are also blank flag outlines that the children can color in to make copies of national or state flags, as well as blank or partially filled in map outlines. When she can find appropriate stories or books, the teacher will read to the students about the country and show some of the artifacts that she has collected. At the end of the year, the students show what they have learned to their parents by singing the "Fifty Nifty United States" song and by pointing to countries on the map. A local store donates a cake shaped like the United States and the students get certificates of accomplishment for what they learned in geography.

Teacher 1B. Teacher 1B has seven strands to her social studies teaching. Three are units that are taught at particular times of the year: history of Thanksgiving; school, home, and personal safety; and families and feelings.

The other four are strands that continue throughout the year: interpersonal skills; problem solving and decision making; geography; and current events.

The interpersonal skills strand is developed from six lessons in the Michigan Health Model intended to develop awareness of similarities and differences in people, knowledge of terms for feelings (calm, surprised, happy, upset), interacting respectfully with others, cooperating, and following school and classroom rules. In practice, this means a lot of time spent getting students accustomed to working with others, being part of a group, and behaving in accordance with school norms, even if these differ from what is acceptable at home. Much of this is traditional socialization to school and the student role, although Teacher 1B reports that the district has placed extra emphasis on interpersonal respect and cooperation lately at the behest of employers who say that they would like to see more of this emphasis.

In addition to hearing explanations of appropriate behavior from the teacher, the students engage in role playing of hypothetical social situations. They also attend an assembly in which they observe demonstrations involving puppets that represent various types of handicapped children, designed to teach appropriate behavior toward these students. In addition, throughout the year the teacher speaks privately to individual students about inappropriate behavior, seeking to reinforce the norms and expectations articulated as part of this curriculum strand.

The interpersonal problem-solving and decision-making strand is also based on lessons from the Michigan Health Model. These lessons use story boards to present social situations and teach students a seven-step process to follow (analyzing the situation to identify your own feelings and those of others; thinking back to determine what may have caused the problem; deciding what the main problem is; establishing a goal that represents a desirable

solution to the problem; generating and assessing ideas about how the goal might be accomplished; choosing the best among these alternatives; and then implementing the solution, refining it if necessary). The teacher leads the students through discussions of the problem-solving alternatives open to characters depicted in stories, then attempts to get them to carry over these ideas to their own lives. As in the other interpersonal unit, there is reinforcement through role-play activities and through individualized discussions with students. This model is being implemented throughout the district, so there also is reinforcement across the grades. This year her class has used the model and related discussions to address not only interpersonal problems within the class but the problem of how they can deal with older students to avoid being picked on or treated inappropriately on the playground.

The unit on families includes some material from the Michigan Health Model and other material put together by the district's social studies committee. The unit teaches respect and appreciation for family diversity, viewing different family configurations as alternative collections of people who love and care for one another. There is exposure to families around the world, to growth and change in family roles, to different family traditions. Much of the content is new to students because, although they know about their own families, they may not know about the diversity that exists in the community and the world. The students are engaged in activities that involve bringing in material or making books or displays about their families.

A family name activity involved making a display of the family name either through stitchery, doing a banner on the computer, or making a name button to wear. They did a lot of graphing to compare and contrast the frequencies of different family characteristics among the students in the room. They also labeled family origins on the world map and did time lines identifying

significant events in the lives of the students and their family members. Family books included statements about favorite things that the family likes to do, a picture of the family, favorite foods, and so on. The unit was taught two or three times a week for about two months.

The history of Thanksgiving unit focuses on the first Thanksgiving, seeking to teach not only the meaning of "Thanksgiving" and the history behind the holiday but also to attack common stereotypes and other misconceptions about Native Americans. The term "Native Americans" is taught as an alternative to "Indians," and their role in teaching the Pilgrims and making it possible for them to survive in the New World is emphasized. The unit also develops comparisons between the conditions of life at that time (prior to electricity and engine power) with life today. It is emphasized that neither the Pilgrims nor the Indians typically dressed in the ways that they are often depicted in Thanksgiving scenes, and in particular, that the Eastern Woodlands Indians who met the Pilgrims did not live in tepees, hunt buffalo, et cetera. There is also description of how the Pilgrims wanted to escape the king for religious persecution reasons, how they had to pack whatever they could fit into a trunk and cross the ocean on a relatively small ship, how they had to bring anirals and various basic supplies with them, and so on. Activities include a decision-making task in which the students pretend to be packing for the trip and have to decide what they would bring with them, making drawings of things in their own lives that they are thankful for, and a recreation of the first Thanksgiving dinner.

The safety unit is designed to develop basic safety knowledge and habits: knowing their addresses and phone numbers, how to dial 9-1-1 in emergencies, personal safety and what to do in case of physical or sexual abuse. Knowledge includes things like not taking medicine on their own, playing with matches or

frayed electrical cords, or leaning out of windows of vehicles. The fire safety aspect includes a presentation by township firefighters and taking home a safety checklist to fill out with parents. There also are exercises such as finding safety rule violations depicted in pictures, practicing 9-1-1 calls on a play phone, and role playing skits depicting safe versus unsafe handling of particular situations.

The geography unit includes understanding and creating maps (of the school or the students' bedrooms), using maps to locate particular places in the classroom or school, realizing that a map is a spatial depiction from above rather than a picture from the side, getting experience in looking at different kinds of maps and knowing what they are used for, map keys and symbols. There is an activity in which students compose their own treasure maps, including use of symbols summarized in map keys. The teacher also leads the group in filling in a large map of the classroom, asking questions and seeking consensus about which features of the room to include and how to depict them. She reinforces map and globe knowledge throughout the year by referring to maps and globes when locations come up in any subject matter.

The current events strand focuses on current events in North America, which is the continent assigned to first grade at her school for current events emphasis. This is not something done every day, but in response to things that students ask about or want to talk about in class. The major topic this year has been the Gulf War, even though it was not in North America. There was a lot f discussion of what was going on there, including reference to maps and globes. The teacher is thinking about doing current events more systematically in the future, perhaps every Friday. She would initiate more by bringing in topics (and associated props), but seeking to engage the students in discussion rather than just to tell them about what was happening. Instead of the kinds

of current events that dominate the headlines of newspapers, she would emphasize events of special interests children, such as special celebrations or parades or a rare animal born in a zoo.

Teacher 2A. The year begins with a unit on group living and appreciating diversity. It starts with exploration of the reasons why we need rules and generation of rules for the room. These begin with the three main rules for the school: Be courteous, be learning, and be safe. The unit also teaches acceptance of individuals and groups and appreciation of the contributions of various groups to the history of our nation. This aspect includes reading and reporting on famous Americans and learning about cultural diversity. Some of these readings open up ideas that are new to most of the students, such as slavery.

The unit on groups and group living includes some study of neighborhoods, including the local neighborhood. There are discussions of why people choose to live where they do, key features of the neighborhood and the local community, discussions of responsibilities that the children have in different groups in which they are members (their families, the class, scout troops, athletic teams), and presentations by parents on cultural customs.

For her map unit, she uses a kit from the Society for Visual Education. The kit includes four filmstrips that introduce a character called Map Man, who teaches about maps and about the cardinal directions. He zooms away from the earth and looks back at it, helping students to realize that a globe is a model of the earth. Then he teaches that a map is simply a picture of the earth, handier to carrier around than a globe. However, this is review. These second graders enter knowing that the world is round and that people don't fall off of it because of something called gravity. The teacher also uses posters showing

the solar system and demonstrates the earth's rotation and the cycle of day and night using flashlights and the globe.

Map work includes using the map to determine (and sometimes graph) the distances between cities, as well as finding cities using their coordinates. These skills are introduced during the map unit and then reinforced later during the unit on Michigan. The coordinates used at this grade level are letter-number coordinates along the edges of the map rather than latitude and longitude readings.

After the Map Man character takes a friend to the ceiling of his bedroom and explains about maps as a schematic view from above, the students make maps. These include maps of real places such as their bedrooms, the classroom, or the playground, as well as maps of imaginary places such as a playground that contained everything they would like to see. The teacher believes that the latter activities stimulate students to think creatively and critically about maps, not just to copy them. Other activities include drawings of globes, maps, and imaginary lands, discussions of which things in a room are important and should be depicted on a map and which should not, learning to make and use legends and map keys, making a map of a food item such as a sandwich or a sundae, using a large map of the neighborhood to talk about directions and movement from one location to another, using a zoo map to answer questions about the locations of various animals, map puzzles consisting of a set of nine cubes that comprise six different maps when combined correctly, and constructing three-dimensional models of places. Although most students enter her classroom already knowledgeable about maps, some do not yet realize that the map depicts a birds-eye view rather than a side view and many of them are still confused about spatial hierarchies (cities within counties within states within the nation).

The teacher's early New England unit uses a detailed teacher's guide and a kit containing artifacts and other materials that has been put together by the district. The kit includes some lesson plans and materials from the old Family of Man curriculum as well as artifacts such as a homemade broom, children's toys made out of wood, a doll made out of cornsilk, and an old candleholder. The unit includes a day spent at a recreation of an old one-room schoolhouse, during which the teacher and children reenact schooling as it was conducted 200 years ago. There are filmstrips of the New England geography (used for lessons on the different kinds of farming and other uses for the land), tape-recordings of period music, a butter churn, replicas of student primers, copybooks, slates, and a dunce cap, as well as many photographs. The teacher uses these materials to lead the students through critical thinking and inquiry activities in which they draw inferences about uses of various kinds of land, about the probable occupations or activities of the people (judging by their clothing), or about the probable uses of tools and other artifacts. Many of the photos are taken from recreations at Sturbridge Village and are used to convey what everyday life was like in early New England.

The unit also includes a trip to the local arboretum to observe tapping of maple trees and manufacture of syrup. The teacher also reads from related children's literature selections. A local hobbyist comes to show and demonstrate old-fashioned toys and the teacher involves the students in a quilting activity that includes learning about the family history built into these quilts. The students also do family trees and develop copybooks containing a lot of the work from this unit that they can later take home with them. There is also cooking--making of applesauce, corn bread, butter. They used to do a daylong feast, but stopped because that was too much trouble. The teacher tries to convey a feeling for the people and their lives at the time, including

who they were and why they came to America, how they learned to live off the land, how they made the most of the resources they had. The Laura Ingalls books are particularly good for conveying the details of everyday life at the time.

The unit on Michigan teaches familiarity with its shape and location on maps, its variety of land forms and natural resources and related economic activities, Native Americans of Michigan, state symbols, and things that are distinctive about the state. There used to be field trips to cereal, auto, and other manufacturing companies, but these have been cut back due to concerns about legal liabilities. The district also provides lesson plans and materials for this unit, including recordings from a Native American powwow, Michigan map activities, recipes for Michigan foods, and activities concerning Michigan industries. The material on Native Americans attacks misconceptions by emphasizing that Michigan Indians were farmers who traveled primarily by foot or canoe, not migratory hunters who rode horses to follow buffalo and lived in tepees.

Teacher 2B. Teacher 2B works from the same curriculum guide and with the same materials as Teacher 2A, so that there are many similarities between them. However, there are some differences.

There is a brief unit on family and self in the fall, in which they talk about family, neighborhood, and getting along with one another. There is a lot of sharing of family and ethnic culture and customs. The children make a book about themselves and bring in artifacts in presenting their histories to the class. The unit is included partly as a way to get the school year off to a good start and create an atmosphere of mutual respect and group identification among the students. The teacher also guides the class in developing rules for the class at this time.

The unit on Native Americans in Michigan begins with the crossing on the Bering Straits land bridge but moves quickly to Michigan tribes and how they lived in this area. The emphasis is on developing understanding of how these tribes lived off the land and on correcting misconceptions or overgeneralizations involving buffalo, tepees, feather headdresses, and so on. The class visits a local Native American historical center to view artifacts. They make cradleboards and wampum belts, paper versions of Indian clothing, and a diorama of a village. They also view powwow slides and other video materials on Native Americans in the state.

Teacher 2B talks about her Michigan unit primarily as Michigan history: how Michigan got started, what changes took place as it grew. The unit includes an emphasis on geographical concepts, such as the reasons why Native Americans lived near water. Near the end of the unit there is an emphasis on present-day Michigan, including study of farming in Michigan. The class visits a local mansion where they can see furnishings and artifacts from the past, spends the day in the one-room schoolhouse, reads books by Laura Ingalls. There are presentations and demonstrations of colonial crafts and the teacher leads the students in weaving baskets, emphasizing the time and craftsmanship that went into it and the uses for the baskets at the time. They also play children's games from the time, visit an old graveyard and do stone rubbings, view movies of recreated colonial craftspeople working at Sturbridge, make a paper quilt, and make a map of the area around the one-room schoolhouse.

Next is a short unit on present-day life in Michigan, focusing on the dairy farm. This includes a visit by a farmer who brings in different cow feeds and silage, shows slides, and engages the students in making butter and drinking buttermilk. Later the class visits a dairy farm and gets a guided tour. The emphasis is on the modern dairy industry, including such features as

computerized monitoring of the cows. This emphasis on dairy farming is an attempt to get away from the more typical state studies that feature the state bird, flower, and so on.

There is a unit on transportation that focuses on its role in our lives and on the different forms of transportation and the functions to which they are best suited. The students learn more about forms of transportation that they are less familiar with (trains and water transportation, as opposed to automobiles and airplanes), and they learn about the economic and practical reasons why these different forms are used for various purposes. During the unit the students draw pictures of trains and in art class they build a three-dimensional model train. They also construct airplanes through paper folding, experimenting with features that make for better flying performance.

In December, there is a unit on the winter holidays, and other holidays are discussed when they come up during the school year. What the children learn about holidays is connected to the idea that different people have different beliefs and customs. The December unit includes attention to Hanukkah, Christmas, and the Chinese New Year. Families are invited to come to the class to share their holiday customs and the children bring in foods to share. They also view movies and slides and do art projects. This year's class included a girl from a family who celebrates Ramadan, so the teacher was able to capitalize on that. The children make wreaths, menorahs, piñatas, and other artifacts connected with holiday celebrations in different cultures.

The unit on famous Americans is interspersed throughout the year and built around biographical readings. Examples are chosen as illustrations of how one person can make a difference: Helen Keller, Jesse Jackson, Sally Ride, Marian Anderson, George Washington Carver, Walt Disney, Chief Pontiac, James Audobon, and several presidents. There is also a study of the current

president and a mini-unit on the White House and the federal government. Sometimes, in addition to or instead of reading a book, the students watch a movie or learn about the person through some other medium. They make peanut butter when studying Carver and make booklets about the current president and the federal government.

The maps and globes unit extends throughout the year and includes both knowledge (directions, compass rose, different kinds of maps) and skills. Many of the activities include laminated maps that can be written on and then erased. The students might be asked to mark locations on them or to draw in illustrations of different uses that might develop for different land forms. There are discussions of the trade-offs involved in living or starting businesses in different types of areas or districts, study of how neighborhoods get established and change over time, and construction of a three-dimensional model of a city of the future.

The safety unit includes two brief subunits, one at the beginning of the year on rules and laws and why they make for safety and another in February when a person from the local power company comes to talk about safety in connection with electricity. In addition, the teacher tries to reinforce safety concepts when they come up naturally throughout the school year and at some point the school nurse visits to make a presentation on personal safety (how to handle inappropriate advances or touching).

The current events strand is included each day in discussions of things in the news. For about 15 minutes each morning, the class discusses newspaper articles that students bring in or comments that they make about things they have heard about. This activity is designed in particular to develop a greater global awareness among the students, although many of the things that they want to talk about involve sports news or local crime news.

Teacher 3. Teacher 3's social studies curriculum begins with a unit on Michigan Indians in November, then moves to a unit on social studies skills (maps and globes, graphing) then a long unit on community, then a unit on communication. then a unit on citizenship and government that concludes with Michigan week activities. Throughout the year the students also read the Scholastic News and discuss it or engage in activities concerning it each Friday. This is part of what the teacher considers a current events unit, which also includes calendar activities focusing on noteworthy events that occurred on that day in history. Using materials provided by the teacher and various reference books, each student is assigned one day each month to prepare a presentation on.

Taken together, the two (Scholastic News and calendar) components of the current events strand are designed to build and reinforce students' general knowledge of geography and history. The Scholastic News topics tend to deal with current events in the news such as recycling, the environment, or the elections. The calendar activity deals with important events in the past. The calendar brings up many birthdays of famous people, providing occasions to talk about their inventions or the noteworthy events in which they were involved. The Scholastic News component involves Friday discussions of articles printed that week and usually a follow-up writing assignment. In both components, the teacher's emphasis is on helping students to appreciate the significance of what is being studied and its connections to their current lives. Frequently she will have the children vote on some of the policy issues suggested by these readings.

The brief unit on Native Americans in Michigan is taught in November, partly because it connects with Thanksgiving. They talk briefly about Squanto and other Indians who helped the Pilgrims, but then switch focus to Indians in

Michigan. The emphasis is on how the Eastern Woodlands Indians were farmers who lived in stable communities. (This introduces some of the concepts on community that will be developed later.) The teacher attempts to familiarize her students with Michigan tribes and how they lived in the past, as well as to correct misconceptions about buffalo hunting and so on. The children do activities involving communicating through pictographs, cutting out paper bags in the shapes of animals or symbols for the sun or sky. They also eat foods from the time, such as wild rice that Michigan Indians gathered, and maple syrup. The students also work with puppets and use their teeth to make patterns on birch bark or leather. An outdoor educator visits to show artifacts and conduct demonstrations for the children relating to Michigan Indian history and customs.

The next unit is social studies skills, familiarizing students with maps and map keys, globes as models of the world, different types of maps, and related geographical knowledge such as latitude and longitude. This unit builds on previous instruction in this area, reinforcing in some respects but introducing some new material (e.g., on the compass rose and the geographical coordinates). The students do a great deal of map work and graphing, develop time lines of their lives up to this point (and bury them in a "time capsule" that will be opened in two years), and practice guiding each other around the room using the cardinal directions. The more able students are asked to do research on particular continents and make presentations to the class.

The unit on community focuses primarily on the local community, including its past history and possible future. In the process, the students learn about concepts such as goods and services, assembly lines, and local government. Students visit the township's governmental offices and talk about the jobs of the people who work there. They talk at length about what a community is and

brainstorm about the kind of community they would like to live in. They visit the oldest part of the town to get some firsthand information about its history. Parents who are knowledgeable about the town come and speak to the students in class. The class makes a mural containing a schematic map of the town and illustrations of several of its points of interest. Sometimes there are writing projects in which the children are asked to write letters to someone else to tell about their town or to put together a book about it.

The unit on communication talks about the importance of communication to human living and examines some of its major forms. It includes attention to body language, pictographs, sign language, and various forms of oral and written communication and media. Historical aspects are considered, particularly how inventions produced new forms of communications that changed modes of living. Activities include letter writing and a trip to the post office. There is also a book awareness week, in which the students write to authors and to pen pals. When they go to the post office they put their letters through a slot, then go around to the other side and find out what happens to it. The class develops a school newspaper that includes news collected by interviewing students in other classrooms. There is also a "no talk" morning, in which the students must communicate without speaking.

The unit on citizenship and government is done in the spring and culminates in Michigan Week. It includes information about lawmaking, the three branches of government, voting, the identities and some of the functions of the President and Governor. The students are often confused about the different levels of government and about the distinction between Washington, D.C., and the state of Washington. The students also need to learn about representative government, to understand that most laws are not made through direct voting by the people but instead by their representatives in the legislatures.

Activities include brainstorming and voting on how classroom rules might be different next year or about how laws might be changed, role playing of different governmental figures in action, and a visit to the capitol during Michigan Week. In addition, the students discuss and write answers to questions about law and government.

Teacher 5A. Both fifth-grade teachers were teaching chronologically sequenced U.S. history, which meant that their units focused on the historical periods traditionally emphasized by historians and used as content organizers in textbooks: Native Americans before Columbus, European exploration and colonization of North America, the English colonies, the American Revolution, et cetera. Asking the teachers to report on each of these units would have elicited a great deal of redundancy, because the teachers typically provided input through their own explanations, the textbook, and other sources such as children's literature selections and movies, engaged in classroom discussion with the students, and involved the students in certain activities. Differences from unit to unit occurred primarily in the depth to which different time periods were developed and the activities used to develop them. The two fifth-grade teachers were asked to describe their teaching of their units on the American Revolution, a period that each developed in depth because of its importance not only to history but to citizenship education. This was done as part of a larger comparative case study of these two teachers that also included classroom observations and collection of additional interview data from the teachers and from their students (VanSledright, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c).

Teacher 5A approached the unit with her usual interest in not only developing knowledge of and interest in U.S. history but also using the content as a vehicle for engaging students in critical thinking, debate, and decision making concerning the decisions and actions of the people being studied and their

implications for citizenship in a democracy. Her goals included developing basic knowledge of the standard interpretations of the period, developing appreciation of its historical significance, understanding the importance of the birth of democracy, and connecting the rights supplied by the *Constitution* with accompanying civic responsibilities. The unit included segments on the developing conflicts between the colonies and Britain, the events that led to the writing of the *Declaration of Independence*, and the actual war. The next unit took up the consideration of the *Constitution*, the branches of government that it established, and issues surrounding the debate over the *Bill of Rights*. The roles of women and blacks in this period were emphasized throughout.

Teaching devices used during the unit included reading and discussion of the textbook, a number of filmstrips and accompanying worksheets, discussion of the issues involved and points of view represented, debating the relative merits of the American and British positions on the issues that divided them, and a concluding videotape describing the struggle over ratifying the *Constitution*. She stimulated her students to think about and discuss alternative points of view, often using devil's advocate questions to focus attention on alternatives that had not yet been considered.

In the process, Teacher 5A frequently used analogies or examples to help the students connect what they were learning about with their own thinking or current lives. In covering the Boston Tea Party, for example, she helped the students to realize how angry they would be if they believed that the government was unfairly taking away their money, especially if they had not been consulted or involved in the decision. Later she developed the other side of the argument, helping the students to see that, from the British point of view, the colonists were ungrateful people attempting to refuse to even share in the costs of their own defense.

In teaching about the Boston Massacre, she notes that colonists seeking war with Britain used the loaded term "massacre" and publicized the event as much worse than it was in order to further their own agenda, and she asks students to put themselves in the place of British soldiers being pelted with snowballs by colonists who had been treating them with increasing rudeness for some time. When showing filmstrips of the period, she makes comments and asks questions designed to get students to note what the people looked like, how they dressed, the messy streets, and other details that encourage them to put themselves back into that place and time. She also engages the students in reading and discussion of the novel My Brother Sam is Dead as a way to personalize and bring the period alive for them. She wants them to realize that families were split and neighbors were pitted against neighbors over the Loyalist-Patriot issue. Later she leads the students in discussion of correspondence between Abigail and John Adams, partly to further enrich their sense of the times but also to bring in issues of gender role and the woman's point of view on the events described. There is also a filmstrip on the role of women during this period.

Following review and a test on the events leading up to the Revolution and the Revolution itself, Teacher 5A taught about the *Articles of Confederation* and the *Constitution*. Here again she supplemented the textbook with filmstrips and other sources of input, and she used analogies and examples to help students understand the reasons why the *Articles of Confederation* failed to establish a workable government and the issues involved in debates over the *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*. In the process, students were engaged in discussions of, for example, the complications that would ensue if each state had its own border guards, money system, and rules regarding commerce and trade, as well as parallels between the issues of federal versus state power

debated in the process of establishing the U.S. *Constitution* and the debates on the same issues going on today in the former Soviet Union. The concluding filmstrip showed mock reporting on the Constitutional Convention, as if it were occurring today and were being reported on television by some of today's visible newscasters.

Teacher 5B. Teacher 5B was similar to Teacher 5A in that she supplemented the textbook with various other sources of input and spent a lot of time engaged in teacher-student discourse. She also shared many of the same goals of making history meaningful and interesting to students and capitalizing on the opportunities it offered to accomplish citizenship education. However, she took more of a disciplinary knowledge approach than a citizenship education approach in teaching the subject, placing somewhat more emphasis than Teacher 5A on maintaining the chronology and teaching many of the details of conventional historical accounts while making fewer digressions to pursue value issues or tie-ins to contemporary social policy debates.

Teacher 5B wanted her students to understand the cause-and-effect relationships involved in the historical developments studied, as well as to be able to imagine the historical period vividly and empathize with its characters. She placed less emphasis on critical thinking than on development of appreciation for the history of the period and especially for the nation's democratic traditions as embodied in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*. Discourse in her classroom is more tightly controlled than in Teacher 5A's classroom, with the interactions resembling recitation more than discussion or debate. Much of the teacher-student interaction revolves around project assignments or games such as Jeopardy or the red light-green light exercise. However, she did occasionally engage her students in discussion of issues, especially when teaching about the *Bill of Rights*. Her main goals

were sorting through the reasons why the colonists sought independence, understanding the roots of the struggle inherent in the search for freedom, studying the struggle itself, learning about the outcome, and making sense of the *Constitution*.

Teacher 5B attempts to build student knowledge and appreciation by providing historical detail, telling stories, offering analogies, and engaging students with historical fiction. She shows a filmstrip shot in colonial Williamsburg to give a sense of what life in the colonies was like at the time. She uses several examples and analogies of taxation and government regulations to help students understand the resentments of the colonists. Then she engages the students in debate over the relative merits of the British and American position on the issues that led to the war. She reads passages from two historical texts to supplement the students' textbook, believing that the latter is too sketchy in its treatment of the events leading to the Revolution. One of these includes a battle account taken from a British soldier's diary. There is also a filmstrip on the issues leading up to the Revolution, followed by a writing assignment that includes an essay question on whether or not the student would have broken the law by taking part in the Boston Tea Party.

Combining review with simulation designed to make the period come alive for students, this teacher formed the class into subgroups called "families" who competed for points by answering questions in a Jeopardy-game format. Then, acting as the British king, she appointed several representatives to collect taxes arbitrarily imposed on the families (taking back some of the credits they won the day before) and, in addition, began proclaiming additional taxes and arbitrary fines. This led to anger, frustration, and attempts to avoid paying the taxes and fines, which then led to discussion of the feelings of the colonists about British taxation laws. As a follow-up, the students

were to assume the role of an angry colonist and write a letter to a friend or relative in Great Britain detailing their experience with these taxes.

The unit then moved on to a filmstrip about the Revolutionary War and to small-group reading and reporting on children's literature books relating to the Revolutionary period. The group presentations sometimes involved murals, newspapers, or mock television shows. In addition to participating in the group report to the class, each individual student writes his or her own report to the teacher. There were filmstrips dealing with the *Articles of Confederation*, the development of the *Constitution*, and the problems faced by George Washington as the first president. There was also a critical thinking exercise in which the students read about factors that influenced the outcome of the Revolutionary War and determined whether each factor was an advantage to the Americans or to the English. Review was accomplished using the red light-green light game for true-false questions and a Jeopardy game for fill-in-the-blank questions.

To prepare students for study of the *Constitution*, Teacher 5B asks th : to pretend that they are Washington, Jefferson, or other people planning a new government for the country and to list 10 things that the government should be sure to do for its people. This assignment yields a considerable list of potential government functions, which the teacher lists on the board. She then breaks students into groups of three and asks them to reduce the long list to five essential rights that they cannot do without. She then lists the results of this exercise on the board and begins study of the actual *Constitution*. After reviewing the *Bill of Rights*, she asks students to paraphrase them in writing in their own words and be prepared to explain them to someone else using examples. While these studies and activities are going on, the class hears reports from the groups on their literature readings, on topics such as Benjamin Franklin, Benedict Arnold, female spies in the Revolution, and the correspondence between

Abigail and John Adams. As part of the discussion of the *Bill of Rights*, the students are asked to think about which right they would give up if they had to give one up. This leads to considerable good discussion, including contemporary examples, of what the implications would be if various articles in the *Bill of Rights* were repealed. The unit concludes with a review and test and with a visit by an attorney to speak and answer questions about the *Constitution* and law in this nation.

Discussion

Even more than their comments made earlier in the process of describing their general approaches to teaching social studies, the teachers' descriptions of their particular units underscore the degree to which they employ a variety of content sources and activities in their teaching. Their teaching contrasts sharply and very favorably with the more commonly observed regimen of recitation and worksheets focusing on regurgitation of disconnected facts gleaned from the textbook.

The similarities and especially the differences between Teachers 2A and 2B and between Teachers 5A and 5B are also of interest. These teachers work in the same upper-middle class district, are provided with the same curriculum materials, and follow the same district social studies guidelines. Yet, they employ different supplementary content sources and different activities in teaching their units. Many of these differences reflect differences in philosophies and goal priorities that were described in their answers to several of the early questions in our interview.

Student Motivation

1. How do you try to make the social studies content meaningful and interesting to students?

2. Do your students ever ask why they need to know some of the things taught in social studies? If so, what do you tell them? Give specific examples.

3. It often is argued that children's interests should be taken into account in selecting topics, examples, and activities. Have you tried to do this in developing your social studies curriculum? If so, give examples.

Teacher 1A. I try to make things meaningful and interesting by providing hands-on activities and puzzles, flags, maps, artifacts and photos from mystery countries, coins, clothing, classroom visitors. With young children, you have to provide hands-on materials and things that they can make, not just read the textbook and ask questions. I pick content that I think will be most meaningful and that the children can identify with. They study Michigan on maps and compare Michigan things such as the state bird or tree or flower with corresponding ones from other states. They understand these things, but not abstractions such as exports. For some of the content, I'm really not sure why we teach it except because we have been taught to do so.

My first graders tend to soak up what we teach without asking why. They are more concerned about pleasing the teacher than about the content. I am enthusiastic about geography, so they are too.

KWL allows children to express their ideas and interests. My geography center is optional and they can choose whether to go there. We try to align content to interests. We reduced the time spent on a unit about the self, because we realized that we had been making a big deal out of the "Student of the Week" throughout the year in kindergarten and there wasn't much point in repeating this in first grade. I have had success using maps. We think children need more cultural awareness, so we will add more of that in the future. We expanded our unit on friends to friends and neighbors, and we put earth and environmental awareness together in one unit. Also, there is a different theme

each month in our PAL lab, where children enjoy role playing shopping at a grocery store, running a pizza restaurant, camping, construction, the Olympics, health and fitness.

Teacher 1B. Our units focus on things that students can tie to their everyday lives, such as Thanksgiving. I look for good trade books and media acquisitions that will interest them, and I project enthusiasm about what I teach. I also stimulate curiosity through mystery questions or other ways to get them making predictions about what they are learning. At this age, most kids are interested in and ready to learn what you teach them.

I don't think first graders have ever asked me that kind of question. Also, I try to tell them why they are learning something when we begin it.

When we reformed our curriculum, we didn't actually ask students about their interests, but we took our knowledge of those interests into account. Where natural interest in a topic doesn't exist, it is up to the teacher to make it interesting for the students. I try to capitalize on the potential in my class each year. For example, if certain students' families can make presentations on other cultures or have gone on interesting vacations and can come and show photos about them.

Teacher 2A. Social studies lends itself well to concrete activities--field trips, turning the room into some other place and role playing. This appeals to this age so much, to be doing actual things. It makes it meaningful and interesting. If we can't go somewhere, I try to bring in movies or something other than just looking at a book and listening to me. If we do use a book, they will work with a group which makes it more interesting. I keep the knowledge at their level and on things they can identify with, and I teach topics from a kid's point of view as much as possible. They can identify with

what they learned about Harriet Tubman as a child or with the books of Laura Ingalls.

They do occasionally ask why they need to know something, and my response depends on what we are talking about. If they ask why we are learning about a quilt, I tell them it is because it is part of how people lived long ago, when people built their histories into the quilts and carried them along, so that when they looked at the quilt it brought to mind a place or a time or a person. I try to explain these things in ways that will make them not only understand but appreciate. If I don't know the reason right away, I will pledge to look into it and get back to them later. You can rationalize almost anything, but I stick to reasons that I believe in because I might be called accountable. For everything I teach, I have thought about why and can give myself a good reason. This isn't much of a problem at second grade because students seem interested in all of the things we teach in social studies.

I take interests into account by picking activities that I know will involve the kids physically with manipulating things. When I leave things out, it is usually because I see that they do not engage the kids. I avoid teaching local government because I don't think they are ready for that, or state or federal government for that matter. They just don't understand that and get engaged in it. I can try and draw it to their level with mock elections during election years or with some kind of set-up in the class for making rules and deciding who is in charge, but it seems to be more work than the payoff it delivers justifies. They don't relate to learning about such things as what the department of water and sewage does. Also, in that kind of unit they often visit the police and fire department, and my second graders have done that as preschoolers and therefore take it as an insult to be doing it again.

Teacher 2B. We try to pick content and activities that interest the children. Even where the objectives remain the same, we update content or activities as needed. If you are trying something for the first time and it doesn't go well, you need to change. I have noticed that children are not interested in learning about community and helpers and all that, possibly because they already have had a lot of that in kindergarten and first grade. So I don't spend much time on that and get on to other things. Most of the content and activities that I have been telling you about are chosen in part because they are meaningful and interesting to my students.

Not many children ask such questions at this age, but three of mine do that all the time. It has affected my teaching to where I prepare what I will tell them when they ask. In general, though, I usually tell the purpose of any lesson. When we study Native Americans and other aspects of the state of Michigan, I tell them that it is important to know how your state got started and how life can be very simple and you can live off the land, as well as how the things they buy in food stores are grown on farms. Often children don't have a sense of where things came from, both in terms of the past and in terms of current things such as where the milk in the store came from. Using KWL helps, because students get to think about what they would like to learn about a topic. Often they are interested in one another's questions.

We take into account interests almost all the time. Our curriculum is based on things we think children will be interested in. For Native Americans, we try to get rid of misconceptions and help them understand people who are different, why they are different, how they can enjoy these people and live with them in harmony. Our trip to the farm enables them to see the kinds of work that people do, that every job has its own integrity and skill level. On famous Americans, we talk about career issues. The district has spent money to

purchase materials and kits that go along with the units and provide artifacts, photos, and children's literature that will make their study of topics more interesting to them.

Teacher 3. I try to relate what I teach to their experiences and hope that that will bring about some interest.

I cannot recall being asked that kind of question in social studies. I try to make things meaningful and keep them close to home. Between matching content to students' interests and the students' tendency to go along with what the teacher says, this has not been a problem for me.

Early in my teaching, I relied on textbooks too much. Over time, I found out that children were more interested when I brought in other things and included more activities.

Teacher 5A. I try to make things meaningful by going into depth on a few main things rather than trying to cover everything superficially, and I try to teach everything interestingly enough so that students will want to learn more on their own later. I also try to follow up on students' initiated questions or comments, within what time allows. I emphasize that social studies is interesting because it is not just about dry facts but about people, what they were trying to do and why. I focus my students on how the people at the time must have felt or how they would feel if they were involved in that situation. My decisions about which aspects of history to go into in depth and which to cover more lightly are based in large part on which aspects are most meaningful and interesting to my students.

I try to anticipate "Why are we studying this?" questions before they occur, by letting students know the purpose of a lesson before I teach it. I try to get them involved so that this doesn't come up. Sometimes I tell them that there are only a few things that are important and need to be remembered

from a particular chapter. I don't give many tests, but I may give them a blank sheet and ask them what they know now that they didn't know earlier. I think their involvement depends on my involvement. If I have developed their trust and they can see that I think something is important, they will go along with me. And, I view my role as including gleaning which things are really important for them to know and sharing that information with them.

Concerning basing the curriculum on student interests, I could argue that both ways. When I taught in lower grades, I had more leeway to take interests into account in choosing my units, so I focused on topics that allowed for a lot of activity, such as panning for gold in connection with the gold rush or churning butter in connection with colonial living. At fifth grade, you don't have that choice because you are supposed to cover all of U.S. history. Here, I try to use interesting examples and activities and to suggest children's literature selections that they can read to expand their knowledge in enjoyable ways.

Teacher 5B. I give a variety of presentations and get them involved through discussions or debates, use games and things like the red light-green light exercise. Filmstrips. Very seldom do I just come in and have them read and answer questions. It's usually some kind of discussion focused toward a goal. Sometimes I ask them to write out main ideas or questions that might be asked of someone else to make sure that they understood the main points.

At the very beginning of the year, we talked about why we are here, why we study social studies, why history is important. About time capsules and how we would want people of the future to know about what life was like now. That what we will be learning connects with today's life and will be used, that it is not just stuff to read in a book. We talk about how things that happened in the past affect our lives today and how we could avoid repeating some of the

mistakes of the past, how life today might be different if historical events such as the Revolution had turned out differently. Most of my kids find history fascinating.

We can't base the curriculum on student interests, because as adults we teach children a curriculum that we think is important for them to learn, and we know how to do that. However, choice and input do come in, especially with gifted students who can dig deeper on their own. I would be open to suggestions from students about things to get into that I hadn't intended to get into, so long as I thought they were worthwhile learning experiences linked to the district's goals. Current events often are acceptable because they connect to the history we are studying or to larger social studies goals.

Discussion

The primary-grade teachers emphasized focusing on content that students are already familiar with in their everyday lives, presenting it through interesting stories or visual media and developing it through hands-on experiences. Although some of them talked about stimulating curiosity or interest through teaching techniques, the first- and second-grade teachers mostly emphasized the need to fit the content and activities to the students. In contrast, the third-grade and especially the fifth-grade teachers, who have more content to cover and less latitude in choosing what to present, emphasized trying to get the students to see the value of what they were studying by relating it to their experiences and by engaging them in active information processing. They placed more emphasis on getting students to view the material as important and worth studying than on getting them to see it as fun. However, the fifth-grade teachers did acknowledge going into more depth on parts of the curriculum that their students responded more positively to.

The teachers have not experienced much problem with students questioning the value of the curriculum. They find that students tend to go along with what they ask them to do, especially if they project enthusiasm for the content and state learning goals when introducing content or activities. The questions that the teachers have experienced tended to focus on history. Teachers' responses tended to emphasize the importance of learning about one's roots and the possibility that studying history will enable us to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Concerning adapting curricula to student interests, the teachers felt that the social studies curricula developed for their schools were informed by accumulated practical wisdom about the kinds of topics and activities that were suited to students in the various elementary grade levels, so that they began with a position of strength represented by a curriculum well suited to their students' ages and stages. They then attempted to build on this through such strategies as placing more emphasis on units or topics that drew the most interest from their students, reducing emphasis on units or topics that had been covered earlier at their schools or at that their students did not seem ready for yet, providing centers or offering optional activities, using KWL or related techniques to determine what students wanted to learn about a topic, emphasizing activities that have been successful in the past, offering an enriched curriculum rather than a curriculum based narrowly on textbooks and worksheets, and relating the content to students' familial backgrounds or personal interests. The fifth-grade teachers felt that they had less leeway to accommodate to students' interests, although they still attempted to do so by inviting student input and suggesting ways that students could follow up on their individual special interests.

Student Ability and Background Knowledge

1. Students often lack experience with or even background information about many topics covered in elementary social studies, so that one often must plan in terms of developing an initial idea about the topic rather than in terms of cueing relevant background knowledge that will be extended or applied. Is this a significant problem at your grade level? Can you give examples of where you encounter it and how you respond to it?

2. How do you respond to individual differences in student knowledge or ability? Do you expose different students to different content, activities, or assignments? Do you use different methods of assessment or different grading standards for the most versus the least able students?

Teacher 1A. I teach the same thing to everybody but modify. If I play the globe game, I might ask a low child just to differentiate land and water, but ask another child to name a continent or country. When students work together, I will pair a low child with a high child. The grading aspect of the question isn't relevant because I don't give grades in social studies.

Teacher 1B. I think my kids already know something about the topics in all of our units, except for a unit on Alaska that I did last year. When I introduce something, I get an initial gauge of background knowledge by asking questions.

I try to recognize individual differences, but I have too many students to teach individually. My students get the same content and pretty much the same activities. I try to use activities that are open-ended enough so that the least able kids can have some success on them and the most able can take them as far as they can. In my treasure map activity, the least able kids might put only one or two symbols on their map keys, whereas others might have 10 or 12 on their keys. Some kids will be so interested in a topic that they will want to research it on their own. When I taught fourth grade, I would direct them to sources.

We don't give letter grades or pencil-and-paper tests, so my grades are partly subjective and focused on whether kids are answering the questions, participating, paying attention, putting forth effort. So, students with less ability can get grades as good as students with high ability.

Teacher 2A. I wouldn't call this a significant problem because forming initial ideas is the focus of this grade level. We are at an introductory level. Also, we don't try to introduce things that children cannot understand. Even in history, they can understand the things about life in the past that we teach, even though they might be unclear about how long ago these things occurred. The latter knowledge will develop over the next few years.

I might have more of a problem if I taught in a rural area or an inner city, but these kids have had lots of experience and are wide open to learning. They do have problems understanding the idea of states within a country and the idea that the United States once looked different than it does now. One student couldn't understand why Buffalo Bill was famous, after reading a book about him. He wondered if it was because Bill was a good father who took good care of his family. The child just didn't see shooting a gun accurately and being a showman as a reason to be famous. If students are having trouble seeing how things fit together, I will sometimes use graphic organizers to help them get the big picture.

I don't respond to individual differences unless students come and say something to me during private interactions. All students do the same things in class. It is hard to individualize in social studies. Also, it is good for them to have common experiences that help build a group feeling. For grading, I use the same standards for everyone, although we don't give formal assessments here.

Teacher 2B. That is what we do at second grade--develop initial knowledge. When you talk about Native Americans, for example, you have to go back and sketch who these people are, where they came from, the land bridge from Asia, and so on. Even with skills, you have to teach the students how to study, how to organize themselves.

The content is the same for all students. Sometimes I use sophisticated materials that some students might not understand completely, but we shouldn't underestimate what children can understand. Even if they don't get it all now, they will be better prepared the next time they hear it. We do a lot of hands-on activities in social studies, and this allows for individual differences. How much they put into making a diorama of an Indian village, for example, will depend on how interested they are as well as their patterns of abilities. They get different avenues to achieve besides paper- and-pencil ones.

I do have different grading standards. I look at both what they are able to understand and what they strive to understand--the effort they put forth. The first scale is pretty cut and dried but the overall grade can be affected by the effort grade.

Teacher 3. My students don't know much about government, so I mostly have to give them information rather than cue them to express their own ideas. Sometimes I put key words on the board and tell them to read the text to come up with ideas about these words, then we talk about it. Another area where they lack background knowledge is the goods and services aspect of communities.

I try to respond to individual differences by using teacher aides or partner readings or having a parent or another student or myself or a resource teacher help the student. I don't change the content, but I might modify it some. For a writing assignment, I let them do the best they can. If they are not yet able to use encyclopedias, I wouldn't ask them to.

For assessment, I modify. Often I use essay questions where students can do the best they can and this varies with individuals. If necessary, I will read the question to them. We use a standard percentage grading system, but I take into account progress and effort.

Teacher 5A. Students come in with bits and pieces heard from the family or on television, but it is true that their background knowledge is very limited. I try to build anticipation for what will come and I bring in information or connections that they will find interesting. I encourage them to bring things from home, too.

If I am going to teach a concept, I will use a lot of different examples. To teach democracy, I begin by establishing a democratic classroom from Day One, giving students responsibilities for running the class and emphasizing respect for other points of view. I engage them in discussing policy options and making decisions.

To respond to individual differences I try to create a positive atmosphere in which we expect those who know more to help others to understand better. I try to model this myself when I think a student knows more about a topic than I do, by communicating that the student can be helpful to me and that I should view this as a helpful interaction rather than something to be ashamed of. I also try to find ways to allow each student to be an expert at least some of the time, so the same people aren't always explaining things to the same others.

I try to take into account effort and growth in my grading, not just objective scores. I encourage struggling students through written and verbal feedback. Especially at the beginning of the year, I try to be very positive and encouraging so that students will keep at it and give me their best rather than give up because they got a low grade. However, if I feel a student is

writing a lot of quantity but not saying much or basically bluffing, I will communicate this and challenge the student to focus on quality.

For the special student in my class, I will sometimes take the same assignments but give her smaller portions, although she has good ability to deal with historical things. Her problem is in writing, so she may get one essay question instead of five or I will ask her oral questions. She can work better on the computer than with handwriting, so I allow her to use the computer to compose responses to essay questions. I also get her resource teacher to work on things from my class. When I test her, I might spread it over three or four days because her attention span is limited. For multiple choice items, I allow her to circle the item right on the test rather than transfer a mark to an answer sheet. Otherwise, she will forget what she intended to do while transferring from one sheet to the other.

Teacher 5B. Most of the kids come without much prior knowledge of history, so I do have to develop initial ideas with them. I have talked about how I do so in answering previous questions.

For individual differences, I sometimes assign special reports, such as to a child who is currently reading an extra book and can make a report on it in newspaper form. Or, work kids into groups in which the accelerated ones who want to go ahead with the project can go ahead and do something special. Or, maybe just go into more depth on the same assignment that others are working on. Many of my assignments allow different students to address them at different levels or depths. I accept whatever students can give me, according to their abilities. If they try to give me less, though, I prod them to do better. When I hand out books for extra reading, I give more difficult books to those who can handle them. Others get less difficult books, and the artistically talented are given roles that call for artwork.

Discussion

All of the teachers mentioned that they frequently must help students develop initial ideas about topics for which they have little or no background knowledge. This was true even for the fifth-grade teachers, who are providing students with their first systematic exposure to chronological history. The teachers took the need to create initial ideas in stride, viewing it as part of the territory of teaching at their grade levels. They emphasized the need to be clear in their explanations and especially to provide examples that were familiar and understandable to their students.

The teachers did not believe that it is feasible to individualize by presenting different content to different students, so they taught their social studies to their entire classes as intact groups with the same content taught to all. However, they allowed for individualization by scheduling a variety of activities, by favoring activities that different students could respond to at different levels of sophistication, and in some cases, by allowing students to choose from a menu of potential activities. Some of the teachers deliberately steer more challenging questions or books toward the brighter students or suggest special projects for these students to do independently. All of the teachers try to help struggling students through extra attention and assistance. Some of them also involve resource teachers or provide special help with testing or special consideration in grading.

On the whole, however, the teachers view social studies as a subject that calls for providing common experiences to the class as a whole and engaging them in teacher-student and student-student discourse that involves processing those experiences, not as a subject that involves mastering particular skills and being graded accordingly. These views fit well with recent policy statements by the National Council for the Social Studies, which emphasize engaging

a community of learners in citizenship education activities, not content mastery and promotion of group or individual differences.

Content Levels and Sources

1. Most students in the primary grades cannot read and study efficiently enough to acquire significant information through reading. This is true of some students in later grades as well. If you cannot rely on independent study as a major source of input to all or some of your students, how do you compensate? How do you see that nonreaders get sufficient social studies input?

2. To what extent do your students need physical examples, photos, or other concrete representations of things that lie outside their experiences to date? Give examples of social studies content taught at your grade level that students are not likely to understand unless they are exposed to such concrete examples.

3. Certain concepts and generalizations are too abstract for students at particular ages to understand in any complete or integrated way, although they may be able to understand certain simplified forms or examples meaningfully. Are there social studies concepts or generalizations taught at your grade level that most of your students can grasp only partially if at all? If so, explain examples of this problem and what you try to do about it.

Teacher 1A. I read them stories, have discussions, show pictures, maps, charts. They can't read the textbooks independently in first grade, so most learning is through discussion. They also can learn through videos and filmstrips, but I emphasize trade books, maps, and other props.

We have to show visual things to get them to understand a different culture that they are not familiar with. I use postcards or pictures from National Geographic, slides of Italy, newspapers and pictures from Puerto Rico, globes and maps to point out locations. Around Thanksgiving, I develop a bulletin board showing pictures of the Mayflower, the Pilgrims, the Indians, their clothing, wigwams, animal skins. I emphasize wigwams because the kids think that all Indians lived in tepees.

First graders can begin to understand map and globe skills, although at a basic level. They won't reach mastery levels. The same is true of history.

You can lay a foundation of knowledge about the past even though they don't have clear-cut time concepts yet.

Teacher 1B. There is one kit that we use at Thanksgiving. We use Big Books for some things, but I am the one who does the reading. The kids just look at pictures and follow along as I read. They don't use a text. We use trade books, media, discussion, and pictures to get information across.

They definitely need examples of maps. I show them 15 or 20 different kinds so that they don't think that the state map that they are most familiar with is the only kind of map there is. For Thanksgiving, we use a lot of photos and try to break down stereotypes of Indians. I don't have artifacts but would use them if I did. We use movies and filmstrips and books with lots of photos. A firefighter visits the classroom in full gear. They practice dialing 9-1-1 with a play phone. If you can't have the real thing, at least get photos.

At Thanksgiving, some kids may have difficulty understanding about the past--the time lines involved or differences between life then and now. I focus on things familiar and interesting to them, especially on life for children then and now, such as that the modern clothes they wear to school didn't exist back then. In geography and mapping, I focus on the classroom or their bedroom at home that they are familiar with. They don't have trouble understanding map keys and symbols, even though these are abstractions.

Teacher 2A. At second grade, even the readers learn more by doing. We use many forms of input and learning experiences, not just books. When we do use books, we try to find books that address their interest level and maybe have them read in pairs or groups. Maybe I will read to them. This isn't a big issue in my class because we don't rely on books that much. We use a lot

of movies, filmstrips, and activities. I will pair weak readers with better readers for activities that require reading.

My students need physical if not concrete manipulatives to help them understand many of the things we do and to get to abstract thoughts. I try to get away from always using the same examples. For neighborhoods, I use maps of their actual neighborhood, not just talk about some other neighborhood. I talk about cardinal directions in terms of their own houses and where they are located in relation to one another. In general, the students need as many physical examples, photos, and hands-on activities as I can give them.

I don't have much of a problem with things being above my students because the curriculum is well suited to them and includes concrete activities, physical representations, and pictures. Time lines might be the hardest. It is still developmentally difficult for them to understand. To them, things that happened 10 or 20 years ago could just as well have happened 100 years ago. I try to help by making a picture, a physical time line, and helping them to see that the space here is larger than the space there, corresponding to the amounts of time. There is a movie that I use in science that helps. It unrolls a huge sheet of paper that covers a large field as a way to represent how far back you would have to go in time to get to when the dinosaurs lived. A similar one shows distances between planets. Still, I think this is too abstract for second graders. We have done family trees too, but it doesn't seem to help them understand time much, although it does help them understand sequences of grandfather, great grandfather, and so on.

Teacher 2B. We use quite a few movies and filmstrips, and sometimes speakers that come to class or site visits. When they do worksheets I have them work cooperatively and make sure that each group includes a strong reader who can help weaker readers if necessary. I will often read tests to them,

unless reading is the focus of the test. If we are studying a topic that the students have information they can bring in or artifacts, or have their parents come in to speak to us, I will invite them to do that.

I think that physical examples and concrete representations are important for learners at any age, but especially young children. When you study a time period, it would be nice to be exposed to the music of the period, the housing. In general, the more senses that are stimulated, the more students will remember. For Native Americans, we show slides and discuss how they live today compared with how they are depicted in movies. The slides help them to see that modern Native Americans dress like everyone else except for special occasions, and that powwow to them is like Halloween is to us as a dress-up time.

Children can understand more than we give them credit for, but we have to find ways to help them, the right materials and language. In the process of studying Lincoln, we got into the Civil War and I found that students could understand it as relatives fighting relatives over a concept of slavery. Most of them already understood slavery, although we talked about what it might mean for children their age--what kinds of things they would be able to do or not. Often we want to protect children and not talk about the realities of war, but with the Persian Gulf happening now, we address those things in our current events discussions. Sometimes students bring in topics from the newspaper that might be difficult for them to understand, as well as things that I don't want to get into, such as rape. One way to minimize their getting into things that they don't really understand is to tell them to practice with their parents what they intend to say about the item when they bring it to class.

Teacher 3. For nonreaders, we use partner reading, aides, the resource teacher, and group reading.

All kinds of concrete props help because they provide models right there for them. Globes, maps, graphs, artifacts from Indians, speakers. The government unit is tough because it is abstract, other than the voting activity itself and the trip to the capital. They can understand the notion of making laws by relating it to our making of rules in the classroom. Behaviors that occur in the class or around the school or playground provide concrete examples of things that the rules refer to.

It is difficult for them to understand the idea of law and how it is useful. Also understanding and connecting the past to the present. The effects of change and technology such as changes in communication. Understanding that Indians had a community but interacted in ways very different from what we are used to. The idea that people are the same and yet things change, often via technology. Sometimes they can't comprehend the idea that people once never had or never lived with something that is common today. Or that people were relatively happy in their day and age. The kids often think that life must have been terrible back then. I try to make it concrete for them through such things as assignments calling for them to try not to use anything with electricity for just one night at home. For communication, we have a "no talk" morning where you must communicate without speaking.

Teacher 5A. You lecture, do discussions, bring in films. Usually nonreaders will shine on nonreading things because they have to rely on listening skills more than other students. I only have about three really disabled readers, but perhaps half of my students don't get what they need to get from reading alone.

In teaching about past time periods, there aren't many concrete examples that you can actually touch, but I do use pictures and filmstrips. Also, you

make things concrete during discussions by using examples or analogies that students can visualize, or by telling anecdotes.

It is hard for my students to understand the notion of freedom. This is hard even for adults to appreciate because when you have something, you tend to take it for granted. You need to refer to slavery and other examples that communicate what it would be like not to have freedom. In current events, talking about countries that have freedom but nevertheless also have starvation. With abstract concepts like that, you do the best you can and promote understanding through examples, but you know that you will spiral back to it sometime again. Another complex concept is democracy. I build understanding through establishing and operating a democratic classroom. Later, their understanding of the concept broadens when we take up the *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*.

Teacher 5B. We have resources such as the helping teacher who works on kids with their reading in content areas. I also tape chapters from the text or have parents read it into a tape for me. I have asked the resource room teacher to go over content that we are learning in class, but without depending on the text. We have a lot of discussion so that kids who are oral learners can learn that way. Games such as red light-green light or Jeopardy help too. Also what-if questions, class discussions, media presentations, picture books, and cooperative learning.

To be concrete in teaching about history, you talk about people, what they looked like at the time, what they wore, what they did. If time allows, visit the Michigan State University museum and look at period clothing and artifacts. Students need to be able to put faces and people and names together, to know that Ben Franklin was short and fat and about what kids at that time looked like and did. What Washington looked like with and without the wig. We talk about what the Mayflower was like, about the physical document of the

Declaration of Independence and where it is. If time allows and you do things thematically, you could even have them talk or write about how Paul Revere's horse or Jefferson's desk or Hancock's pen would feel or think about the events going on at the time.

Difficult concepts include the economics of the Civil War, the idea that the north was industrial and the south agricultural. I don't get into that in depth because I don't think they are ready for it. Slavery is another one. Superficially, they understand buying and selling and the cruelty of breaking up families and how they would be enraged by it, but they don't grasp the enormity of it, of a human being sold into bondage. Freedom is difficult because it is taken for granted. Even if I did a simulation involving taking away their freedoms, they still would walk out of here in freedom after it was over. The holocaust is difficult, beyond knowing that it was awful and terrible. Also the difficulties of a sailor sailing off into the unknown. Even today's astronauts have cameras and are basically going to a known destination. The plight of Native Americans and westward expansion of the nation, what that was really like. With all of these things, you try to give them as much as they can handle and then some, but there will be parts that they don't really grasp.

Discussion

All of the teachers emphasized the importance of forms of input used in addition to or instead of reading. These included reading to the students (often from trade books, not just texts), showing films or other visual media, using props or artifacts, or engaging in various forms of experiential learning. The first- and second-grade teachers did not expect their students to learn much through independent reading. The third- and especially the fifth-grade teachers did, but they emphasized class discussion and involvement in a

variety of activities over reading and answering questions in textbooks. Furthermore, they provided a variety of forms of assistance to weaker readers, such as pairing them with stronger readers for activities that required reading, arranging for special help from resource teachers, and providing audiotaped versions of text chapters. Students' limited ability to learn through independent study was not as big a problem for these teachers as it might have been for some others, because these teachers did not depend on textbooks as their sole or even their primary vehicle for curriculum and instruction. They viewed classroom presentations, discussions, and activities as the heart of the curriculum, with independent study and other forms of reading playing a more supplementary role. In effect, they agreed with those who argue that textbooks should be viewed as resources, not as "the" curriculum. In this regard, it is worth noting that even Teachers 5A and 5B, who teach fifth graders in an upper middle class and educationally oriented community, noted that many students in their classes would not learn what they need to learn in social studies if they had to rely on reading and independent study in order to learn it.

Even though the teachers believed that their social studies curricula were well suited to their students, they did tend to note concepts that were difficult for students at their grade levels to understand. Younger students had trouble with hierarchical geographical relationships (cities within states within the nation) and with time lines (not so much reading and understanding actual time lines, but keeping clear about how long ago various things happened). The younger students also had trouble understanding (or at least sustaining interest in) certain aspects of law and government. Also, they often lacked historical empathy, at least initially. That is, rather than being able to study people of the past in terms of their contemporary lives and times,

they tended to assume that life must have been unpleasant then because the people lacked modern inventions.

The third- and fifth-grade teachers spoke of the difficulty of getting students to truly understand certain concepts that they take for granted because they have lived with them all their lives. The third-grade teacher tried to raise awareness of this by requiring her students to attempt to communicate without speaking or to spend an evening without using electricity. The fifth-grade teachers tried to get their students to understand, in a holistic and visceral way rather than a merely intellectual way, what it might mean to lack the freedoms in our *Bill of Rights* or to live in slavery.

Although these teachers were aware of certain concepts that their students had difficulty understanding and had developed strategies to minimize this problem, they were not overly concerned about it. Again, they viewed themselves as building initial ideas about things that the curriculum would spiral back to several times in the future.

The Expanding Communities Curriculum

1. Opinions vary on what sources of input are most suitable for elementary social studies. Some prefer to stick with textbooks and other nonfictional sources of information that provide mostly impersonal accounts of general concepts or trends. Others would retain the factual emphasis but communicate as much as possible in story form, emphasizing personalized accounts of actual people or events that exemplify the general concepts or trends. Still others would extend this to include children's literature, emphasizing factually based but nevertheless fictional stories. Finally, some would include myths, fables, folklore, and other purely fictional sources. Where do you stand on these issues of impersonal text versus personalized stories and purely factual versus partially or wholly fictional sources of social studies input? Why?

2. Elementary social studies series typically follow the <u>expanding communities</u> organizational framework. Many are satisfied with this framework, but many others would like to get rid of it. What do you know about this controversy? More generally, what are your views on the pros and cons of the expanding communities framework?

3. (For primary grade teachers) Many social educators believe that the content currently taught in the primary grades is thin, redundant, of little interest to students, and of little value to them because they know most of it already. These social educators would like to get rid of most of this content (on families, neighborhoods, communities, food, clothing, shelter, etc.) and replace it with something else, such as more sustained study of history or contemporary geography and cultures. Others would retain these same general topics but would address them with more substantive, informative, and interesting content. Still others would leave things as they are. What do you think? Are you satisfied with the content currently taught in the primary grades? If not, how would you change it?

4. (For the fifth-grade teachers) Social studies textbooks at these grade levels are commonly criticized as being parade-of-facts compendia that address too much breadth (they cover to many topics) in not enough depth (they fail to develop important topics in sufficient depth to promote understanding). Do you agree with this assessment? If so, how would you change these texts? What would you retain and emphasize, and what would you delete?

5. Some argue that elementary social studies should be mostly history (and to a lesser extent, geography and civics), much as it was before we began including so much content drawn from the social sciences (sociology, economics, anthropology, psychology). Others believe that this social science content is just as important and appropriate for elementary students as the history, geography, and civics content is, so they would like to retain the approximate balance that exists at the moment. What do you think? Should we keep the content balance roughly as it is? Should we reduce the social science content in order to teach more history? Or what?

Teacher 1A. I would retain the factual emphasis but communicate more in story form to these younger children. I think they get a better understanding when they see pictures and material is put into story form. I like the "Big Book" format that takes children through a typical day or week in their country, illustrated with good pictures. This is backed up with a listening center where children use smaller versions of the book to listen to the story again on tape. I do think that folktales could be added, but I wouldn't want a major emphasis on them in social studies. I would want children to understand that these were folktales and not actual people or events.

Concerning the expanding communities framework, I think that you can start with family in first grade and neighborhood, but not stay there for the whole year. Move on to something else, such as comparisons of local family life with family life in other countries. The curriculum at this grade level is thin and bland, and we could use additional material. Obviously, I don't think that you need to keep everything within the expanding communities sequence, because I teach world geography and cultures to first graders. I find them ready and eager to learn certain aspects of these topics, and I believe that this helps lay a foundation for later grades so they don't get overwhelmed when the social studies curriculum suddenly gets crowded.

I am not happy with the primary grades curriculum as it is. I would like to see more contemporary geography and cultures, including comparisons of familiar local family, neighborhood, and school life with parallels in other cultures. I think you could teach a little history too, but I would put more emphasis on contemporary geography and cultures. This is partly because of my own interests and greater knowledge about geography and cultures than history, but also partly because I know that our kindergarten curriculum includes a good unit on pioneer life. I think that we should keep the approximate balance we have now, but teach more history and geography, especially in the early grades.

Teacher 1B. I am always looking for trade books and supplemental materials. I wouldn't use many myths, fables, or folklore, but I would use the other types of materials mentioned. Another good source is material written by children who lived in earlier times. All of these sources have their place. One thing we try to teach students is some sense of the different kinds of source materials that exist and what can be expected from them compared to one another.

Our district's social studies curriculum committee decided to stick with the expanding communities framework. We didn't find anything else that was agreeable and that we felt was age appropriate. However, we supplement the expanding communities content with more geography and current events. We don't agree that the children already know these things in the expanding communities curriculum. If anything, today's kids may know less about this than they used to because they are less involved with their parents who are now busy working. Parents don't spend as much time as they used to taking their kids places, teaching them things. Many of our kids have not traveled much nor gone on vacations out of the area. Many of them don't know what the word "community" means, and three or four had never seen maps prior to this year in my class. They know about their own family experiences, but not about the variety of family lifestyles that exist today. We left study of the state at fourth grade because kids that age are starting to listen to the news more and can appreciate a visit to the capitol. Younger kids only see a pretty building but don't understand what it is for.

I would keep the expanding communities content but enhance all of these topics with a multicultural approach, getting kids to compare American families with families elsewhere. This is important for people skills and also for making study of the family more interesting. Developmentally, first graders are not ready for history, which won't make much sense to them until Grade 3 or 4.

Any history that you try to teach in first grade would have to be age appropriate. First graders don't have much time sense yet and are not ready for a whole year of chronological history. I think that all of these different subject areas are important and I would keep roughly the present balance. Some of them won't be addressed in much depth until high school, especially anthropology or psychology.

Teacher 2A. We do use folklore, especially in teaching about Native Americans. The children enjoy the stories and we approach them by asking why they think someone would come up with that kind of a story. It's like interpreting a picture--interpret the story by telling why you think people wrote it. We also would mention Paul Bunyan and other folklore figures, but in language arts rather than social studies. The same for fables. For social studies, I like nonfiction books like the Laura Ingalls books or the Harriet Tubman book. I don't think it takes an exciting life to grab kids--it's more in the way a person writes. Some authors write dryly so that you do not feel that you are there, but when you read the Harriet Tubman book, you get angry and feel like she might have felt. When you read the Laura Ingalls books, there is so much detail and description, as well as insertion of her feelings. The best books make you identify with the characters and engage your emotions. They present information accurately but in ways that kids can respond to, rather than taking a lot of dramatic license to make it heroic.

An emphasis on the experiences of people as children helps. This is a theme in the Tubman book and in a book called Shark Lady: True Adventures of Eujenie Clark (written by Ann McGovern and published in New York in 1984 by Macmillan) about a well-known woman scientist who studies sharks. It starts with her as a 10-year-old visiting an aquarium and getting excited by what she sees. These books are fictional in that conversations are made up, but they convey the same basic facts that would be put into an encyclopedia.

The books have to be written at a level that second graders can get into. I found one on Lincoln's humor that I thought would appeal to them, but it focused on puns and other sophisticated forms of humor, so it didn't work well with them. I haven't used books on geography or culture or stories of kids growing up in other countries, but I have used some good films of that. Kids

enjoy them and they always lead to good discussion. Again, they especially respond to a focus on children in these countries, not films showing a more adult perspective.

I never gave the expanding communities framework much thought until I saw your question. It is the framework we work under. I don't have a problem with it because I think it fits developmentally. Second graders are just getting out of the egocentric stage and the curriculum is suited to their interests. I think you could teach more history if you emphasized well-written biographies and other children's literature rather than a textbook.

My students are interested in all of the things included in the curriculum, except for local government aspects of community. I don't think it would be a good idea to compact the community and neighborhood content into first grade and then start teaching history through biography in second grade. First graders aren't ready for neighborhood and community things and I don't think these should be thrown out of the curriculum. That would also involve throwing out understanding current events and how things in your neighborhood affect you and what you might be able to do about them. I don't think kids pick this up on their own. I don't know if second grade is the best place to teach all of these things compared to other grades, but they do need to be taught.

The appropriateness of the curriculum in the primary grades depends on the angle you take to teach it. We emphasize making maps, focusing on things that are real to the students. This makes the mapmaking meaningful and gets you into your neighborhood, which you then can begin to compare with other kinds of neighborhoods in other places. Students need to learn these things and it does expand their horizons. I suppose if you taught it artificially, making up maps of fictional places or places that they were not familiar with, it might be meaningless to them.

In general, I am satisfied with this curriculum. We might be able to compact some of these things a little better or build in more ethics or basic ideas of right and wrong. I would be willing to insert more biographies if I could find good materials, but I don't want to junk this curriculum and replace it with history. Even the biographies I would use at least as much for teaching ideals and values as for teaching history.

I think we should keep the current balance because all of these content areas ar important and children need them. Also, I don't think it is appropriate to teach history, at least in any great depth, until at least third grade.

Teacher 2B. All of these materials have a place, but you have to be up front about each piece of information. Only certain parts of textbooks have much value. Others are unnecessary or dated and not worth using. Folktales can give a little bit of flavor, as can music. But you have to be sure that children understand what you are trying to get across. With something like Paul Bunyan, be sure that they understand it 's fiction.

I think that the concept of expanding communities is OK but that it shouldn't be the entire program. Don't spend the whole year studying the community. It is a place to start, but it also should be a springboard for comparisons with other communities. In general, though, I don't object to the organization that starts with self and then goes to family, neighborhood, community, state, and so on.

I agree that the content is thin and redundant in the primary grades. I don't teach much of the community material from the text because my students have had much of it in earlier grades. I combine the Graphic Learning mapping lessons into five or six that focus on the meat of it. But instead of spending the whole year on these two texts that contain a lot of nonsubstantive

material, I also teach geography and maps, famous Americans, cultures, and Michigan history. Students do learn a lot about family and neighborhood outside of school, but they need to learn about it inside school as well. We need to develop a base of common understanding and ensure that they have the language to articulate this understanding.

I don't think that any of these areas of study are more valuable than the others; they are all important.

Teacher 3. I am moderate on this issue. I view history as a living thing that should include personalized stories, but it should not be so fictionalized that it is not realistic. It should not be one or the other, but a blending. I see value in fables and folklore, which we address in a unit on fairy tales in language arts. These can be related to social studies without a big problem. But for social studies, I would lean more toward the personalized stories that are factually based. They are more interesting to students than an impersonal text.

I know very little about the current controversy. I would like to see change, with more emphasis on different cultures and geography, identifying places and giving children more experiences. I do want to teach the expanding communities content, but to bring in more cultural aspects and such things as comparisons of a family in Japan with families in America.

I don't know if the curriculum is thin, but it is certainly redundant. I would like to see more contemporary geography and other cultures. Second graders could handle certain aspects of history such as Michigan Indians, their culture, and how their lives changed when the Europeans came. I don't know if it would be a good idea to try to teach chronological history in the early grades, but certain aspects of history would be developmentally appropriate.

Children could be given some experience with the children of the colonies, what it was like to be a child at the time.

You are asking a person who loves history, but children have to understand their present situation too, so we can't ignore the social sciences. I would like to see more emphasis on geography, psychology and anthropology. But we could get rid of some of the expanding communities content to have more room for history.

Teacher 5A. They are not mutually exclusive. I want a factual emphasis in my curriculum, but I add literature when good stuff is available. Also films. They capture interest more and help the period come alive for students, although I am careful to help them keep track of what is factual and what is fiction. The text is important too, though, to help kids learn about key historical events in the chronological order in which they occurred. In effect, the text is the time line.

I don't know anything about current controversies but I believe that if lower grades go through the expanding communities sequence, it makes my job easier. I can refer to relevant background knowledge or examples, such as that no one likes to pay taxes for the community but they want fire departments and schools and sanitation. So I guess I like the expanding communities framework.

I wouldn't change the text. I think that texts do what they have to do. They are skeletons. Unless there was reduction in what we were expected to teach at fifth grade, I don't know how a text could personalize much more because you have to get through this breadth of material. I like my current text because it has good questions in the side margins.

I wouldn't want to take the post-holing approach either. I want to at least touch on all of the historical periods and bridge across them to retain continuity. Besides, I might not make the right judgments about what to empha-

size, and some kids might miss out on things that they could relate to and enjoy learning about. The text complements me. If I omit something or fail to treat it effectively, the kids have another chance to learn it through reading the text.

When I taught fourth grade, I didn't like the geography text so I made sure to cover things that they would need in the middle school but I brought in National Geographic and filmstrips and my own questions to generate discussion. The text was too superficial to do what I wanted to do. I focus on meeting the goals I am supposed to address, but I approach them in the most interesting ways that I can.

I would keep the approximate balance that exists now, but emphasize meaningful understanding, not just facts. I don't want to go back to just history, geography, and civics. You have to bring in the things that make it more meaningful and give students ways to apply it, or it will just be memorized briefly and then forgotten.

Teacher 5B. I think you want to bring in things besides the text that can present history on a real-life basis. Historical fiction, letters between Abigail and John Adams, personal accounts written by people from the times. History is the story of people, and children remember it better when you give them these details, like John Hancock dressing in a flashy way. I use the book by Jean Fritz on how the *Constitution* came about.

I don't know anything about the current controversy, but I think you can teach various aspects of social studies at all grade levels if you streamline it so that the students can understand it. You could teach about the American Revolution in kindergarten. I don't know why we have to stay just within the community. I like the idea of using biographies to teach history with younger

children, or to do little skits on historical topics like the Revolutionary War.

Textbooks are good to give students an overview, but you also should use literature selections and a lot of critical thinking and discussion.

Balance is important. I love history, but students can make better connections if you get into anthropology and deal with the evolution of mankind. There is no ideal. Whatever anthropology can bring into it is good. I do think that geography and history and civics should be the core but that other things should be brought in to enrich it.

Discussion

All of the teachers were enthusiastic about using children's literature in addition to or instead of a textbook to teach the social studies content developed at their grade level. They liked the idea of a narrative format and of a good story written in ways that would engage their students' interest. However, they emphasized children's literature that is based in fact rather than purely fanciful literature (in particular, geography/culture books focusing on the lives of children and families in different cultures and biographies or historical fiction in which the dialogue and certain scenes might be fictional but the general characteristics of the people, places, and events depicted would be historically accurate). Some of the teachers saw a place for myths, fables, and folklore as supplementary to basic social studies information, but they viewed these aspects of children's literature more as language arts than as social studies and they emphasized the importance of making sure that students understood that these were fictional stories.

The teachers were generally comfortable with and approving of the expanding communities framework as they understood it, although several of them did

not have much information about it. The latter teachers tended to view it more as a collection of topics taught in the early grades than as a more general scope and sequence or organizing framework for the entire elementary school social studies curriculum.

The teachers clearly favored retaining something like the present balance over junking the expanding communities content and replacing it with a heavy emphasis on history. They mostly agreed that primary-grade children could understand certain aspects of history (especially biography and comparisons of life now with life in the past), and some of them were amenable to somewhat increased emphasis on these topics in these grades. However, they rejected the notion of beginning chronological treatment of history much if any earlier than the fifth-grade level where it begins currently in most schools. Furthermore, they rejected the notion that children learn the expanding communities content anyway through everyday living and thus do not need to be taught it at school. The teachers felt strongly that this content is important and that their students do need to be taught it, although they need to be taught it effectively rather than through the kinds of curriculum represented by current market-share elementary social studies series. In short, they shared the views expressed by critics of these series, but they did not share the solutions proposed by Egan (1986) or Ravitch (1987). Instead, their views were closer to those expressed by Larkins, Hawkins, and Gilmore (1987) who emphasized focusing instruction on those aspects of the expanding communities content that students do not learn at home and teaching them primarily through direct experiential learning rather than through textbooks and related worksheets.

There was agreement that the social studies curriculum in the primary grades is thin and/or redundant. The teachers responded to redundancy by eliminating or minimizing time spent on topics that the students had already

studied in earlier grades or did not seem to need much time on. They responded to thinness by expanding the social studies curriculum at their grade level to include considerably more emphasis on maps, geography, comparative cultures (focusing on children and families, however, not things like economic or political systems), famous Americans, and current events. Also, partly due to the adoption of the Michigan Health Model at some schools, lessons and activities on social skills and interpersonal problem solving were considered part of social studies.

The fifth-grade teachers agreed that the social studies curriculum is too crowded at their grade level, and that it is not possible to teach each unit from the American Indians crossing the land bridge to the United States circa 1980 with an emphasis on developing understanding of key ideas. So, they compromise by going into more depth on certain topics and skimming over others more quickly (Teacher 5A in particular). These two teachers like their textbooks better than the other teachers like theirs, although they still emphasize that the textbooks should be used as one resource among many, not as "the" curriculum.

Values and Controversial Material

1. What about the value aspects of social studies teaching? Some argue that certain values are basic and universal, so that they should be inculcated in students systematically. Others argue that students should learn to think critically about the values aspects of issues, but should be allowed to determined for themselves what values they should embrace. What do you believe? Why? How does this affect your teaching?

2. Some argue that elementary students should be shielded from unpleasant realities, so that elementary social studies curricula should avoid content that is controversial or that might be upsetting to students. Others view this as unnecessary overprotectiveness and argue that social studies content should portray the social world as it is, without avoiding or sanitizing its unpleasant aspects. What do you believe? Why? How does this affect your teaching?

Teacher 1A. There are values that all people should learn, such as treating people fairly, and we do teach those. It would be premature to get into value analysis and decision-making exercises at first grade, though. We also teach the Pumsy program, although this is done by a counselor rather than by teachers. Some parents object to it. I don't so much teach values in general as values that relate directly to our classroom rules. I avoid the word "values" in talking about what I do because of parental concern about Pumsy as values education. I also avoid having children close their eyes and visualize, because these parents think that you are hypnotizing their children.

I am in the middle on controversial topics. Some I wouldn't touch but others wouldn't harm the students to discuss. I bring up equality and equal rights, treating people fairly, environmental issues and conservation. I wouldn't get into war, partly because I have trouble with the notion of using force to solve problems. I couldn't avoid it this year and we did talk some about what was happening, but not about the right and wrong aspects of it. I didn't feel that it was my role to express my personal viewpoints on war. I wanted them to be aware of where the Middle East was and that we were involved in a war there, but that was about it.

I also avoid things like abortion that are probably best left for higher grades where children have more understanding. Things like crime or divorce I treat matter-of-factly. I don't get into them to any extent myself, although children might bring them up in discussion. I do make a point of noting that there are different kinds of families, but again, I treat it matter-of-factly.

Things like religion and especially politics and socioeconomic differences don't usually come up at first grade. I wouldn't initiate much about them because the kids wouldn't understand much and the parents might get upset. I respond when kids bring them up but I don't give them more than they can

handle. Usually it is easy to answer just the question they asked without getting into other details.

Teacher 1B. We have to be careful these days because there are pockets of parents who go crazy if you do anything with values. I think that the value aspects of living in a democratic society come with the territory, and if people have a problem with that, they had best pull their child out of public school. We teach about citizenship, the pledge, respect for the flag, those kinds of things. We also teach respect for people and appreciation for differences, things that are consistent with the *Bill of Rights* and the *Constitution*.

I don't get into religion or race, and if they come up, I just note that different people have different beliefs. I don't think that value analysis kinds of activities are appropriate for the primary grades, although they are appropriate for the upper elementary grades. However, I don't know how much of that I would do if I were teaching at those grades, because of the political problems it would cause me.

I don't go out of my way to talk about awful things that go on in the world, especially things that might scare the kids or create nightmares. I don't want a sanitized curriculum but I do try to be careful. By third or fourth grade, there is less need to worry about vulnerabilities or nightmares.

We did talk about the Gulf Crisis, being careful not to scare the students. The counselors said not to dwell on people getting shot and killed or bleeding and other things that they might have nightmares about. But they saw the same media coverage that we did and brought up questions that we tried to answer honestly.

I do think that children ought to be taught truer history than we were taught. They need to know about contributions that everyone made to the country, not just white people. I talk about unfair treatment in the past of

Native Americans and African Americans. I tell them about segregation in the south that I saw even in my own lifetime.

Teacher 2A. Teachers in this community are encouraged not to preach a certain way of looking at things or to say that this is right or wrong. Instead, we are encouraged to be less judgmental and to get kids involved in looking at situations and asking what is right or wrong about it or whether there is more than one way to look at it. The dilemma cards mentioned earlier are one way to do this.

I do teach values such as kindness to one another, fairness, acceptance, taking care of one another, taking care of the environment. The emphasis is on social ethics rather than on civic values such as liberty or privacy or other Constitutional things taught at higher grades. I also teach that certain things are wrong, such as stealing, physically abusing one another, unacceptable language. Actually, I don't say that the latter is wrong but just that certain language that might be OK at home or somewhere else is not OK in class. They usually accept what I say without arguing, although occasionally there will be a spirited discussion about how certain values apply, such as fairness. For sectarian religious beliefs, I try to legitimize everyone's beliefs but otherwise to stay out of it.

It's hard to avoid the unpleasant, but I don't bring it in here unless they do. We had some discussions about the space shuttle explosion, how we felt about it, but mostly that is something for the home. Fortunately, we weren't viewing it live in class. We sent messages home explaining to the parents what happened and suggesting that they talk to their children about it.

Last year, a parent of one of our fifth graders was murdered in her home, and many of the students had seen the house roped off, the police, and so on. I brought that up for discussion in class myself because I knew the kids were

talking about it. Of course, the class that the student was in had to deal with it much more than we did.

We do talk about things in the news, including unpleasant things such as racial strife. I relate experiences from my growing-up years about prejudice and mistreatment of people, then turn discussion to how people should be treated. I mention the negatives but emphasize the ideals. I don't get into poverty or homelessness or other economic problems, but they often come up, such as when students ask why a classmate doesn't have lunch money or gets a free lunch. You have to be careful there. I try to keep it simple, saying that some people might be having a hard time in their lives through no fault of their own, that circumstances have not been kind to them, so we need to help each other out through tough times.

Prejudice and bigotry are easy to talk about because kids see these as unfair and get angry about them. Harriet Tubman is my vehicle for getting into this issue. We don't do much with socioeconomic things. I don't think these students are yet very aware of how privileged most of them are. For different kinds of families, we note that there are different family configurations but do not get much into the reasons for them. I have a poster that I put up showing lots of different kinds of families. This year, the war has been a big topic.

Teacher 2B. There are basic values that children need to learn, such as safety, being kind to one another, developing friendships and cooperating. I also think that it is good for them to compare and contrast their different lifestyles and rules at home. I emphasize interpersonal social values rather than American creed democratic types of values taught later. Recently, we have had to teach a lot of general manners that didn't have to be taught before.

Most of the children don't understand how manners can pave the way for positive interactions.

I want to be as honest as I can be with topics. If something comes up that I am not prepared to talk about, I want to make a note so that the next time it comes up, I will know how to respond. I want to give an accurate answer and avoid giving the impression that there is something wrong with the question. Sometimes I will wait for a private interaction with the student, if it is something I don't want to say to the class as a whole.

I do get into controversial areas on my own initiative, such as in our unit on personal safety. We want children to know that they have every right to refuse inappropriate sexual touching. In the holiday season, I teach about all the different holidays celebrated by different cultures and religions. I don't get into meditation, though, because this is interfering with parental religion and beliefs. I don't initiate discussion of potentially upsetting things such as disasters or murders, but if children bring them up we talk about them so long as discussion remains informative and they are not being silly about it. This year we have talked about such things as the assassination of Ghandi and the Rodney King incident.

Teacher 3. Students need to be given information so that they can make informed decisions. Some values are definitely universal but students still should learn to think critically about them and be given choices. This gets tricky because values from home might not be appropriate at school and we have to keep that in mind. For the really universal values and the behavioral standards we have to insist on at school, you can usually make students see the reasons for them by talking about them and what would happen if people didn't follow them. Certainly we teach basic things like being kind to one another, understanding, or cooperation.

I think that we need to portray the world as it is yet compromise in what you present or how far you take it. In talking about slavery, we discuss Martin Luther King and things like segregated drinking fountains, and I tell them about things I observed in my travels 20 years ago. But I don't wallow in all of the cruel things that exist in the world. I don't want to encourage those who want to hear every dirty detail or upset those who might be anxious. Also, I try to leave the discussion in a positive way, talking about what we can do to make things better in this area.

Teacher 5A. We do try to examine or dissect values, talking about why people believe this or that and what is accomplished when they do. Teachers bring in their values all the time, often without awareness, but I try to be careful to use terms like "In my opinion." I also note that their opinions are important and need to be well informed. I refuse to tell them what candidate I am voting for, for example, but I talk about the process of forming criteria for what kind of candidate you want and informing yourself about options. I'm sure that I teach my values in subtle ways, but I try to be self-critical about my own value system. I also note that I will sometimes change my mind after informing myself better. Values are OK in the classroom as long as they are examined critically. Fifth graders have a tendency to critique values anyway, so you just need to guide them through proper questioning.

I can't imagine avoiding or sanitizing unpleasant aspects of the curriculum, so this issue is easy for me. Personally, I think that is the interesting stuff. We deal with slavery, the holocaust, prejudice and discrimination, and so on.

Teacher 5B. This is not a parochial school pushing a single values system. I can't tell my kids what to think. All I can do is present the time-honored values like democracy, freedom of speech, the *Bill of Rights*. But I

note that there have been changes to the *Constitution* and that there are value-based disagreements all the time about issues like abortion. I want students to think critically about value aspects of issues but determine for themselves how to apply their values. That is what this country is all about. My role as the teacher is to present the whole issue, all sides, not to impose my own value system.

I go down the middle of the road on controversial issues. You can't shield children because the media won't allow that to happen. They know a lot about what is going on in society today. You can help them put it into perspective and clarify according to the values of their families, and I think that is important. You have to do it subtly, you can't preach. But I avoid a great deal of the violence and gore, mass murders, and so on. I might talk briefly about Jeffrey Dahmer, but not dwell on the sensationalism.

In history, I get into things like Indians scalping people or the many things that whites did to the Indians. Also things like why labor unions got started, sweatshop abuses, selling of rotten meat, and other things that the muckrakers talked about. But I also balance it, raising questions about whether unions could become too strong or about corrupt union leadership. In general, I try to draw out both sides and let the students make choices for themselves. I try to avoid preaching to them or pushing my own views.

Even if I were teaching in the earlier grades, I would want to avoid sanitizing the curriculum. Kids already know a lot about controversial issues and can discuss them. We avoid abortion, however, because the school board doesn't want us to talk about it.

Discussion

Although they are careful to avoid teaching sectarian views, the primary grade teachers do teach values that they view as universal. These tend to be Golden-Rule morality values in the interpersonal domain--kindness, caring, fairness, respect and consideration for others. They do not get into civic or political values much because they do not get into government much, although some of this is noticeable by third grade. The fifth-grade teachers do get into American creed values, especially in the process of teaching about the *Bill of Rights* and the *Constitution*. Also, these teachers talk about their role more in terms of guiding their students to analyze values than in terms of teaching them what values to adopt.

The teachers differ considerably in their views on handling controversial topics. None of them wants a sanitized curriculum that deliberately distorts what children learn about the social world. However, some of them avoid or minimize their introduction of unpleasant or controversial material and handle themselves carefully whenever students bring these topics up themselves. For unpleasant topics that might threaten young children's sense of security (war, murder, natural disasters), some teachers try to minimize the potential for anxiety or nightmares by keeping discussion of the topic to a minimum, answering only the question asked, and concluding on a positive note by providing reassurance or emphasizing what can be done to avoid or minimize the problem. With potentially controversial topics, especially sectarian religious beliefs or practices, the teachers tend to honor diversity by indicating that different people believe different things and that is OK. Some of them follow up by teaching about (or inviting family members to come and teach about) the various beliefs and practices represented in the classroom. Certain topics are

sufficiently taboo that some teachers will avoid or cut off discussion of them (rape, abortion).

The teachers tend to be very aware of their roles as public school teachers, so they try to both avoid imposing their own personal or sectarian views on students and to honor diversity in general and the particular beliefs and practices represented in the community in particular. Within limits, they tend to be willing to avoid practices that certain parents object to, such as meditation or traditional Halloween decorations. However, they do believe that certain values are both sufficiently general and sufficiently important that they need to be taught and insisted upon, regardless of what might be considered appropriate in the home. The most prominent among these are the notion that the children should respect one another and solve interpersonal conflicts without resort to violence and the notion that certain forms of sexual touching of children are inappropriate and represent child abuse when done by adults, including relatives.

Variety and Integration of Learning Activities

1. It often is argued that children (especially in the primary grades) need to represent their learning through multiple modalities (not just talk about it) if they are to develop complete understanding. Consequently, teachers' manuals often call for having students draw or paint, construct murals or displays, engage in pantomime or role play, stage dramas or pageants, and so on. Do you believe that such artistic, dramatic, or multisensory learning activities are essential to a good social studies curriculum? If not essential, are they desirable? Is there anything important that they bring to the program that wouldn't be brought through more typical activities and assignments built around content-based discourse (recitation, debate, discussion) or writing assignments (worksheets, research reports, critical analysis and synthesis)?

2. Some argue that elementary social studies teaching should emphasize an inquiry approach in which students learn to develop information in much the same ways that social scientists do. Others argue that this is premature for elementary students, and that elementary social studies should emphasize basic social knowledge and skills

needed for understanding and functioning in everyday living. What do you believe? Why? How does this affect your teaching?

3. Some argue that across-subjects integration should be emphasized because it makes for more natural, holistic learning. Others argue that much of what is done in the name of integration has only trivial value for teaching one or more of the school subjects involved, and they fear that too much emphasis on integration will damage the coherence and thrust of the curricula in the various subjects. What do you believe about across-subjects integration? Why? How does this affect your teaching?

Teacher 1A. The key word is creativity. We need to allow children to be creative, be problem solvers, become independent and do things on their own. Give them an idea and let them use their ability to create something on their own. Social studies allows for a lot of art. Children can learn something and then apply it in creative form through arts or drama. This helps them to pull together what they are learning and to deepen their understanding. Even just getting them to talk to each other by working in pairs will help them to re-think what they have heard and deepen their understanding.

I think it would be neat if kids could learning through inquiry at this age, but I don't think they have enough knowledge to analyze why people act as they do. It would be great if we could fly to France for a week and they could take notes on what they were seeing, but I think it is premature to expect them to do much inquiry with their available knowledge and resources.

I think that integration is great when it fits naturally with what you are teaching, but that you shouldn't force it or spend a lot of time hunting for something that would allow you to combine subject matters. For example, tangrams came up in our study of China an provided a natural fit with mathematics, so that made sense. But I wouldn't have them do something like count fortune cookies just to integrate math.

Teacher 1B. I think that multiple modalities are essential in the primary grades because many kids have trouble with paper-and-pencil activities.

Sometimes even drawing pictures is hard work for them. I believe in the Chinese saying about, "If you do it, you will understand it." The more modalities you can include, the better. Kids learn in different ways, and if you provide many different experiences, you will hit something that makes it meaningful for each one.

Even at the higher grades, I think this is still important. I know that those teachers have a time crunch and it is easier to do pencil-and-paper things, but it's the hands-on projects that make things stick in kids' minds. They won't remember writing answers to questions at the ends of a chapter but they will remember the colonial house they built and put on display. But time and feasibility are problems. I have done less painting this year than before because I don't have a project area to use and I can't trust some of this year's group to work without close supervision. So the only way I can include painting is to allow a few kids to do it at a time in one corner of the room and stay with them, meaning that I have to have something to keep the rest of the class busy. So I haven't done it much.

With writing projects with older kids, it is helpful to allow them some choice of topic. Simulation and role play activities are good at those grade levels too. But you have to be careful with these things now because certain parents get upset about them.

You could certainly introduce the inquiry approach by fourth or fifth grade, but not earlier. You can model it in the early grades, but not expect kids to be able to do it.

You have to integrate for your own sanity. With the amount of curriculum we are asked to cover these days, you have to integrate or it won't get covered. You need to do it the right way, in a systematic and organized way, so that you don't lose coherence. Many teachers need training in this because

they have never had it and tend to think in terms of separate subject matters only. Integration makes sense at least for topics such as families that come up in different contexts and subject matters. When you cover a family unit in social studies you can have books relating to families to read, art projects dealing with families, math activities involving measuring the physical characteristics of family members or graphing various family characteristics, and so on.

Teacher 2A. I think that multisensory activities are essential. Artistic things are one more way for students to be actively involved and to have something to talk about later. We do little role plays, not necessarily dramatics in front of the whole class. We talk about how to get along in neighborhoods and in groups. When we go to the old school, we dress up like children from 100 years ago. Some of these things are time consuming, especially in the preparation for and the cleaning up afterwards. But many big time consumers are the best teachers at this grade level. Making a big deal out of something helps to underscore its importance and helps the students to remember it, compared to if you just stuck to reading and writing.

It's hard to determine how much they get out of teacher-led discussions. But for something specific like building a diorama, each individual has a specific thing to talk about and you can see exactly what they know about it. Unless I had them make some kind of written or pictorial response to every group discussion, I wouldn't know what they got out of it. Also, for this grade level you need variety for left brain/right brain reasons. Things like painting or drawing or constructing complement discussions and movies and so on. It helps students to order their thoughts to draw or interpret what they have experienced in some way. It helps them to put it all together.

Drawing or painting is helpful because it gives them more time to think. They are not all verbal and ready to speak out when you ask them something on the spot and their vocabulary isn't developed enough in many cases to carry on good critical thinking discussions. But they can draw it and you can have a lot of insight into things that you might not have known were there. Their drawings may look primitive, but there still will be many things represented in them. Making a map of a place that you would like to be is easier than trying to write a description of it or even to talk about it. The writing and talking come easier after the drawing, after they have had a chance to put thei. thoughts into pictorial form. [However, at this point the teacher went into an example of how a word web developed on the chalkboard was used to generate ideas about the concept of a home before having the students write about it. She noted that this seemed to work even better than having them draw homes first. Thus, to a degree, she switched sides of the argument here, at least temporarily.]

Another advantage of drawing or painting or constructing, but one that works with word mapping too, is that children can do it in pairs or small groups. There is benefit in listening to teach other and getting ideas to build on. Drawing or painting takes less trouble and materials than construction, but kids like three-dimensional things more than pictures. They are more fun to do because they don't do them as often and they are more dramatic to look at. But I don't do dioramas or three-dimensional models often, I guess because it takes more skill than most of them have and the trade-off is frustration. The frustration of many is not worth the success of a few. So we do a lot of drawing and painting. I have never used pantomime and don't do dramas or pageants within the room, although my students will be involved in a pageant as part of the school's celebration of Black History Month.

Debate can be an exciting way to get kids thinking. Throw out a devil's advocate question and get them to argue against me. They love to show me in as many ways as they can that I am wrong.

You could teach social studies at second grade without using crayons or art supplies, but you would be going away from where their interest level is. Communicating and interpreting their learning in this way is so natural for them at this age, we ought to take advantage of it. They enjoy what they are learning more and remember it longer. I do use worksheets, recitation, discussion, and simple levels of critical analysis in each unit, and usually drawing and arty things. I don't have them draw pictures of rules, although I could. Drawing or painting is especially useful for topics such as maps and globes, geographic features, neighborhoods in the past, or Michigan. Things that are physical and spatial rather than abstract.

I don't think that inquiry or a problem-solving approach is too sophisticated for second graders. I think it has a place in teaching social studies. Have them look at pictures of times or places, people, or social situations, analyze them, and learn in that way along with the other ways that we emphasize. For our Family of Man kits, we have artifacts for them to handle and manipulate and we ask them to think about how people might have used them and for what purposes. We have materials from early New England, the Hopi Indians, a country in Africa, and Russia, so they are looking at cultures different from their own and artifacts that are not familiar to them. I find these inquiry activities interesting and useful, although as part of a larger approach rather than as the whole approach.

I have been doing more integrating lately, although I haven't yet made it a complete program. There are advantages to it because you can read it, eat it, live it all day long. I could focus on social studies topics and build

everything else around them. I have started integrating with reading and writing, using stories about quilt making and other aspects of pioneer life. Student interest is so high that they often read books two or three grade levels above second grade but enjoy them nevertheless. So there are advantages to integrating other subjects into social studies.

A disadvantage is that it takes a lot of work and preparation to get started. Also, although pulling in these other areas enriches social studies, you can carry this to overkill. But I like the idea of using an overarching topic theme from social studies and including literature readings that fit with the topic and writing assignments that include research on the topic. In summary, I think that there is more positive to it than negative. [This teacher talked solely in terms of integrating other things into social studies, not vice versa.]

Teacher 2B. I think that the multimodal approach is essential, although it is important to make sure that students understand why they are involved in these activities. Tie them to the learning goal.

These activities impact memory. If you have a good time doing something and it has a positive impact on you, you will remember it. If you are doing something, eating something, making something, your memory will be more acute than if you just listen to someone talk to you. When you are reenacting events, you get a better sense of how the person might have felt or how the situation might have been at the time. This helps memory too. Also, learning should be fun, and children enjoy these activities.

Concerning inquiry approaches, I think that we are once again headed toward teaching children how to collect, record, and analyze information, and that this is good. Second graders are limited in their research potential because of their limited reading abilities, but even here, recent changes in

reading instruction have put more emphasis on reading for information and understanding. However, I think our emphasis is still more on the practical or everyday life applications than on creating little social scientists. Mainly we try to help students learn how to get information and think about it.

I think integration is very important. I mentioned how music could interface with history. I think that the more you can integrate, the better understanding you will have for a total picture. We tend to study too many things in isolation.

But you do have to keep focused on the goal. You could get into so many art projects that you would lose the focus of why you were doing them in relation to social studies. I would question spending a week making tepees or canoes in a unit on Native Americans.

I think we could integrate more with social studies than we have in the past. For example, integrating math through graphing or science through things like our trip to the farm.

Teacher 3. I would say that multimodal approaches are essential at this grade level. Also desirable, because they may make the difference between successfully connecting to an interest level and enabling students to appreciate the value of what they are learning or to experience it in a more active way. So it is important. Some activities like collages can take a lot of time, but a mural or a graph can be done quickly if you make the proper preparations. You can tack up a mural on the back chalkboard and allow students to work on it a few at a time during free periods over the course of a week, and use this as a culminating activity. I might occasionally do plays or something else that is time consuming, but typically I will look for activities that have these characteristics but are quicker or easier to do. Sometimes I ask the art teacher to do a connected art project.

Concerning inquiry, I lean more towards emphasizing social knowledge and skills, but I think my students can do some inquiry with enough guidance and structure. You have to give them complete procedures to follow or examples or goals.

Social studies teaching should be integrated. That's important and the way education seems to be leaning, at least for us in language arts right now. Discussions this past year have emphasized integrating math or social studies into language arts, but I can see the concern for social studies getting lost. You would have to make sure that you had distinct social studies curriculum and that the subject didn't get trivialized. So long as your goals were met, I don't think it would make a difference whether it was within social studies or language arts time. I think it is easier to retain social studies if you teach it for 45 minutes a day three days a week than if you tried to fit it in for 20 minutes each day, because it can get lost too easily. It does get lost in a lot of classrooms.

Teacher 5A. I see the artistic and dramatic as desirable but not essential for fifth graders. I see multisensory learning as essential for all kids because different ones learn in different ways. Variety is important. You want recitation, debate, discussion, writing assignments, worksheets, research reports, and all of the other things you mentioned. I don't stress art much, in part because I am not at all artistic myself. When I taught in lower grades, we did a lot of plays and role taking. We don't have much time for that in fifth grade. Also, I believe that discussion and devil's advocate questions and the other things that I emphasize in my teaching are effective with fifth graders. Also, my kids will be headed into middle school where they will have a lot more straight lecture and textbook experiences, and I need to

get them ready for that. This is also why I do a variety of testing situations with them.

Concerning inquiry, you need knowledge and skills to understand and function, but you also need to pose questions and engage in inquiry. I have always emphasized this. People need to have some interaction with what they are learning, and my approach worked as well in second and third grade as it does in fifth. I had to use more concrete analogies, but the approach was the same. Get them thinking about how they might have done it differently, why people didn't do it this way at the time, how their answer is affected by what they now know in hindsight.

The question about integration seems academic to me. You are constantly changing your content to make it relevant to this year's group, and integration helps me do that. I can't use it all the time, because I would never get anywhere and I would sometimes have a watered-down version of what I was trying to do. So, I often integrate with my literature or writing, but not always.

I don't worry about the coherence issue in relation to integration because when I do integrate, I do it in part to get more coherence. Otherwise, I wouldn't do it at all. I do less integrating now than when I was younger because I've found that it is not always effective to choose a central theme and try to pull everything from that theme. At my grade level, I have some fairly distinct subjects that I need to teach. A lot of the integration comes at the level of checking for understanding, through application questions and writing assignments.

Teacher 5B. Multiple approaches are essential and I do employ them. Sometimes this is the only way a particular child will take ownership and become an active learner. If they are just listening, or even if you have a discussion but only a few children participate, most may sit passively.

If they can engage in inquiry using computers and other available technology, then I say go for it. The kids can work with that picture on the screen and all that information. It's like a miniature time machine. There should be more opportunities for students to do things or at least simulate the real things, not just read about them. If I had the equipment, I would have the students drawing, plotting longitude and latitude in the classroom. They might simulate a ship, plotting its course. There might be strings all over the place and multimedia aspects.

Integration has to happen. You have too much volume to teach so you have to integrate. But losing continuity or coherence is a danger. You can't just pick and choose what your favorite things are to teach--you have to follow the curriculum to some degree. I can't just choose to teach explorers but skip the Revolution because it doesn't fit with the literature that I am teaching.

Discussion

All of the teachers believed that multisensory input and multimodal activities are essential to effective teaching of elementary school children. This was emphasized even by the fifth-grade teachers, although they did not think that the artistic and construction projects commonly used in earlier grades had as much importance at their grade level.

In explaining their views, the teachers emphasized not just that students enjoy these activities but also that the activities provide opportunities for students to process and synthesize their learning, and to communicate their ideas about their learning, in ways that would not occur otherwise. Also, many of these activities are memorable and have the effect of fixing the learning in the students' minds more permanently. Other rationales included the notion that variety in activities is important to respond to individual differences in

learning styles and preferences, the notion that artistic and construction activities are necessary in the early grades because children cannot yet learn efficiently through reading and writing, and the notion that the products that children create in the process of carrying out these activities provide teachers with assessment information that supplements what they learn about students' understanding through discourse.

The teachers tend to value inquiry approaches, although those working in the early grades believe that the value of such approaches is limited at their grade levels because the students have not yet developed enough background knowledge and independent learning skills to be able to engage in independent learning very successfully. The second- and third-grade teachers believe that their students can engage in certain forms of inquiry if given sufficient guidance, and they believe that inquiry has a place in the curriculum. Some of the teachers reported engaging their students in what they called "inquiry," although much of this was teacher-led discussion in the whole-class setting rather than individual or group investigation and preparation of a report on some question or topic. Teacher 5B expressed enthusiasm about her students conducting inquiry via computer access to data bases, although she does not have access to the equipment that would allow her to use this approach currently.

The teachers expressed positive views of the value of curricular integration, although they emphasized accomplishing this in natural ways that facilitated one's social studies goals, not through artificial means of dubious curricular value. The teachers emphasized integration both as a means to save time and address the breadth/depth issue and also as a way to make the learning more meaningful and connected for the students. Some teachers were currently

attempting to increase the degree of integration in their teaching, although Teacher 5A reported that she now does less than she used to.

Staying Current

1. Some believe that elementary students at particular ages and grade levels are pretty much the same as they always were. Others believe that social mobility, television, and other aspects of modern society are producing children who are different in many ways from the children of the past, so that a different kind of elementary social education is needed for them. What do you think about this? How do today's kids differ from those of 10, 20, or 30-plus years ago, and what does this imply about elementary social studies?

2. Can you relate examples of times when you found that something wasn't working in your social studies teaching? In each example, what made you decide that change was needed and what did you do?

Teacher 1A. Kids have become more visual learners who are used to watching things on TV. It's harder for them now just to rely on oral discussion.

You have to avoid using KWL too much or it loses its importance. [Teacher said that she is always making adjustments, but couldn't think of any other examples.]

Teacher 1B. Today's kids are having to grow up faster and deal with situations that didn't exist in the past or that were sheltered from them. Some kids have moved around a lot or had friends or relatives die of crack or meet a violent death. Kids who are not getting good parental upbringing at home need to see that there are other choices and to develop hope that life does not have to be that way. Teachers have to be prepared to deal with the complexities involved in divorces and reconstituted families. You may send something home to be signed on Friday but the kid put it in his book bag and took it to his dad's house where he left it, and now it is Monday and he's back home with his mother and doesn't have it. You may have to have double conferences for

certain kids because both parents want to come but can't sit at the same table together and be civil.

I don't think that today's kids are any brighter than in the past or that their skills are any more developed, but they are exposed to a lot more information than they used to be. Sometimes they are lacking in basic things like knowing how to use the scissors.

Recently, I had a problem with a map activity that the other first-grade class handled without trouble but my class couldn't. So, I shifted to an activity intended for the kindergarten level that used a large piece of paper and blocks and cubes for structures, rather than abstractly trying to draw a map of the classroom with just pencil and paper. In general, I will stop an activity if it is obvious that it is not working with most of the students. I will go back and try a different approach, reexplain, ask for questions, whatever is needed to fix it.

Teacher 2A. Kids are more sophisticated now, especially due to television. They still need to learn about the same basic topics, but the world around them has changed a great deal and I have to be ready to talk about whatever they bring into the classroom. Also, some things that used to be there are missing, such as knowledge of nursery rhymes. Most kids don't learn them anymore. They have a lot more electronics knowledge now, including using computers, sometimes even to write their own stories and print them.

I think we have to work harder to keep their attention now. It's almost like the premise that "Sesame Street" is built on--do things shorter or quicker in order to maintain attention in whole-class activities. I don't know if television is the reason, but I do think that children have shorter attention spans now.

They seem less tolerant in personal relations, more impatient with each other, unless that is just this year's group. They do seem to have more general knowledge of families, ethnicity, neighborhoods, transportation, and so on, mostly from TV. You can see the influence of PBS programs on science knowledge, such as awareness of inventions and of other parts of the world. They seem more knowledgeable about things going on in the world, especially in news about hot spots such as Iraq. They may not know where these places are located on the globe, but they know about current events.

We have had to put more emphasis on personal safety, child molestation, and related topics. We teach kids how to handle uncomfortable situations with both peers and adults. In general, though, kids are still more the same than different--they are still curious and still like learning. I don't buy the argument that kids learn most of the expanding communities content on their own outside of school. They may have some street knowledge or disconnected observations, but they haven't drawn their ideas together. Also, much of what they have learned about their own homes and what is appropriate behavior there may not be shared by most or even many in the larger community. Also, with frequent divorce and parents busy with jobs, children don't get as much information from parents as they used to.

We changed our school's primary social studies curriculum from an emphasis on the self to an emphasis on groups because we felt that the students were already heavily into themselves and needed to learn more about accepting and getting along with others. Beyond that, there is change that has to occur each year due to differences in the chemistry of the group or the interests of the students. This year they didn't go for the map adventures (listening to a cassette and takin a "map adventure"), perhaps because the unit was taught by

a student teacher. If students had shown more interest, I might have scheduled more activities in that area.

When we visited the old school this year, we did a map that didn't turn out well. It wasn't too difficult for the students; my directions weren't complete enough and I didn't have the time to make it better. You always have to make adjustments because you are dealing with things that students haven't had experience with before and some groups pick it up faster than others. The main thing that didn't work with these students, which I stopped doing, was relying on a textbook as the basis for the curriculum. It wasn't relevant for them to look at pictures of someone else's neighborhood as a way to study neighborhoods. Instead, we study ours.

Teacher 2B. Today's kids are different. Many of them have not learned basic manners, so we need to emphasize that more at school. Family lifestyle today is at such a fast pace that many things are just dropped by the wayside. Schools are having to pick up areas that they didn't have to touch on as extensively before. Also, children are exposed to more adult situations earlier than they should be. Adults are sharing or allowing children to eavesdrop on conversations and don't often realize how much children can absorb. This is not always good for the children.

There have been both positive and negative changes. Children are more knowledgeable about many things. Parents now have higher expectations and often treat children like little adults. But their emotional level is still childish. They haven't had the experience and background to understand many situations. I wonder if enough time is spent today spending time with and socializing children. I think that TV takes away a lot of time that should be spent with parents or doing family activities.

I have made curriculum changes to adapt to my students. Second-grade curriculum materials overdo community roles, which my students have studied in kindergarten and first grade. They often have 12 lessons on something I can cover in one or two. It is often useful to revisit topics that they have been exposed to before, but use this as a springboard for new discussions rather than just repeat everything. Establish common understandings and then move forward. You have to keep your educational purposes in mind. An activity that students like is not a good one if it doesn't teach them something worth learning.

Teacher 3. Children are now more mature and aware, informed through television, although not always informed correctly. This affects me in social studies because I have to keep them motivated, get them to see the content as interesting and important. The content hasn't changed much other than when we talk about the communication unit and how we interact that way. They bring more into our discussions about community and government. They are more knowledgeable.

Early in my teaching, I relied too much on a text. I like my current text but would like to see more cultural things in it. In trying out things over time, I found that children were more interested when I brought in other things and included more activities.

One lesson that hasn't worked well is teaching the idea of responsibility to one another, especially early in the year when the community notion hasn't developed yet and they are still operating more as individuals. We brainstorm about ways that they might help one another and work together, and we try to move toward cooperation and away from tattletale things that are common in earlier grades.

Another one that didn't work well was a Magic Circle-type activity in which you rolled a ball and the person who caught it was supposed to tell something about himself or his family. In another version, they were supposed to share something good about someone else. Early in the year, when students didn't know one another very well and they had trouble verbalizing, this type of activity didn't go well.

Teacher 5A. It is harder to teach social studies now than 20 years ago, but also more rewarding. Kids are now bored more easily but they ask more questions. They have been raised with the "Sesame Street"-type technology. I used to try to teach that way myself, but recently I have been getting away from that. I try to fire them up to get into something, but I also want them to delve more deeply into things and sustain their interest. If I can hook their interest at the beginning, I can usually sustain it.

Teachers no longer have the automatic respect that they used to. Teaching 20 kids today is tougher than teaching 40 was back then. You have to earn their respect and constantly prove yourself. You can't just be a teller of information and a grader.

Manners are no longer taught very much in the family, because we don't all eat at the same time anymore or sit down and discuss our lives at length. I think it is important for me to model the giving of respect and related social behaviors.

Parents seem less respectful of teachers now, and more defensive, often denying that their child could have done what you are suggesting. So it helps to show that you respect their child and have a personal relationship with the child, as well as to be able to cite several anecdotes to support your statements about the child. You have to show them that you care about the child and

share the same goals as they do. I think we may be seeing a trend toward renewed emphasis on family life, and that is a good thing.

Activities not working perfectly happens every day. I deal with it by bringing the students in to help me figure out what the problem is. Sometimes they will say, "Well, you lost us right about here." Usually, I will see them yawning or fidgeting before it gets to that point, and I will shift to bring in analogies or something that relates better to them. When something isn't working, you have to generate something else. If I have tried everything I could think of and it still isn't working, I will stop the lesson. Why beat a dead horse? I usually have fallbacks--questions or activity suggestions gleaned from teachers' guides or past experience.

Teacher 5B. Today's children are more sophisticated at an earlier age, more developmentally advanced than 20 years ago. Even in menstrual cycles. Many more fifth graders have them in place now than in the past. They are affected by the TV, the mobility, the divorce rate. I have had classes where two-thirds were from single-parent families. Many are distracted by such problems when they walk into the classroom.

Fifth-grade boys used to be naive but they are not anymore. They have considerable knowledge and vocabulary about sex and sexual innuendo. Lots of bits and pieces about history and life and violence. More violence than I have seen before, always talking about "popping somebody off." That makes it more important than ever to talk about democracy and values and rights and conflict resolution. They are used to being entertained by TV, so we have to work harder to maintain interest.

You have to learn to monitor your class closely to realize when things are not going well. New teachers often think that a lesson has gone well

because 10 kids have responded, but the other 15 might have been glassy eyed. You also need to call on kids who don't have their hands up.

I once stopped a lesson on longitude and latitude because the kids just weren't getting it. I wanted them to locate cities using their coordinates, but the kids didn't understand enough to do it. We ended up putting a grid on the floor and having a living grid where we put children at different places and described their coordinates.

In history at fifth grade, students have trouble understanding the significance of the French and Indian War. I have had to stop and insert some games and discussions to help them understand the notion of taxation without representation and why people were angry about that.

Discussion

The teachers believe that students are pretty much the same as they always were in the most fundamental ways, but they have noted differences in recent years. In particular, they find that children are now more attuned to the visual emphasis and quick pacing of children's television and that they are correspondingly less prepared to sustain attention to and learn from explanations or discussions. Also, their heavy exposure to television makes them more knowledgeable than they used to be about the world around them, about current events, and about "adult" topics that children didn't used to learn much about until later ages. These changes have mixed effects on social studies teaching. The teachers report having to work harder to sustain attention to a topic, but they also find that the students are often better informed and more able to make useful contributions to lessons.

The teachers also report that dual careers and other aspects of today's complex and fast-paced living have reduced the time that children spend

interacting with their parents and learning things from them. Thus, although children now know more things than they used to that are learned through the media and the children's culture, they learn fewer things than they used to from dinner-table conversations and other parental sharing of family stories or interactions during family vacations. Many of them now come to school ignorant of nursery rhymes, working with scissors, basic manners, and other things that were learned in the past through domestic activities at home. On the other hand, many come in with knowledge of sex, violence, drugs, divorce, computers, or other "adult" topics. In response, teachers have had to make adjustments in their curricula (e.g., more emphasis on interpersonal respect and good manners) as well as in their methods of dealing with the students and with their parents.

The teachers report monitoring their students regularly to see how things are going and attempting to take corrective action when things are not going well. Sometimes they simply back up and reexplain, but usually they try to come at the topic from a different way, use better examples or illustrations, or seek to enlist the students' help in determining where the problem lies. If the material appears too abstract, they may try to teach it in a more concrete way and establish certain fundamental understandings before reverting to the original lesson. If the problem appears to be even more fundamental, an inability to understand or see the relevance in a topic, they may abandon it altogether. For many of them, the teaching methods that they use now represent a major shift from an earlier approach that was focused more around textbooks and worksheets.

Concluding Discussion

The findings from each section of the interview were discussed immediately following their presentation, and there is no need to repeat all of that discussion here. Consequently, the paper will conclude with a few general observations.

First, it appears that our search for exemplary teachers to interview was successful. Insofar as it is possible to judge this from self-report data, it appears that these seven teachers were exemplary, both in general and in their social studies teaching. They offer their students much richer curricula than the ones represented by the market-share textbook series and by the over-reliance on recitation and worksheets that is so often observed in classrooms (Goodlad, 1984; Shaver, 1991). This was true even though the majority of them were not involved with the National Council for the Social Studies or with other social studies or social science professional groups or well informed about current scholarship in the area. Even their inservice professional development activities tended to focus on generic techniques (advance organizers, KWL, cooperative learning) rather than on topics specific to social studies. However, some of the teachers had had experiences in the past with special social studies curriculum materials such as MACOS or the Family of Man materials, Teacher 1A was involved with the Michigan Geographic Alliance, and Teachers 1B and 2B had read recent scholarship in the field.

All seven of these teachers were clearly elementary teachers who espoused the role definitions and goal priorities that this title implies. However, their statements about the purposes and goals of social studies and about the ways that they approach the subject with their students did not contrast sharply with the views of theorists in the ways that Leming (1989) has discussed. Instead, these teachers' views were similar to those of the teachers

interviewed in the study reported by Brophy, McMahon, and Prawat (1991) and Brophy, Prawat, and McMahon (1991)--teachers who had been selected not only because they had reputations for exemplary teaching but also because they were known to be knowledgeable about current scholarship and issues in social education. The seven teachers interviewed for this study were mostly less knowledgeable about the latter issues but were similar to the teachers interviewed in the other study in their frustrations with elementary social studies textbook series, their views on the kinds of curriculum and instruction that their students need, and their ideas about how the social studies curriculum in the primary grades might be improved.

In particular, they advocated using a considerable range of content sources in addition to or instead of a textbook, engaging students in a variety of forms of teacher-student and student-student discourse in addition to or instead of traditional recitation, and engaging students in a variety of learning activities in addition to or instead of traditional worksheets. They used KWL and similar techniques to help their students bring relevant prior knowledge to bear and to think about what they wanted to learn about topics; they attempted to make the material meaningful and promote understanding by exposing students to a variety of content sources and by citing analogies or examples that linked the content to students' lives or to current events; and they asked questions and engaged students in activities that caused the students to process the content actively, connect it to other knowledge, and use it in a variety of application situations. The teachers' comments about relatively generic aspects of their teaching were well matched to the common elements that have emerged in recent research on what is involved in teaching school subjects for understanding, appreciation, and application, not only in social studies but in all subjects (Brophy, 1992a).

The teachers working in Grades K-3 tended to agree with recent critics who have claimed that the social studies curriculum in these grades, at least as it is represented in the market-share textbook series, is thin, trite, and redundant. However, they did not endorse the solutions suggested by critics such as Egan (1986) or Ravitch (1987). In particular, they did not accept the idea of junking most of the topics addressed in the primary grades as part of the expanding communities curriculum and replacing them with an emphasis on history and related children's literature featuring biographies, mythology, and folklore. Instead, they argued that children do not learn what they need to know about these topics through experiences outside of school and may even be learning less about certain aspects of them than they used to, even though they may be more knowledgeable about other aspects. Instead of simply junking or drastically reducing emphasis on topics such as families, neighborhoods, and communities, they advocated teaching these topics more effectively. In particular, they emphasized addressing these topics by placing more emphasis on direct experiential learning than on attempts to learn through textbooks, and they recommended taking a more comparative and global perspective by not just studying contemporary and familiar families, neighborhoods, and communities but also comparing them with parallels in the past and in contrasting contemporary cultures, using various forms of visual media and children's literature as content sources. More generally, although most of the them were amenable to inclusion of certain aspects of history in the social studies curriculum at their grade levels, these teachers believed that emphasis should be placed primarily on geography and cultures, not history, in strengthening the K-3 social studies curriculum.

Finally, it should be noted that these teachers tended to think about the expanding communities curriculum as a body of knowledge to be taught about

families, neighborhoods, and communities, rather than as a scope and sequence hierarchy that had to be followed scrupulously in order to avoid exceeding children's "expanding horizons." None of the teachers thought that first-graders' abilities to understand social studies content were limited to the family and school context, that second graders' abilities to understand were limited to the neighborhood context, and so on. All saw value in teaching about the past and about contemporary geography and cultures at all grade levels. However, they did not believe that elementary students were ready for chronological treatment of history much if any before its current fifth-grade introduction, and they identified several other content areas (especially relating to government) that they believed had only limited potential for development at their grade levels.

These teachers believed that their students were not yet cognitively ready to address certain abstract or sophisticated topics, and also that the students' background knowledge relating to certain other topics was so limited that it would not be cost-effective (in time and trouble) to attempt to teach those topics at their grades. Thus, although the teachers did not accept a straightforward version of the "expanding horizons" notion as a summary of what elementary students at the different grade levels are capable of understanding, they did believe that age-related differences in cognitive capacities and levels of background knowledge made certain topics highly appropriate and certain other topics inappropriate for thorough development at their grade levels. They also tended to believe that a given student would be ready to absorb only so much information or only certain information about a topic at a given time, so that they favored spiral approaches to curriculum planning over approaches that called for addressing a topic just once but teaching it very thoroughly at that time.

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