

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: I. Introduction

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What Is Social Studies?

In 1992, the Board of Directors of National Council for the Social Studies, the primary membership organization for social studies educators, adopted the following definition:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

Social studies is taught in kindergarten through grade 12 in schools across the nation. As a field of study, social studies may be more difficult to define than is a single discipline such as history or geography, precisely because it is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary and because it is sometimes taught in one class (perhaps called "social studies") and sometimes in separate discipline-based classes within a department of social studies.

Two main characteristics, however, distinguish social studies as a field of study: it is designed to promote civic competence; and it is integrative, incorporating many fields of endeavor. In specific and more detailed terms, these distinctions mean the following:

1. *Social studies programs have as a major purpose the promotion of civic competence—which is the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of students to be able to assume "the office of citizen" (as Thomas Jefferson called it) in our democratic republic. Although civic*

competence is not the only responsibility of social studies nor is it exclusive to the field, it is more central to social studies than any other subject area in the schools.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has long supported civic competence as the goal of social studies. By doing so, NCSS has recognized the importance of educating students who are committed to the ideas and values of our democratic republic and who are able to use knowledge about their community, nation, and world, along with skills of data collection and analysis, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving. Students who have these commitments, knowledge, and skills will be the most capable of shaping our future and sustaining and improving our democracy.

2. *K-12 social studies programs integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes within and across disciplines.* Integrated social studies programs across the nation take many forms, varying in the amount and form of disciplinary integration:
 - ▶ At *primary levels*, children often learn social studies through learning opportunities that are highly integrated across several disciplines. These often take the form of units constructed around themes. For example, teachers using the theme "time, continuity, and change" would likely engage young learners in studies using history, science, and language arts.
 - ▶ As students proceed to *middle and higher levels*, social studies programs may continue to be highly integrated and in some cases planned by interdisciplinary teams of teachers (for example, social studies, science, mathematics, humanities). Alternatively, programs may be planned as interdisciplinary courses or more exclusively linked to specific disciplines (for example, a history course that also draws from geography, economics, political science).
3. *Social studies programs help students construct a knowledge base and attitudes drawn from academic disciplines as specialized ways of viewing reality.* Each discipline begins from a specific perspective and applies unique "processes for knowing" to the study of reality. History, for instance, uses the perspective of time to explore causes and effects of events in the past. Political science, on the other hand, uses the perspective of political institutions to explore structures and processes of governing.

It is important for students in social studies programs to begin to understand, appreciate, and apply knowledge, processes, and attitudes from academic disciplines. But even such discipline-based learning draws simultaneously from several disciplines in clarifying specific concepts. A study of the concept of "the common good," for example, may draw upon some or all of the following:

- ▶ the discipline of *history*, to determine the concept's origin, study primary source documents that define and address the concept, and analyze the concept's development over time;
- ▶ the discipline of *geography*, to locate where the concept was first developed, map its movement from one continent or nation to another, and recognize the power of the diffusion of ideas as an example of global linkage;

- ▶ the discipline of *political science*, to determine the developing meaning of the concept as it is promoted or limited through existing political institutions, to study examples of actual practice related to the common good, and to acknowledge the need for citizen involvement in closing the distance between the ideal and reality;
- ▶ the discipline of *sociology*, to examine the role of individuals, groups, and institutions and their relationship and responsibility to the common good, and to develop an understanding of the complexities of those relationships resulting from the diversity of beliefs, values, and structures within and among them; and
- ▶ communication abilities from *language arts/English* and the *fine arts* to enable students to express their understanding of the concept in a personally meaningful way.

The example could be extended to other disciplines, but the point is that discipline-based knowledge, processes, and attitudes are fully utilized within social studies programs. Students in social studies programs must study the development of social phenomena and concepts over time; must have a sense of place and interrelationships among places across time and space; must understand institutions and processes that define our democratic republic; must draw from other disciplines appropriate to a more complete understanding of an idea or phenomenon; and must experience concepts reflectively and actively, through reading, thinking, discussing, and writing.

4. *Social studies programs reflect the changing nature of knowledge, fostering entirely new and highly integrated approaches to resolving issues of significance to humanity.* Over the last fifty years, the scholarly community has begun to rethink disciplinary boundaries and encourage more integration across disciplines. This process has been spurred by pressures such as the following:

- ▶ Social issues, such as poverty, crime, and public health, are increasingly understood to transcend the boundaries of disciplines, cultures, and nations. As these issues grow increasingly complex, the work to develop solutions demands an increasingly integrated view of scholarly domains and of the world itself.
- ▶ Many scholars now define themselves by the issues and problems they address and use several disciplines to inform their work. Entirely new departments and programs reflect this development. Academic programs in American Studies, African-American Studies, Biotechnology, and Medical Ethics, for example, draw on multiple disciplines and their processes to address the needs of humanity.
- ▶ Technology provides increasingly easy access to data bases that are cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary as well as to scholarship in many disciplines.
- ▶ Scholars increasingly consider themselves to be members of the international academic community and share findings regularly across intellectual and geographic boundaries.

The more accurately the K-12 social studies program addresses the contemporary conditions

of real life and of academic scholarship, the more likely such a program is to help students develop a deeper understanding of how to know, how to apply what they know, and how to participate in building a future.

It is within this context that these social studies standards were created. They pay attention to the specific contributions of history, the social sciences, humanities, fine arts, the natural sciences, and other disciplines, while simultaneously providing an umbrella for the integrative potential of these several disciplines. This characteristic is the nature and strength of social studies: recognizing the importance of the disciplines and their specific perspectives in understanding topics, issues, and problems, but also recognizing that topics, issues, and problems transcend the boundaries of single disciplines and demand the power of integration within and across them.

How Do We Achieve Excellence in Social Studies?

To achieve the vision of social studies, we must ensure that students become intimately acquainted with scholarship, artisanship, leadership, and citizenship. Excellence in social studies will be achieved by programs in which students gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to understand, respect, and practice the ways of the scholar, the artisan, the leader, and the citizen in support of the common good.

Supporting the Common Good

As citizens of a democracy, we support one of our republic's most important ideals: the common good, i.e., the general welfare of all individuals and groups within the community.

The common good is supported when all citizens become aware that the meaning and purpose of education in a democratic republic is the intellectual and ethical development of "student-citizens," young people who will soon assume the role of citizen. Individuals must understand that their self-interest is dependent upon the well-being of others in the community. Attention to the common good means putting first things first. If educators address the ethical and intellectual habits of students, other priorities will be realized.

Our moral imperative as educators is to see all children as precious and recognize that they will inherit a world of baffling complexity. Our responsibility is to respect and support the dignity of the individual, the health of the community, and the common good of all. This responsibility demands that we teach our students to recognize and respect the diversity that exists within the community.

Adopting Common and Multiple Perspectives

Each person experiences life in an individual way, responding to the world from a very personal perspective. People also share common perspectives as members of groups, communities, societies, and nations—that is, as part of a dynamic world community. A well-designed social studies curriculum will help each learner construct a blend of personal, academic, pluralist, and global views of the human condition in the following ways:

- ▶ Students should be helped to construct a *personal perspective* that enables them to explore emerging events and persistent or recurring issues, considering implications for self, family, and the whole national and world community. Social studies students need to

learn to make choices after weighing their personal expectations, along with the pros, cons, responsibilities, and consequences of those choices for themselves and others.

- ▶ Students should be helped to construct an *academic perspective* through study and application of social studies learning experiences. The social studies disciplines provide specific points of view. Discipline-based concepts such as "democratic republic," "citizen," "common good," and others help learners construct the meaning of ideals U.S. citizens hold in common. Discipline-based concepts such as "class," "race," "equal access," and others help learners ask how to live in communities characterized by both unity and diversity and how to close the gap between ideals and reality. The informed social studies learner applies knowledge and processes from academic disciplines and from interdisciplinary means to both personal and social experiences.
- ▶ Students should be helped to construct a *pluralist perspective* based on diversity. This perspective involves respect for differences of opinion and preference; of race, religion, and gender; of class and ethnicity; and of culture in general. This construction should be based on the realization that differences exist among individuals and the conviction that this diversity can be positive and socially enriching. Students need to learn that the existence of cultural and philosophical differences are not "problems" to be solved; rather, they are healthy and desirable qualities of democratic community life.
- ▶ Students should be helped to construct a *global perspective* that includes knowledge, skills, and commitments needed to live wisely in a world that possesses limited resources and that is characterized by cultural diversity. A global perspective involves viewing the world and its people with understanding and concern. This perspective develops a sense of responsibility for the needs of all people and a commitment to finding just and peaceful solutions to global problems.

Personal, academic, pluralist, and global perspectives all develop within the framework of civic responsibility that is the hallmark of the democratic national culture committed to individual liberty and the common good. These interrelated perspectives will be developed in a social studies curriculum designed to enable students to use knowledge in the following ways: to conceptualize contexts of issues or phenomena; to consider causality; to inquire about the validity of explanations; and to create new explanations and models for grappling with persistent and/or recurring issues across time, space, and cultures.

Applying Knowledge, Skills, and Values to Civic Action

It is important that students become able to connect knowledge, skills, and values to civic action as they engage in social inquiry.

Knowledge

Knowledge is constructed by learners as they attempt to fit new information, experiences, feelings, and relationships into their existing or emerging intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional constructs. Disciplinary or specialized knowledge is useful but not always sufficient for developing contextual understanding of the phenomena we seek to comprehend. In these

instances, ideas, principles, concepts, and information from a number of fields may be relevant to the topic studied. In the social studies, therefore, educators draw widely from a number of disciplines to construct curricular experiences enabling students to actively relate new knowledge to existing understanding.

If we want our students to be better thinkers and better decision-makers, they must have contact with those accustomed to thinking with precision, refinement, and clarity. We must encourage them to be critical and copious readers of the best media, print, audio, and video content, writers of reflective essays, and critics of social phenomena. An awareness of the relationship among social studies content, skills, and learning context can help us establish criteria for developing reflective social inquiry. This disposition toward reflective thinking is essential if we wish to foster democratic thought and action.

Skills

The skills that should be promoted in an excellent social studies program include the following:

- acquiring information and manipulating data;
- developing and presenting policies, arguments, and stories;
- constructing new knowledge; and
- participating in groups.

These skill categories should not be seen as a fragmented list of things that students and teachers should do. Rather, they should be used as an interconnected framework in which each skill is dependent upon and enriched by all other skills. All together are necessary for a program of excellence:

Acquiring information and manipulating data.

To develop this skill category, the social studies program should be designed to increase the student's ability to read, study, search for information, use social science technical vocabulary and methods, and use computers and other electronic media.

Developing and presenting policies, arguments, and stories.

To develop this skill category, the social studies program should be designed to increase the student's ability to use the writing process and to classify, interpret, analyze, summarize, evaluate, and present information in well-reasoned ways that support better decision-making for both individuals and society.

Constructing new knowledge.

To develop this skill category, the social studies program should be designed to increase the student's ability to conceptualize unfamiliar categories of information, establish cause/effect relationships, determine the validity of information and arguments, and develop a new story, model, narrative, picture, or chart that adds to the student's understanding of an event, idea, or persons while meeting criteria of valid social studies research.

Participating in groups.

To develop this skill category, the social studies program should be designed to increase the student's ability to express and advocate reasoned personal convictions within groups, recognize mutual ethical responsibility in groups, participate in negotiating conflicts and differences or maintain an individual position because of its ethical basis, work individually and in groups, and accept and fulfill responsibilities associated with citizenship in a democratic republic. (See Appendix A. Essential Skills for Social Studies for additional details on necessary skills.)

Values

Some values are so central to our way of life and view of the common good that we need to develop student commitment to them through systematic social studies experiences. These include such fundamental rights as the right to life, liberty, individual dignity, equality of opportunity, justice, privacy, security, and ownership of private property. They include as well the basic freedoms of worship, thought, conscience, expression, inquiry, assembly, and participation in the political process. In some instances, the social studies curriculum will focus on how values are formed and how they influence human behavior rather than on building commitment to specific values. In other instances, the emphasis will be placed upon helping students weigh priorities in situations in which a conflict exists between or among desirable values (i.e., those that form our common beliefs about rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of human beings in a democratic society). (See Appendix B. Democratic Beliefs and Values for the complete list.)

Democratic societies are characterized by hard choices. Many choices involve personal behavior; for example, should I vacation in a state that has just passed a law of which I disapprove? In a democratic society, many choices involve whether to support people or groups who advocate certain public policies. Choices become dilemmas when they involve issues that pit our most cherished values against each other. For example, we value business competition and believe that consumers should decide what survives in the marketplace, but we also believe that the public should be protected from unsafe products. Because we value human life, we vote for legislators who support helmet and seat-belt laws, but we also believe that people should control their own lives. Social studies should not dictate to students what the solutions should be to such dilemmas, but it should teach them how to analyze and discuss those dilemmas within the context of the civil discourse required to maintain a democratic society.

Sometimes the choices confronting citizens are extremely difficult, and decisions may lead to actions that require personal sacrifice—even at the risk of personal well-being or life. We generally value law-abiding behavior, for example, but we also recognize that there are times when laws represent something so wrong that they must be broken. The civil rights movement in the 1960s involved just such a dilemma, as did the choice in the eighteenth century between obeying British laws or supporting the American Revolution.

Social studies can help students search for situations analogous to these issues in both contemporary and historical settings. By learning ways others have responded to such dilemmas, students can begin to understand that choices they or their society face have been confronted by others in different times and places. By helping students learn how to understand ideals such as patriotism and loyalty and to examine the meaning of justice, equality, and privacy in specific

dilemma situations, educators can give them practice in discussing the arguments and evidence that surround such dilemmas. By guiding them to clarify the facts connected with value dilemmas and teaching them how to identify pros, cons, and consequences of various positions, educators can also give students tools that will inform their decision-making processes as they face difficult choices in life.

Although there is no finite list of persistent issues and dilemmas in social studies, the following are typical of those with which people have wrestled over time. They are often stated as one value versus another because that is the choice that often must be made. However, most issues, when framed from the perspective of two or more differing points of view, allow for a broader, more reasoned discussion rather than an immediate debate of one view versus an opposite view. If worker security is guaranteed by legislation, for example, it is often thought to be at the expense of the rights of employers, but it might also address what is best in the common interest. With that potential for complexity in mind, then, the following illustrative list of persistent issues and dilemmas is presented:

- ▶ individual beliefs/majority rule
- ▶ obeying the law/the right to dissent
- ▶ cultural variety/cultural assimilation/uniformity
- ▶ community progress/individual liberties
- ▶ individual rights/public safety
- ▶ national security/individual freedom
- ▶ national/state/local community control
- ▶ worker security/employer rights
- ▶ free enterprise/public planning
- ▶ global business competition/the national interest

Civic Action

Discussions and arguments about how to deal with these persistent issues and dilemmas go on in families, groups, and the community at large. Social studies should help public discourse to be more enlightened because students possess the knowledge, intellectual skills, and attitudes necessary to confront, discuss, and consider action on such issues. Social studies educators have an obligation to help students explore a variety of positions in a thorough, fair-minded manner. As each position is studied and discussed to determine the strongest points in favor of it, the strongest points in opposition to it, and the consequences that would follow from selecting it, students become better able to improve the ways in which they deal with persistent issues and dilemmas and participate with others in making decisions about them.

Students who possess knowledge, skills, and values are prepared to take appropriate civic action as individuals or as members of groups devoted to civic improvement. Individual and group action designed to support both individual dignity and the common good bring our nation's ideals and practices closer together. In this way, civic participation supports and extends civic ideals and practices in a democratic republic.

How Do We Meet the Social Studies Standards?

No single ingredient can guarantee student achievement of the social studies standards as set forth in this document. In general terms, public commitment, ideal learning conditions, and excellent instruction are equally important and must receive equal attention in educational settings.

Needed: Public Commitment, Time, and Resources

To provide a social studies program of excellence, the ingredient that is most often ignored, yet upon which all others depend, is public commitment. Public commitment requires that the public receive information that clearly demonstrates the importance of social studies programs for the education of all children. Public commitment also requires that the public recognize all that it takes to support excellence in social studies programs.

What does it take? Many things. But when asked to name their most critical need in implementing these standards, teachers, without exception, listed "time." Adequate facilities to foster active learning and house the multitude of materials required to maintain a high-interest laboratory setting are also frequently named by teachers, as are high-quality technology, resources, and opportunities for students to engage in meaningful learning. All of this requires more adequate funding for social studies programs.

Principles of Teaching and Learning

The curriculum standards presented in this document describe major themes and outcome expectations to assure excellence in social studies. The delivery of such a program at the level of classroom teaching is equally important and is discussed at length in the NCSS position statement, **A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy**, *Social Education* 57, no. 5 (September 1993): 213-223, reprinted at the end of this volume.

That document identifies and describes those principles of teaching and learning that must undergird all social studies programs of excellence. Those principles are:

1. Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful.

- ▶ Students learn connected networks of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that they will find useful both in and outside of school.
- ▶ Instruction emphasizes depth of development of important ideas within appropriate breadth of topic coverage and focuses on teaching these important ideas for understanding, appreciation, and life application.

- ▶ The significance and meaningfulness of the content is emphasized both in how it is presented to students and how it is developed through activities.
- ▶ Classroom interaction focuses on sustained examination of a few important topics rather than superficial coverage of many.
- ▶ Meaningful learning activities and assessment strategies focus students' attention on the most important ideas embedded in what they are learning.
- ▶ The teacher is reflective in planning, implementing, and assessing instruction.

2. *Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are integrative.*

- ▶ Social studies is integrative in its treatment of topics.
- ▶ It is integrative across time and space.
- ▶ Social studies teaching integrates knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and attitudes to action.
- ▶ Social studies teaching and learning integrate effective use of technology.
- ▶ Social studies teaching and learning integrate across the curriculum.

3. *Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are value-based.*

- ▶ Powerful social studies teaching considers the ethical dimensions of topics and addresses controversial issues, providing an arena for reflective development of concern for the common good and application of social values.
- ▶ Students are made aware of potential social policy implications and taught to think critically and make value-based decisions about related social issues.
- ▶ Rather than promulgating personal, sectarian, or political views, these teachers make sure that students: 1) become aware of the values, complexities, and dilemmas involved in an issue; 2) consider the costs and benefits to various groups that are embedded in potential courses of action; and 3) develop well-reasoned positions consistent with basic democratic social and political values.
- ▶ Powerful social studies teaching encourages recognition of opposing points of view, respect for well-supported positions, sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences, and a commitment to social responsibility.

4. *Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are challenging.*

- ▶ Students are expected to strive to accomplish the instructional goals, both as individuals and as group members.

- ▶ Teachers model seriousness of purpose and a thoughtful approach to inquiry and use instructional strategies designed to elicit and support similar qualities from students.
- ▶ Teachers show interest in and respect for students' thinking, but demand well-reasoned arguments rather than opinions voiced without adequate thought or commitment.

5. *Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are active.*

- ▶ Active social studies teaching requires reflective thinking and decision-making as events unfold during instruction.
- ▶ Students develop new understanding through a process of active construction of knowledge.
- ▶ Interactive discourse facilitates the construction of meaning required to develop important social understanding.
- ▶ Teachers gradually move from providing considerable guidance by modeling, explaining, or supplying information that builds student knowledge, to a less directive role that encourages students to become independent and self-regulated learners.
- ▶ Powerful social studies teaching emphasizes authentic activities that call for real-life applications using the skills and content of the field.

The teaching and learning document goes on to delineate additional requirements to support an excellent social studies program which lie beyond the control of the individual teacher. These include:

- ▶ continuous program assessment;
- ▶ preparation of pre-service teachers that is aligned with curriculum and teaching and learning standards;
- ▶ provision of in-service training to support teachers in understanding and implementing standards;
- ▶ community and governmental support to
 - ▶ recognize the subject's vital purpose for civic education
 - ▶ sustain teacher education and professional development
 - ▶ provide adequate funding and leadership (from school districts and state and federal government).

School as a Learning Place

Successful schools are unique places, not simply spaces. When students conceive of a school as space, they focus on "getting through it" as quickly as possible. Time and destination are foremost in their minds. Rather than having learning as the main focus, their objective is to move on, to get through. Society often reinforces this concept of school by using extrinsic motivational cliches like "finish school to earn more money." Extrinsic motivation with its emphasis on time and destination tends to corrupt true learning. Only rarely do we hear, "Stay in school and learn for your sake as a learner."

Our responsibility as educators is to imagine and create places of learning. Such places foster aesthetics, civility, ethics, openness, conversation, security, stewardship/ public responsibility, craftsmanship, and individual liberty. Although all educators must take responsibility for creating a learning place, social studies educators should be leaders in this effort.

Unless this concept of school is taken seriously, with all the necessary resource and time dimensions, curriculum and instruction will remain a symbolic adventure in rhetoric and retribution. Learning is a dependent variable, relying heavily upon a deep sense of place and community within that place. A focus on school as a learning place will help students stop simply moving "through" school and instead find the satisfaction that comes from creating and working within a place that values learning. This focus on school as a place for the community of learners will in the end be advantageous to individuals as well as to society as a whole.

The elements of curriculum; public commitment, time, and resources; powerful teaching and learning; and the concept of school as a learning place are all essential if students are to achieve the social studies standards we advocate.

What Is the Purpose of the Social Studies Standards?

Our world is changing rapidly. Students in our schools today, who will be the citizens of the twenty-first century, are living and learning in the midst of a knowledge explosion unlike any humankind has ever experienced. Because schools and teachers cannot teach everything and because students cannot learn all there is to know, this document focuses on three purposes for these standards. The social studies standards should:

1. serve as a framework for K-12 social studies program design through the use of ten thematic strands;
2. serve as a guide for curriculum decisions by providing performance expectations regarding knowledge, processes, and attitudes essential for all students; and
3. provide examples of classroom practice to guide teachers in designing instruction to help students meet performance expectations.

These social studies standards provide criteria for making decisions as curriculum planners and teachers address such issues as why teach social studies, what to include in the curriculum, how to teach it well to all students, and how to assess whether or not students are able to apply what they have learned. The ten thematic curriculum standards and accompanying sets of student

performance expectations constitute an irreducible minimum of what is essential in social studies. Along with the examples of classroom practice, these standards and performance expectations help answer the following questions:

- ▶ How can the social studies curriculum help students construct an accurate and positive view of citizenship and become citizens able to address persistent issues, promote civic ideals and practices, and improve our democratic republic?
- ▶ What content themes are essential to the curriculum at every level (early, middle, and high school) because they address societal expectations and the needs of young future citizens and are drawn from disciplines and fields related to social studies and from other disciplines and fields that are natural allies of social studies?
- ▶ What are the student performance expectations at early, middle, and high school levels for knowledge, skills, attitudes, civic ideals, and practices that encompass social studies as an integrative field?
- ▶ How can learning opportunities be structured at each school level to help students meet social studies performance expectations?
- ▶ How might performance expectations be assessed to show that students have constructed an understanding that allows them to demonstrate and apply what they have learned?

How Are the Social Studies Standards Organized?

The social studies standards present, in the next chapters of this document, a set of ten thematically based curriculum standards, corresponding sets of performance expectations, and illustrations of exemplary teaching and learning to foster student achievement of the standards at each school level.

A **curriculum standard** is a statement of what should occur programmatically in the formal schooling process; it provides a guiding vision of content and purpose. The social studies curriculum standards, designated by roman numerals, are expressed in thematic statements that begin: "Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of. . . ." These curriculum experiences should enable students to exhibit the knowledge, skills, scholarly perspectives, and commitments to American democratic ideals identified in the **performance expectations**.

For each school level, two or three examples of **classroom activities** related to each theme appear in the "Standards into Practice" chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). In each case, the performance expectations addressed by the example are identified.

Since these themes are interdisciplinary, there is often a close relationship among performance expectations across the curriculum standards. To show these connections, roman numerals representing related themes are cross-referenced in the "Standards into Practice" chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

The ten themes that serve as organizing strands for the social studies curriculum at every school

level are:

- I** CULTURE
- II** TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- III** PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
- IV** INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY
- V** INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS
- VI** POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE
- VII** PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION
- VIII** SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, SOCIETY
- IX** GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
- X** CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

Two features of these curriculum strands are especially important. First, they are interrelated. To understand culture, for example, students need to understand time, continuity, and change; the relationship among people, places, and environments; and civic ideals and practices. To understand power, authority, and governance, students need to understand the relationship among culture; people, places, and environments; and individuals, groups, and institutions.

Second, the thematic strands draw from all of the social science disciplines and other related disciplines and fields of scholarly study to build a framework for social studies curriculum design. The ten themes thus present a holistic framework for state and local curriculum standards. To further enhance the curriculum design, social studies educators are encouraged to seek detailed content from standards developed for history, geography, civics, economics, and other fields.

Who Can Use the Social Studies Standards and How?

The social studies curriculum standards offer educators, parents, and policymakers the essential conceptual components for curriculum development. Classroom teachers, scholars, and state, district, and school administrators should use this document as a starting point for the systematic development of a K-12 social studies curriculum of excellence.

State governments and departments of education can use the standards to:

- ▶ guide change to standards-based education;
- ▶ review and evaluate current state curriculum guidelines; and
- ▶ develop a state curriculum framework.

School districts and schools can use the standards to:

- ▶ provide a framework for curriculum development;
- ▶ review and evaluate current social studies programs; and
- ▶ provide ideas for instruction and assessment.

Individual teachers can use the standards to:

- ▶ provide outcome goals for units and courses;
- ▶ evaluate current practices; and
- ▶ glean ideas for instruction and assessment.

Parents and community members can use the standards to:

- ▶ understand how social studies learning contributes to meeting the broad educational goals of our society;
- ▶ assess the quality of social studies education in local school districts; and
- ▶ judge children's development as social studies learners.

Teacher educators can use the standards to:

- ▶ introduce pre-service and in-service teachers to standards-based planning and curriculum development;
- ▶ assess the instructional planning and teaching of pre-service and in-service teachers in their programs and courses; and
- ▶ guide the development of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs and courses.

What Is the Relationship of the Social Studies Standards to Other Standards in the Field?

The social studies standards will help teachers, program and curriculum designers, and

administrators at the state, district, and school-site levels develop a systematic K-12 social studies program. Using the social studies standards as an umbrella can assist program development by:

- ▶ Ensuring integrated, cumulative social studies learning at each level (that is, learning that addresses powerful discipline-based and interdisciplinary themes at the early, middle, and high school levels).
- ▶ Encouraging program designers to use the inclusive social studies themes as the basis for a curriculum design that can also draw upon other standards projects (for example, history, geography, civics) for specific grade levels or courses within the K-12 program as appropriate. Most importantly, the several social science disciplines thus find a curriculum "home" in social studies since no one discipline is sufficient in and of itself to meet the vision of social studies as an integrative field.

A metaphor can help readers conceptualize the relationship of social studies and specific, individual disciplines as they promote learning in a K-12 social studies program. Consider a musical ensemble such as an orchestra (the social studies program) as it performs a specific musical composition (a grade level or specific course within the curriculum). At certain times, one instrument (a discipline such as history) takes the lead while others (such as geography and economics) play supporting roles. At other times, several instruments (history, geography, etc.) or the full ensemble play together to fully address the composer's thematic aims. The quality of the performance is the result of the composer's creation of the music (design of the social studies curriculum), the unique qualities of individual instruments (the contribution of individual disciplines), the acoustics of the setting (expertise of curriculum planners and teachers, school site facilities, and instructional resources), and the skills of musicians and the conductor (students, teachers, program planners, and implementers) to know when and how to express the meaning of the composition (curriculum).

There is a rational relationship between the social studies standards and the standards of the several social sciences. The social studies standards address the overall curriculum design and the comprehensive student performance expectations of a program of excellence, while the individual sets of discipline standards provide enhanced content detail to ensure quality instructional programs. Teachers and curriculum designers are encouraged first to establish their program frameworks using the social studies standards as a guide, then to use the individual sets of standards from history, geography, civics, economics, or other disciplines to guide the development of strands and courses within their programs. Using these standards in concert with one another can enable educators to give adequate attention to both integrated and single discipline configurations within the social studies curriculum.

The effective use of the social studies curriculum standards will depend not only on the quality of their design, but also on the skills of educators to know when and how to integrate content, to design quality learning environments, and to construct with these standards more complete K-12 social studies programs that reflect the newest research in learning, developmental abilities of students, and knowledge construction. Only such a thoughtfully designed curriculum will carry forth a vision of social studies for the next century.

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: II. Thematic Strands

This section defines and explains the ten thematic strands that form the basis of the social studies standards. The explanations give examples of questions that are asked within each thematic strand, as well as brief overviews of the application of each strand in the early grades, middle grades, and high school.

- I** CULTURE
 - II** TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
 - III** PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
 - IV** INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY
 - V** INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS
 - VI** POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE
 - VII** PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION
 - VIII** SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, SOCIETY
 - IX** GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
 - X** CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES
-

I CULTURE

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

Human beings create, learn, and adapt culture. Culture helps us to understand ourselves as both individuals and members of various groups. Human cultures exhibit both similarities and differences. We all, for example, have systems of beliefs, knowledge, values, and traditions. Each system also is unique. In a democratic and multicultural society, students need to

understand multiple perspectives that derive from different cultural vantage points. This understanding will allow them to relate to people in our nation and throughout the world.

Cultures are dynamic and ever-changing. The study of culture prepares students to ask and answer questions such as: What are the common characteristics of different cultures? How do belief systems, such as religion or political ideals of the culture, influence the other parts of the culture? How does the culture change to accommodate different ideas and beliefs? What does language tell us about the culture? In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with geography, history, and anthropology, as well as multicultural topics across the curriculum.

During the early years of school, the exploration of the concepts of likenesses and differences in school subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, music, and art makes the study of culture appropriate. Socially, the young learner is beginning to interact with other students, some of whom are like the student and some different; naturally, he or she wants to know more about others. In the middle grades, students begin to explore and ask questions about the nature of culture and specific aspects of culture, such as language and beliefs, and the influence of those aspects on human behavior. As students progress through high school, they can understand and use complex cultural concepts such as adaptation, assimilation, acculturation, diffusion, and dissonance drawn from anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines to explain how culture and cultural systems function.

II TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time.

Human beings seek to understand their historical roots and to locate themselves in time. Such understanding involves knowing what things were like in the past and how things change and develop. Knowing how to read and reconstruct the past allows one to develop a historical perspective and to answer questions such as: Who am I? What happened in the past? How am I connected to those in the past? How has the world changed and how might it change in the future? Why does our personal sense of relatedness to the past change? How can the perspective we have about our own life experiences be viewed as part of the larger human story across time? How do our personal stories reflect varying points of view and inform contemporary ideas and actions?

This theme typically appears in courses that: 1) include perspectives from various aspects of history; 2) draw upon historical knowledge during the examination of social issues; and 3) develop the habits of mind that historians and scholars in the humanities and social sciences employ to study the past and its relationship to the present in the United States and other societies.

Learners in early grades gain experience with sequencing to establish a sense of order and time. They enjoy hearing stories of the recent past as well as of long ago. In addition, they begin to recognize that individuals may hold different views about the past and to understand the linkages

between human decisions and consequences. Thus, the foundation is laid for the development of historical knowledge, skills, and values. In the middle grades, students, through a more formal study of history, continue to expand their understanding of the past and of historical concepts and inquiry. They begin to understand and appreciate differences in historical perspectives, recognizing that interpretations are influenced by individual experiences, societal values, and cultural traditions. High school students engage in more sophisticated analysis and reconstruction of the past, examining its relationship to the present and extrapolating into the future. They integrate individual stories about people, events, and situations to form a more holistic conception, in which continuity and change are linked in time and across cultures. Students also learn to draw on their knowledge of history to make informed choices and decisions in the present.

III PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Technological advances connect students at all levels to the world beyond their personal locations. The study of people, places, and human-environment interactions assists learners as they create their spatial views and geographic perspectives of the world. Today's social, cultural, economic, and civic demands on individuals mean that students will need the knowledge, skills, and understanding to ask and answer questions such as: Where are things located? Why are they located where they are? What patterns are reflected in the groupings of things? What do we mean by region? How do landforms change? What implications do these changes have for people? This area of study helps learners make informed and critical decisions about the relationship between human beings and their environment. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with area studies and geography.

In the early grades, young learners draw upon immediate personal experiences as a basis for exploring geographic concepts and skills. They also express interest in things distant and unfamiliar and have concern for the use and abuse of the physical environment. During the middle school years, students relate their personal experiences to happenings in other environmental contexts. Appropriate experiences will encourage increasingly abstract thought as students use data and apply skills in analyzing human behavior in relation to its physical and cultural environment. Students in high school are able to apply geographic understanding across a broad range of fields, including the fine arts, sciences, and humanities. Geographic concepts become central to learners' comprehension of global connections as they expand their knowledge of diverse cultures, both historical and contemporary. The importance of core geographic themes to public policy is recognized and should be explored as students address issues of domestic and international significance.

IV INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual

development and identity.

Personal identity is shaped by one's culture, by groups, and by institutional influences. How do people learn? Why do people behave as they do? What influences how people learn, perceive, and grow? How do people meet their basic needs in a variety of contexts? Questions such as these are central to the study of how individuals develop from youth to adulthood. Examination of various forms of human behavior enhances understanding of the relationships among social norms and emerging personal identities, the social processes that influence identity formation, and the ethical principles underlying individual action. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with psychology and anthropology.

Given the nature of individual development and our own cultural context, students need to be aware of the processes of learning, growth, and development at every level of their school experience. In the early grades, for example, observing brothers, sisters, and older adults, looking at family photo albums, remembering past achievements and projecting oneself into the future, and comparing the patterns of behavior evident in people of different age groups are appropriate activities because young learners develop their personal identities in the context of families, peers, schools, and communities. Central to this development are the exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals relate to others. In the middle grades, issues of personal identity are refocused as the individual begins to explain self in relation to others in the society and culture. At the high school level, students need to encounter multiple opportunities to examine contemporary patterns of human behavior, using methods from the behavioral sciences to apply core concepts drawn from psychology, social psychology, sociology, and anthropology as they apply to individuals, societies, and cultures.

V INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Institutions such as schools, churches, families, government agencies, and the courts all play an integral role in our lives. These and other institutions exert enormous influence over us, yet institutions are no more than organizational embodiments to further the core social values of those who comprise them. Thus, it is important that students know how institutions are formed, what controls and influences them, how they control and influence individuals and culture, and how institutions can be maintained or changed. The study of individuals, groups, and institutions, drawing upon sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines, prepares students to ask and answer questions such as: What is the role of institutions in this and other societies? How am I influenced by institutions? How do institutions change? What is my role in institutional change? In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, and history.

Young children should be given opportunities to examine various institutions that affect their lives and influence their thinking. They should be assisted in recognizing the tensions that occur when the goals, values, and principles of two or more institutions or groups conflict—for example, when the school board prohibits candy machines in schools vs. a class project to install a candy

machine to help raise money for the local hospital. They should also have opportunities to explore ways in which institutions such as churches or health care networks are created to respond to changing individual and group needs. Middle school learners will benefit from varied experiences through which they examine the ways in which institutions change over time, promote social conformity, and influence culture. They should be encouraged to use this understanding to suggest ways to work through institutional change for the common good. High school students must understand the paradigms and traditions that undergird social and political institutions. They should be provided opportunities to examine, use, and add to the body of knowledge related to the behavioral sciences and social theory as it relates to the ways people and groups organize themselves around common needs, beliefs, and interests.

VI POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

Understanding the historical development of structures of power, authority, and governance and their evolving functions in contemporary U.S. society, as well as in other parts of the world, is essential for developing civic competence. In exploring this theme, students confront questions such as: What is power? What forms does it take? Who holds it? How is it gained, used, and justified? What is legitimate authority? How are governments created, structured, maintained, and changed? How can we keep government responsive to its citizens' needs and interests? How can individual rights be protected within the context of majority rule? By examining the purposes and characteristics of various governance systems, learners develop an understanding of how groups and nations attempt to resolve conflicts and seek to establish order and security. Through study of the dynamic relationships among individual rights and responsibilities, the needs of social groups, and concepts of a just society, learners become more effective problem-solvers and decision-makers when addressing the persistent issues and social problems encountered in public life. They do so by applying concepts and methods of political science and law. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with government, politics, political science, history, law, and other social sciences.

Learners in the early grades explore their natural and developing sense of fairness and order as they experience relationships with others. They develop an increasingly comprehensive awareness of rights and responsibilities in specific contexts. During the middle school years, these rights and responsibilities are applied in more complex contexts with emphasis on new applications. High school students develop their abilities in the use of abstract principles. They study the various systems that have been developed over the centuries to allocate and employ power and authority in the governing process. At every level, learners should have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to and participate in the workings of the various levels of power, authority, and governance.

VII PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

People have wants that often exceed the limited resources available to them. As a result, a variety of ways have been invented to decide upon answers to four fundamental questions: What is to be produced? How is production to be organized? How are goods and services to be distributed? What is the most effective allocation of the factors of production (land, labor, capital, and management)? Unequal distribution of resources necessitates systems of exchange, including trade, to improve the well-being of the economy, while the role of government in economic policymaking varies over time and from place to place. Increasingly these decisions are global in scope and require systematic study of an interdependent world economy and the role of technology in economic decision-making. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with concepts, principles, and issues drawn from the discipline of economics.

Young learners begin by differentiating between wants and needs. They explore economic decisions as they compare their own economic experiences with those of others and consider the wider consequences of those decisions on groups, communities, the nation, and beyond. In the middle grades, learners expand their knowledge of economic concepts and principles, and use economic reasoning processes in addressing issues related to the four fundamental economic questions. High school students develop economic perspectives and deeper understanding of key economic concepts and processes through systematic study of a range of economic and sociopolitical systems, with particular emphasis on the examination of domestic and global economic policy options related to matters such as health care, resource use, unemployment, and trade.

VIII SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, SOCIETY

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of relationships among science, technology, and society.

Technology is as old as the first crude tool invented by prehistoric humans, but today's technology forms the basis for some of our most difficult social choices. Modern life as we know it would be impossible without technology and the science that supports it. But technology brings with it many questions: Is new technology always better than that which it will replace? What can we learn from the past about how new technologies result in broader social change, some of which is unanticipated? How can we cope with the ever-increasing pace of change, perhaps even with the feeling that technology has gotten out of control? How can we manage technology so that the greatest number of people benefit from it? How can we preserve our fundamental values and beliefs in a world that is rapidly becoming one technology-linked village? This theme appears in units or courses dealing with history, geography, economics, and civics and government. It draws upon several scholarly fields from the natural and physical sciences, social sciences, and the humanities for specific examples of issues and the knowledge base for considering responses to the societal issues related to science and technology.

Young children can learn how technologies form systems and how their daily lives are intertwined with a host of technologies. They can study how basic technologies such as ships,

automobiles, and airplanes have evolved and how we have employed technology such as air conditioning, dams, and irrigation to modify our physical environment. From history (their own and others'), they can construct examples of how technologies such as the wheel, the stirrup, and the transistor radio altered the course of history. By the middle grades, students can begin to explore the complex relationships among technology, human values, and behavior. They will find that science and technology bring changes that surprise us and even challenge our beliefs, as in the case of discoveries and their applications related to our universe, the genetic basis of life, atomic physics, and others. As they move from the middle grades to high school, students will need to think more deeply about how we can manage technology so that we control it rather than the other way around. There should be opportunities to confront such issues as the consequences of using robots to produce goods, the protection of privacy in the age of computers and electronic surveillance, and the opportunities and challenges of genetic engineering, test-tube life, and medical technology with all their implications for longevity and quality of life and religious beliefs.

IX GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

The realities of global interdependence require understanding the increasingly important and diverse global connections among world societies. Analysis of tensions between national interests and global priorities contributes to the development of possible solutions to persistent and emerging global issues in many fields: health care, economic development, environmental quality, universal human rights, and others. Analyzing patterns and relationships within and among world cultures, such as economic competition and interdependence, age-old ethnic enmities, political and military alliances, and others, helps learners carefully examine policy alternatives that have both national and global implications. This theme typically appears in units or courses dealing with geography, culture, and economics, but again can draw upon the natural and physical sciences and the humanities, including literature, the arts, and language.

Through exposure to various media and first-hand experiences, young learners become aware of and are affected by events on a global scale. Within this context, students in early grades examine and explore global connections and basic issues and concerns, suggesting and initiating responsive action plans. In the middle years, learners can initiate analysis of the interactions among states and nations and their cultural complexities as they respond to global events and changes. At the high school level, students are able to think systematically about personal, national, and global decisions, interactions, and consequences, including addressing critical issues such as peace, human rights, trade, and global ecology.

X CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

An understanding of civic ideals and practices of citizenship is critical to full participation in society and is a central purpose of the social studies. All people have a stake in examining civic ideals and practices across time and in diverse societies as well as at home, and in determining how to close the gap between present practices and the ideals upon which our democratic republic is based. Learners confront such questions as: What is civic participation and how can I be involved? How has the meaning of citizenship evolved? What is the balance between rights and responsibilities? What is the role of the citizen in the community and the nation, and as a member of the world community? How can I make a positive difference? In schools, this theme typically appears in units or courses dealing with history, political science, cultural anthropology, and fields such as global studies and law-related education, while also drawing upon content from the humanities.

In the early grades, students are introduced to civic ideals and practices through activities such as helping to set classroom expectations, examining experiences in relation to ideals, and determining how to balance the needs of individuals and the group. During these years, children also experience views of citizenship in other times and places through stories and drama. By the middle grades, students expand their ability to analyze and evaluate the relationships between ideals and practice. They are able to see themselves taking civic roles in their communities. High school students increasingly recognize the rights and responsibilities of citizens in identifying societal needs, setting directions for public policies, and working to support both individual dignity and the common good. They learn by experience how to participate in community service and political activities and how to use democratic process to influence public policy.

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A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy

This statement is a slightly revised version of the NCSS Position Statement 'A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy,' which was prepared by the Task Force on Standards for Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies, and approved by the NCSS Board of Directors in 1992.

I. Background and Rationale

A. Introduction

These are challenging times for our nation's educators. As we approach the twenty-first century, renewal is in the air. Schools are experimenting with alternative organizational structures and educational practices. States and higher education institutions are reforming teacher education and professional development programs. Professional organizations are developing guidelines on content and methods to improve teaching.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has contributed to these efforts by reaffirming citizen education as the primary purpose of social studies and by identifying the unique goals and essential characteristics of social studies programs designed to accomplish this purpose.

The NCSS House of Delegates voted overwhelmingly in November 1992 to approve the final version of the definition of "social studies" presented by the NCSS Board of Directors: "Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and the natural sciences. The primary purpose of the social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world."

NCSS recently issued position statements on curriculum, assessment, teacher education, and professional development. This document on teaching and learning complements those position statements by describing the forms of teacher-student discourse and the kinds of learning activities that can promote citizen education most effectively. Throughout the document, we use the word "powerful" to refer to those ideal forms of social studies teaching and learning.

Powerful social studies teaching helps students develop social understanding and civic efficacy. Social understanding is integrated knowledge of social aspects of the human condition: how they have evolved over time, the variations that occur in various physical environments and cultural settings, and the emerging trends that appear likely to shape the future. Civic efficacy—the readiness and willingness to assume citizenship

responsibilities—is rooted in social studies knowledge and skills, along with related values (such as concern for the common good) and attitudes (such as an orientation toward participation in civic affairs). The nation depends on a well-informed and civic-minded citizenry to sustain its democratic traditions, especially now as it adjusts to its own heterogeneous society and its shifting roles in an increasingly interdependent and changing world.

1. Purpose of This Position Statement

This position statement sets forth a vision of social studies teaching and learning needed to produce the levels of social understanding and civic efficacy that the nation requires of its citizens. It also considers the teacher education programs and the community and governmental support for social studies needed to sustain such teaching and learning.

This document is broadly inclusive in its reference to “social studies.” The term is intended to apply to all courses or units in social studies, social science, anthropology, civics, economics, geography, government, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and topics such as ethnic studies, global education, and law-related education. This position statement focuses, however, on what constitutes powerful teaching and learning within a unified social studies curriculum, and not on how much emphasis each content area should receive.

Consequently, this statement does not outline a K–12 social studies program or suggest any particular curricular scope and sequence. These and other content issues have been addressed by previous task forces and committees in Social Studies Curriculum Planning Resources (NCSS 1990). This position statement complements the documents in that collection by shifting the focus from content (what is taught) to method (how it is taught). Recognizing that teacher-student interaction is the heart of education, it offers guiding principles portraying ideal social studies teaching and learning. The principles have been synthesized by organizing findings from the best available classroom research around a core of ideas that represent an emerging consensus of expert opinion about how to teach social studies for understanding, appreciation, and life application.

The emphasis is on principles of teaching and learning that have enduring applicability across grade levels, content areas, and scope-and-sequence arrangements. These principles are summarized in the statement that social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active.

This vision statement summarizes these principles without presenting detailed elaboration, numerous examples, or discussion of related scholarly literature. A larger document currently in preparation will provide an annotated bibliography for readers who wish to pursue the scholarly basis for the principles and vignettes that illustrate their application in various K–12 social studies lessons and activities.

The focus of this document on teaching and learning processes is not intended to imply that such processes are goals in themselves or that curriculum planning should emphasize process over content. What is worth teaching well must be worth teaching, and there are many connections between worthwhile content and effective process. Ideal curriculum planning combines content and assessment components so that they complement one another and constitute coherent methods for accomplishing social

studies goals.

In addition to displaying the characteristics described here, social studies teaching and learning must be subsumed within a coherent curricular scope and sequence. They also must be adapted to the topics and to the students taught at various grade levels. No attempt to address these complexities is made here, although some of them will be addressed in the forthcoming larger document.

2. Intended Audience

This document has been written for social studies educators, educational policymakers and administrators, publishers of educational materials, parents, and other interested parties. In particular, though, it is intended for teachers—the pivotal actors who shape the curriculum and effect change as they work with students. Articulating enduring principles that form a foundation for powerful teaching and learning, it is intended to advance social studies education as a profession, improve social studies teaching and teacher education, recognize and validate the effective practices that already exist in many classrooms, and provide a self-assessment tool for teachers.

3. Need for a Guiding Vision

There is a need for a guiding vision to assist social studies teachers in planning their instruction and focusing their students' learning. This need is derived from two features of social studies that distinguish it from other school subjects and provide special instructional challenges.

First, social studies is diverse, encompassing a great range of potential content. When taught well, its content is drawn not only from its most direct foundational disciplines but also from the arts and humanities, mathematics and science, current events, and students' own interests and experiences. This content, however, is not treated simply as collections of miscellaneous information and activities, but rather is organized within a coherent citizen education curriculum.

Second, the social understanding and civic efficacy goals of social studies place special responsibilities on teachers for addressing the ethical and social policy aspects of topics. When taught well, social studies engages students in the difficult process of confronting ethical and value-based dilemmas, and encourages students to speculate, think critically, and make personal and civic decisions based on information from multiple perspectives.

B. Social Studies Purposes and Goals

Powerful social studies teaching begins with a clear understanding of the subject's unique purposes and goals. NCSS's statement "Essentials of the Social Studies" (NCSS 1990, 9–11) identifies citizenship education as the primary purpose of K-12 social studies. Noting that concern for the common good and citizen participation in public life are essential to the health of our democratic system, it states that effective social studies programs prepare young people to identify, understand, and work to solve the problems facing our diverse nation in an increasingly interdependent world. Such programs:

- foster individual and cultural identity along with understanding of the forces that

hold society together or pull it apart;

- include observation of and participation in the school and community;
- address critical issues and the world as it is;
- prepare students to make decisions based on democratic principles; and
- lead to citizen participation in public affairs.

Curriculum components include knowledge, democratic values and beliefs, thinking skills, and social and civic participation skills. Knowledge refers to interpretations that students construct in response to their experiences in and out of school. Knowledge is not merely a fixed body of information transmitted for students to memorize. Teachers should not only expose their students to curriculum content but should also provide them with opportunities to think and communicate in ways that will help students construct a working knowledge of such content.

The content of social studies focuses on the world—near and far, social and civic, past, present, and future. Effective social studies teaching draws this content from the social studies foundational disciplines (such as geography, government, and history) and links it with knowledge that students have acquired through life experiences and the media. It builds knowledge about the history and cultures of our nation and the world, geographical relationships, economic systems and processes, social and political institutions, interpersonal and intergroup relations, and worldwide relationships among nations, races, cultures, and institutions. From this knowledge base, exemplary programs help students to: (1) develop skills, concepts, and generalizations necessary to understand the sweep of human affairs; (2) appreciate the benefits of diversity and community, the value of widespread economic opportunity, and the contributions that people of both genders and the full range of ethnic, racial, and religious groups have made to our society; (3) become ready and willing to contribute to public policy formulation; and (4) acquire ways of managing conflict that are consistent with democratic procedures.

The fundamental values and beliefs taught in social studies are drawn from many sources, but especially from the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution with its Bill of Rights. These beliefs form the basic principles of our democratic constitutional order. They depend on such practices as due process, equal protection, free expression, and civic participation, and they have roots in the concepts of liberty, justice, equality, responsibility, diversity, and privacy. Exemplary programs do not indoctrinate students to accept these ideas blindly. Instead, they present knowledge about their historical derivation and contemporary application necessary to understand our society and its institutions. Teachers model fundamental democratic principles in their classrooms, discuss them as they relate to curriculum content and current events, and make them integral to the school's daily operations (e.g., through involving students in making decisions that affect them). Exemplary social studies programs also prepare students to connect knowledge with beliefs and action using thinking skills that lead to rational behavior in social settings. These include the thinking skills involved in: (1) acquiring, organizing, interpreting, and communicating information; (2) processing data in order to investigate questions, develop knowledge, and draw conclusions; (3) generating and assessing alternative approaches to problems and making decisions that are both well informed and justified according to democratic

principles; and (4) interacting with others in empathetic and responsible ways.

Finally, exemplary social studies programs develop social and civic participation skills that prepare students to work effectively in diverse groups to address problems by discussing alternative strategies, making decisions, and taking action: to pursue social and civic agendas through persuasion, negotiation, and compromise; and to participate actively in civic affairs (e.g., by writing opinion letters to newspapers). Participation in informed public discussion of policy issues is direct preparation for active citizenship, especially when it culminates in decisions and actions that have real consequences.

The ideas set forth in the NCSS statement on the “Essentials of the Social Studies” are elaborated in its “Social Studies Curriculum Guidelines” (NCSS 1990, 12–15). The guidelines reaffirm that social studies teaching should draw from a broad range of content sources and use varied learning resources and activities. They also emphasize, however, that planning should be guided by basic and long-range social studies goals. Instruction should keep students aware of these goals, and assessments of teaching and learning should focus on the degree to which these goals have been accomplished.

Thus, a powerful social studies curriculum is unified by its purposes and goals. All of the components of such a curriculum—not only its content, but its instructional approaches, learning activities, and evaluation methods—are included in the curriculum because they are viewed as means for helping students acquire important capabilities and attitudes. By itself, the idea of cultural literacy construed in a narrow, name-recognition sense is not considered an adequate basis for content selection. Instead, content is included because it promotes progress toward major social understanding and civic efficacy goals, and it is taught accordingly. That is, instructional methods and activities should be planned to encourage students to connect what they are learning to their prior knowledge and experience, to think critically and creatively about what they are learning, and to use it in authentic application situations. Learning activities should be introduced and developed so as to make them minds-on activities that engage students with important ideas, not just hands-on activities that may or may not have educational value.

C. Assumptions About Social Studies as a School Subject

Several basic assumptions about the nature of social studies and its place in the school curriculum undergird the vision of powerful social studies presented in this position statement. These fundamental beliefs about social studies are assumed here as given.

1. Social studies is diverse. Social studies encompasses many more potential goals and content clusters than can be addressed adequately. Among both social studies teachers and the general public, there is disagreement about the relative importance of major social studies goals and content strands. Consequently, there never has been, and may never be, agreement on a single scope and sequence as the basis for a national social studies curriculum. Recognizing this, the NCSS curriculum guidelines state that goal setting and program development should be undertaken locally in response to locally perceived needs. To inform this process, NCSS has adopted a set of criteria for assessing scope-and-sequence plans and has endorsed three plans that meet these criteria as suitable for use as models by educational agencies and school districts (NCSS 1990, 17–70). Locally developed curricula should reflect the essentials of the social studies and embody the principles

in the NCSS curriculum guidelines, but their emphasis on goals and content strands can and should vary. The same assumption applies to the principles of powerful social studies teaching described here. This position statement does not attempt to prescribe ways to teach particular content because methods must be tailored to local needs. The statement does assume, however, that both the content and the methods of instruction should be selected as means to accomplish major social understanding and civic efficacy goals.

2. All students should have access to the full richness of the social studies curriculum. A complete core curriculum should be available to all students, not just gifted students in advanced programs. Tracking arrangements should not restrict important learning opportunities. In addition to acquiring basic knowledge and skills, all students at all grade levels should experience a social studies curriculum that includes ongoing engagement in thinking about social and civic problems and policy issues. This includes students at risk of school failure, students whose interests lie in other subject areas or vocational fields, and students who do not plan to attend college.

Special education students are often mainstreamed into social studies classes. This is as it should be, because all students need exposure to a diverse range of peers and opportunities to address social problems in group settings. Curricular planning for any special education students who are not mainstreamed should include full attention to social studies as well as to other subjects.

3. Teachers need adequate time and resources to teach social studies well at every grade level. The unique social understanding and civic efficacy goals of social studies will not be accomplished if it is treated as a collection of disconnected content to be covered as time allows. Social studies must be viewed as a basic K–12 curriculum component, and teachers and students must be supplied with materials and resources that reflect the students' needs and interests.
4. Social studies teachers need to treat the social world realistically and address its controversial aspects. To accomplish the major goals of this issue-oriented subject, teachers need both the freedom and the fortitude to address the real social world (not simply an idealized version) and to engage students in critical thinking about controversial topics. As they work to help students come to grips with social issues, teachers have both a responsibility to avoid inappropriate promotion of their personal views and a right to expect administrative and community support for their citizen education efforts.

II. A Vision of Powerful Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Informed by the major purposes and goals of social studies, the assumptions stated above, and the available research and scholarship, this position statement identifies key features of ideal social studies teaching and learning. These features are summed up in the statement that social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active.

These five key features are considered equally important. They are addressed in the order presented here because such an order creates a natural flow of ideas, not because some key features are considered more essential than others.

A. Social Studies Teaching and Learning Are Powerful When They Are Meaningful

Powerful social studies teaching and learning are meaningful to both teachers and students. The content selected for emphasis is worth learning because it promotes progress toward important social understanding and civic efficacy goals, and teaching methods are designed to enable students to appreciate how the content relates to those goals. Rather than memorizing disconnected bits of information or practicing skills in isolation, students learn connected networks of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that they will find useful both in and outside of school. This worthwhile content is taught in ways that relate to each student's culture and assists the student in recognizing its value. As a result, students' learning efforts are motivated by appreciation and interest, not just by accountability and grading systems. Students become disposed to care about what is happening in the world around them and to use the thinking frameworks and research skills of social science professionals to gather and interpret information. As a result, social learning becomes a lifelong interest and a basis for informed social action.

Thoughtfully planned to accomplish significant goals, meaningful social studies teaching embodies several other key features. Instruction emphasizes depth of development of important ideas within appropriate breadth of topic coverage and focuses on teaching these important ideas for understanding, appreciation, and life application. A great many facts, definitions, and generalizations are taught because understanding often-used information and ideas enhances communication within and between cultures. The most effective teachers, however, do not diffuse their efforts by covering too many topics superficially. Instead, they select for emphasis the most useful landmark locations, the most representative case studies, the most inspiring models, the truly precedent-setting events, and the concepts and principles that their students must know and be able to apply in their lives outside of school. Furthermore, teachers inform students of when and how this content will be useful to them in realistic contexts, and they follow through with activities that engage students in applying the content in simulated or real situations.

Facts and ideas are not taught in isolation from other content, nor are skills. Instead, they are embedded in networks of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that are structured around important ideas and taught emphasizing their connections and potential applications.

The significance and meaningfulness of the content is emphasized both in how it is presented to students and how it is developed through activities. New topics are framed with reference to where they fit within the big picture, and students are alerted to their citizen education implications. The new content is developed in ways that help students see how its elements relate to one another (e.g., using diagrams of concept networks or causal chains, lists of key steps in narrative sequences, or other graphic learning aids or illustrations). Students are encouraged to process what they learn on several levels simultaneously, rather than always starting with low-level factual information and only later engaging in higher-order thinking. From the very beginning, students may be asked to relate new learning to prior knowledge, to think critically about it, or to use it to construct arguments or make informed decisions.

Teachers' questions are designed to promote understanding of important ideas and to

stimulate thinking about their potential implications. As a result, classroom interaction focuses on sustained examination of a few important topics rather than superficial coverage of many. Teacher-student interactions emphasize thoughtful discussion of connected major themes, not rapid-fire recitation of miscellaneous bits of information.

Meaningful learning activities and assessment strategies focus students' attention on the most important ideas embedded in what they are learning. They encourage students to connect these ideas to their previous knowledge and experience, to think critically and creatively about them, and to consider their social implications. Thus, meaningful social studies teaching emphasizes authentic activities and assessment tasks—opportunities for students to engage in the sorts of applications of content that justify the inclusion of that content in the curriculum in the first place. For example, instead of labeling a map, students might plan a travel route and sketch landscapes that a traveler might see on the route. Instead of listing the amendments in the Bill of Rights, students might discuss or write about the implications of the Bill of Rights for a defendant in a selection of court cases. Instead of filling in a blank to complete the definition of a principle, students might use the principle to make predictions about a related situation or to guide their strategies in a simulation game.

This vision of meaningful social studies teaching and learning implies that the teacher is reflective in planning, implementing, and assessing instruction. Reflective teachers are well informed about the nature and purposes of social studies, and they remain current with developments in the field. They construct well-articulated ideas about their students' citizen education needs, plan their social studies teaching accordingly, and continue to adjust their practices in response to classroom feedback and growth in their own professional knowledge. They work within state and district guidelines, but adapt and supplement these guidelines and their adopted curriculum materials in ways that support their students' social studies education.

In particular, reflective teachers select and present content to students in ways that connect it with the students' interests and with local history, cultures, and issues. Local history and geography receive special attention, as do local examples of social, economic, political, or cultural topics studied at each grade level. There exists a systematic effort to increase awareness and validate the diversity found in the community by involving family members or local ethnic or cultural groups, encouraging students to share their cultural knowledge and experiences, and involving students in the community.

B. Social Studies Teaching and Learning Are Powerful When They Are Integrative

Social studies is naturally integrative because it addresses a broad range of content using varied instructional resources and learning activities. But powerful social studies is both integrated and integrative in other respects as well.

First, powerful social studies teaching is integrative in its treatment of topics. It crosses disciplinary boundaries to address topics in ways that promote students' social understanding and civic efficacy. Its content is anchored by themes, generalizations, and concepts drawn from the social studies foundational disciplines, supplemented by ideas drawn from the arts, sciences, and humanities, from current events, and from local examples and students' experiences. Powerfully integrated social studies teaching builds a working knowledge of the evolution of the human condition through time, its

current variations across locations and cultures, and an appreciation of the potential implications of this knowledge for social and civic decision-making.

Powerful social studies teaching is integrative across time and space, connecting with past experiences and looking ahead to the future. It helps students appreciate how aspects of the social world function, not only in their local community and in the contemporary United States but also in the past and in other cultures. It puts what is familiar to students into historical, geographical, and cultural perspectives, thus expanding their limited purviews on social phenomena that they may have taken for granted.

Powerful social studies teaching integrates knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and attitudes to action. In particular, it teaches skills within the context of applying knowledge. Skills are included when they are necessary for applying content in natural ways. They are taught directly when opportunities for practice are embedded in authentic application activities. Content flow is not interrupted for practice of related skills.

Integrated social studies teaching and learning include effective use of technology that can add important dimensions to students' learning. Teachers can provide students with information through films, videotapes, videodiscs, and other electronic media, and they can teach students to use computers to compose, edit, and illustrate social studies research reports. Computer-based learning, especially games and simulations, can allow students to apply important ideas in authentic problem-tackling or decision-making contexts. If students have access to computerized data bases, they can search these resources for relevant research information. If they can communicate with peers in other states or nations, they can engage in personalized cultural exchanges or compare parallel data collected in geographically or culturally diverse locations.

Finally, powerful social studies teaching integrates across the curriculum. It provides opportunities for students to read and study text materials, appreciate art and literature, communicate orally and in writing, observe and take measurements, develop and display data, and in various other ways to conduct inquiry and synthesize findings using knowledge and skills taught in all school subjects. Because it addresses such a broad range of content and does so in an integrative fashion that includes attention to ethical and social policy implications, social studies is a natural bridging subject across the curriculum. Particularly in elementary and middle schools, instruction can feature social studies as the core around which the rest of the curriculum is built.

These integrative aspects have the potential for enhancing the scope and power of social studies. They also, however, have the potential for undermining its coherence and thrust as a curriculum component that addresses unique citizen education goals. A literary selection, writing assignment, cooperative learning activity, or computerized simulation cannot be considered curriculum simply because it features social studies combined with some other subject or set of skills. Nor can such activities be substituted for genuine social studies activities. To qualify as worthwhile elements of social studies curricula, activities must engage students in using important ideas in ways that promote progress toward social understanding and civic efficacy goals. Consequently, programs that feature a great deal of integration of social studies with other school subjects—even programs ostensibly built around social studies as the core of the curriculum—do not necessarily create powerful social studies learning. Unless they are

developed as plans for accomplishing major social studies goals, such programs may focus on trivial or disconnected information.

C. Social Studies Teaching and Learning Are Powerful When They Are Value-Based

Powerful social studies teaching considers the ethical dimensions of topics and addresses controversial issues providing an arena for reflective development of concern for the common good and application of social values. Students learn to be respectful of the dignity and rights of others when interacting socially, and to emphasize basic democratic concepts and principles when making personal policy decisions or participating in civic affairs.

Topics are treated comprehensively and realistically, with attention to their disturbing or controversial aspects. Students are made aware of potential social policy implications and taught to think critically and make value-based decisions about related social issues. They learn to gather and analyze relevant information, assess the merits of competing arguments, and make reasoned decisions that include consideration of the values within alternative policy recommendations. Through discussions, debates, simulations, research, and other occasions for critical thinking and decision-making, students learn to apply value-based reasoning when addressing social problems.

The best social studies teachers develop awareness of their own values and how those values influence their selection of content, materials, questions, activities, and assessment methods. They assess their teaching from multiple perspectives and, where appropriate, adjust it to achieve a better balance.

Rather than promulgating personal, sectarian, or political views, these teachers make sure that students: (1) become aware of the values, complexities, and dilemmas involved in an issue; (2) consider the costs and benefits to various groups that are embedded in potential courses of action; and (3) develop well-reasoned positions consistent with basic democratic social and political values. The teacher provides guidance to such value-based reasoning especially when it is difficult to discern the connections between core democratic values and the issues at hand, when various core values suggest conflicting policies, or when there is conflict between these core values and students' personal or family values. When this is done most effectively, students may remain unsure about the teacher's personal views on an issue, at least until after it has been discussed thoroughly. Students become more aware of the complexities involved in addressing the issue in ways that serve the common good, and are more articulate about their own and others' policy recommendations and supporting rationales.

Powerful social studies teaching encourages recognition of opposing points of view, respect for well-supported positions, sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences, and a commitment to social responsibility and action. It recognizes the reality and persistence of tensions but promotes positive human relationships built on understanding, commitment to the common good, and willingness to compromise and search for common good.

D. Social Studies Teaching and Learning Are Powerful When They Are Challenging

Students are expected to strive to accomplish instructional goals both as individuals and as group members through thoughtful participation in lessons and activities and careful work on assignments. To establish a context that will support productively challenging teaching and learning, the teacher encourages the class to function as a learning community. Students learn that the purpose of reflective discussion is to work collaboratively to deepen understanding of the meanings and implications of content. Consequently, they are expected to listen carefully and respond thoughtfully to one another's ideas.

In advancing their own ideas and in responding critically to others, students are expected to build a case based on relevant evidence and arguments and to avoid derisive and other inappropriate behavior. They are challenged to come to grips with controversial issues, to participate assertively but respectfully in group discussions, and to work productively with partners or groups of peers in cooperative learning activities. Such experiences foster the development of competencies essential to civic efficacy.

Making social studies teaching challenging should not be construed as merely articulating high standards and then leaving it to students to try to meet them. Rather, the teacher models seriousness of purpose and a thoughtful approach to inquiry and uses instructional strategies designed to elicit and support similar qualities from students. The teacher paves the way for successful learning experiences by making sure that the content is suited to the students' developmental levels and cultural backgrounds and by providing assistance that enables students to handle challenging activities. The teacher also makes it clear, however, that students are expected to connect thoughtfully what they are learning to their prior knowledge and experience, to offer comments, and to raise questions.

To stimulate and challenge students' thinking, teachers should expose them to many information sources that include varying perspectives on topics and offer conflicting opinions on controversial issues. Questions call for thoughtful examination of the content, not just retrieval of information from memory. After posing such questions, the teacher allows sufficient time for students to think and formulate responses and to elaborate on their peers' responses.

Many of the questions call for critical or creative thinking, suggested solutions to problems, or reasoned positions on policy issues. Such questions often produce numerous and conflicting responses. When this occurs, the teacher withholds evaluation and instead invites the students to engage in sustained dialogue and debate. This shifts some of the authority for evaluating the validity of knowledge from teacher to students.

Challenge is also communicated in the teacher's reactions to students' ideas. The teacher shows interest in and respect for students' thinking, but demands well-reasoned arguments rather than opinions voiced without adequate thought or commitment. Routinely, students are asked to explain and defend their ideas using content-based arguments. Instead of always accepting students' views or asking the class to discuss them, the teacher sometimes challenges students' assumptions or responds with comments or questions that help students identify misconceptions, flaws in the argument, or unrecognized complications. The teacher must act with sensitivity, because some students become anxious or embarrassed when someone questions their ideas in this way. The teacher makes it clear that the purpose of such a challenge is not

to put students on the spot but to help them construct new understanding through engagement in thoughtful dialogue.

E. Social Studies Teaching and Learning Are Powerful When They Are Active

Powerful social studies teaching and learning are rewarding, but they demand a great deal from both teachers and students. Thoughtful preparation and instruction by the teacher and sustained effort by students are required for students to make sense of and apply what they are learning.

Powerful social studies teaching demands that the teacher actively make curricular plans and adjustments. Rather than mechanically following the instructions in a manual, an exemplary teacher is prepared to: (1) acquire and update continuously the subject-matter knowledge and related pedagogical knowledge needed to teach the content effectively; (2) adjust goals and content to the students' needs; (3) participate as a partner in learning with students, modeling the joy of both discovering new knowledge and increasing understanding of familiar topics; (4) use a variety of instructional materials such as physical examples, photographs, maps, illustrations, films, videos, textbooks, literary selections, and computerized databases; (5) plan field trips, visits to the class by resource people, and other experiences that will help students relate what they are learning to their lives outside the classroom; (6) plan lessons and activities that introduce content to students, and encourage them to process it actively, think about it critically and creatively, and explore its implications; (7) develop current or local examples that relate the content to students' lives; (8) plan sequences of questions that allow for numerous responses and stimulate reflective discussion; (9) provide students with guidance and assistance as needed, yet encourage them to assume increasing responsibility for managing their own learning; (10) structure learning environments and activities in ways that encourage students to behave as a community of learners; (11) use accountability and grading systems that are compatible with instructional methods and that focus on accomplishment of major social understanding and civic efficacy goals; and (12) monitor reflectively and adjust as necessary.

Besides advance planning and preparation, active social studies teaching requires reflective thinking and decision-making as events unfold during instruction. Teachers must adjust plans to developing circumstances such as teachable moments that arise when students ask questions, make comments, or offer challenges worth pursuing. The teacher decides whether to persist with a topic or conclude it and move on to a new topic, whether to try to elicit an insight from students or to supply it directly, and how thoroughly the students will need to be prepared for an activity before they can begin work on it independently.

After the teacher launches an activity and students are working on their own or in collaboration with their peers, the teacher remains active by monitoring individual or group progress and providing assistance. Interventions are designed to clear up confusion, while enabling students to cope with task demands productively; students should be allowed to handle as much of the task as they can at the moment while at the same time making progress toward fully independent and successful performance. The teacher does not perform the tasks for students or simplify them to the point that they no longer engage the students in the cognitive processes required to accomplish the activity's goals.

Students develop new understanding through a process of active construction. They do not passively receive or copy curriculum content; rather, they actively process it by relating it to what they already know (or think they know) about the topic. Instead of relying on rote learning methods, they strive to make sense of what they are learning by developing a network of connections that link the new content to preexisting knowledge and beliefs anchored in their prior experience. Sometimes the learning involves conceptual change in which students discover that some of their beliefs are inaccurate and need to be modified.

The construction of meaning required to develop important social understanding takes time and is facilitated by interactive discourse. Clear explanation and modeling from the teacher are important, as are opportunities to answer questions about content, discuss or debate the meanings and implications of content, or use the content in activities that call for tackling problems or making decisions. These activities allow students to process content actively and make it their own by paraphrasing it into their own words, exploring its relationship to other knowledge and to past experience, appreciating the insights it provides, or identifying its implications for social or civic decision-making.

Teacher and student roles shift as learning progresses. Early in a unit of study, the teacher may need to provide considerable guidance by modeling, explaining, or supplying information that builds on students' existing knowledge while also assuming much of the responsibility for structuring and managing learning activities. As students develop expertise, however, they can begin to assume responsibility for regulating their learning by asking questions and by working on increasingly complex applications with increasing degrees of autonomy. The teacher still assists students with challenges they are not yet ready to handle by themselves but such assistance is gradually reduced in response to increases in students' readiness to engage in independent and self-regulating learning.

Because what one learns is intimately linked to how one learns it, powerful social studies programs feature learning that is both social and active. The learning is social because it occurs in a group setting and includes substantial student-student interaction during discussions and collaborative work on activities. The learning is active because the curriculum emphasizes hands-on (and minds-on) activities that call for students to react to what they are learning and use it for some authentic purpose.

Effective activities encourage students to think about and apply what they are learning. Teachers may provide opportunities for students to apply their existing knowledge to questions about new content, to understand new content, to synthesize and communicate what they have learned, to generate new knowledge or make creative applications, or to think critically about the content and make decisions or take actions that relate to it.

Powerful social studies teaching emphasizes authentic activities that call for using content for accomplishing life applications. For example, critical-thinking attitudes and abilities are developed through policy debates or assignments calling for critique of currently or historically important policy arguments or decisions, not through artificial exercises in identifying logical or rhetorical flaws. Similarly, in addition to more traditional assignments, students frequently engage in cooperative learning, construction of models or plans, dramatic re-creations of historical events that shaped democratic values or civic policies, role-play, and simulation activities (e.g., mock trials

or simulated legislative activities, interviewing family members, and collecting data in the local community). They also participate in various social and civic roles (e.g., discussing home safety or energy conservation checklists with parents and planning appropriate follow-up action, participating in student government activities and local community restoration or improvement efforts, or doing volunteer work for nursing homes or political campaigns). Through such activities, students develop social understanding that they can explain in their own words and can access and apply in appropriate situations. For example, they learn to think critically as they read newspapers and magazines, watch television, or monitor political or policy debates. They learn to recognize the problematic aspects of statements, to project the probable social consequences of advocated policies, and to take these complexities into account when forming their opinions.

The teacher's modeling, classroom management, motivational techniques, instructional methods, and assessment procedures all communicate to students that they are expected to participate in social studies classes actively and with a sense of purpose. The students learn to reflect thoughtfully on what they are learning and to ask questions, share opinions, and engage in public content-based dialogue. Through authentic application activities they develop civic efficacy by practicing it—engaging in the inquiry and debate required to make informed decisions about real social issues then following up with appropriate social or civic action.

III. Making It Happen: Developing and Maintaining Powerful Social Studies Programs

The kind of powerful social studies teaching and learning envisioned here is realized most fully when it is encouraged and reinforced by other components of the educational system. In particular, powerful social studies teaching and learning are likely to become more common to the extent that: (1) assessment approaches at all levels focus on measuring progress toward social understanding and efficacy goals; (2) teachers benefit from effective preservice preparation and in-service professional development programs, and social studies education receives support from school administrators, parents, the local community, and government agencies; and (3) the nation successfully meets certain currently recognizable challenges, including the need for additional research on powerful social studies teaching and learning, for improvements in curriculum materials and technologies, and for improvement efforts that focus on accomplishing our most important educational goals. These systemic influences on social studies education are addressed in the following sections.

A. Assessment of Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Powerful social studies teaching and learning include assessment components designed to inform instructional planning and thus produce continuing improvements through successive cycles. The assessment mechanisms focus on the degree to which major social understanding and civic efficacy goals are accomplished, rather than on measuring acquisition of miscellaneous information or command of generic skills. Care is taken to see that testing does not place inappropriate content coverage pressures on teachers or cause them to shift their emphasis away from pursuing major social studies goals.

The NCSS curriculum guidelines (1990) call for systematic and rigorous assessment of social studies instruction that is based primarily on each school's stated objectives as

the criteria for effectiveness. Knowledge, thinking skills, valuing, and social participation are assessed, using data from many sources in addition to paper-and-pencil tests. These data provide a basis for planning curriculum improvements as well as for assessing students' learning. The guidelines emphasize locally planned assessment of progress toward locally established goals.

In 1991, NCSS elaborated on these guidelines through a position statement on testing and evaluation of social studies students. This statement calls for transforming student assessment from an over-reliance on machine-scored standardized tests to approaches that balance such measures with more authentic performance assessments. These include tasks such as speaking effectively or articulating a reasoned stance on a controversial social issue. Such assessments focus on the processes that students use, not merely on the answers they choose.

A comprehensive assessment plan for social studies includes daily monitoring of the general effectiveness and quality of student participation in lessons and activities, as well as appropriate use of both criterion- and norm-referenced tests. The primary purpose of testing should be to improve teaching and learning. To accomplish this purpose, teachers need the freedom and encouragement to select or develop assessment tasks that are suited to their students and aligned with locally adopted social studies goals. This process will involve augmenting traditional tests with performance evaluations, portfolios of student papers and projects, and essays focusing on higher-order thinking and applications. The assessment devices must be fair to all students and interpreted with sensitivity to the propriety of any norms or comparison groups that might be used to place the scores of local students into context. Teachers must have access to all data collected in their classrooms and be proficient in interpreting and reporting results.

A basic underlying principle is that assessment should be aligned with, and designed to help accomplish, the citizen education goals that drive the social studies curriculum. The curriculum's assessment component should not drive its content and process components; instead, all three components should constitute a coherent plan for accomplishing the curriculum's major social understanding and civic efficacy goals. To the extent that the assessment component creates content or skills coverage pressures that do not promote significant progress toward these goals, it is counterproductive to the purposes of social studies. The same may be true of test-driven coverage pressures in other subject areas if these pressures result in inadequate time allocations to social studies or loss of its coherence as an integral curriculum component.

B. Support for Powerful Social Studies Teaching and Learning

If social studies teaching and learning are to begin to approximate the vision outlined here, more support for social studies education at every level is necessary. Such support includes internal support from the profession itself (emphasizing improvements in preservice and in-service teacher education) and external support from parents, the local community, and government agencies.

1. Preparing Preservice Teachers

In 1987, NCSS developed a position statement and guidelines on the preparation of social studies teachers. The guidelines refer to admission and continuation of students in teacher education programs, characteristics of these programs, and characteristics of

the sponsoring institutions. Social studies professionals should lobby for state staffing policies that reflect the NCSS teacher preparation standards.

Academic and continuation requirements should ensure that candidates possess sufficient knowledge and skills, as well as appropriate personal and ethical qualities. Programs should include: (1) general education preparation in the humanities, the social and behavioral sciences, the natural sciences, mathematics, and computer science; (2) special emphasis on foundational disciplines for the social studies, approached within a global perspective and with attention to value conflicts and policy issues; and (3) a professional education component that includes courses in social and philosophical foundations, human growth and development, psychology of learning, needs of exceptional students, gender and ethnic perspectives, use of media, and a range of planning, teaching, and assessment skills.

Social studies methods courses should prepare prospective teachers to select, integrate, and translate knowledge and methodology from the social studies into curricula suitable for the grade levels at which they expect to teach. Programs should include both information and clinical experiences designed to prepare prospective teachers to teach social studies in a variety of settings to a variety of students using a variety of approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Student teaching experiences should span complete school semesters, not just college quarters, and they should be supervised by appropriately qualified cooperating teachers and college or university personnel.

Institutions sponsoring teacher education programs should vest responsibility for managing those programs in the head of the college, school, or department of education and should staff the program with faculty members who have experience in K-12 schools. These faculty members should excel as teachers or field supervisors, not just as scholars. They should observe and interact with their student teachers in school settings often enough to assess the student teachers' progress accurately and to model or suggest improvements adapted to the settings.

Effective preparation of social studies teachers requires close cooperation between the social science specialists and the teacher education specialists, as well as between the university personnel and school personnel involved in clinical and field experiences. All of the participants in teacher education programs should understand and be committed to major social studies goals, should be knowledgeable about powerful social studies teaching, and should model such teaching in their classrooms. This implies use of a broad range of teaching and learning methods. Prospective teachers need coaching and structured opportunities to develop their skills at using approaches such as lecture and discussion, cooperative learning, panel discussions, debates, games, simulations, community participation experiences, and computerized data bases and learning programs. Besides learning the procedural aspects of these varied approaches, prospective teachers should learn to shift their managerial and instructional roles appropriately and to prepare students to assume additional responsibilities for managing their learning. Teachers need to function comfortably not just as experts but also as guides.

Learning to plan, implement, and assess powerful social studies teaching on a consistent basis will require years of guided in-service and self-assessment experiences in addition to good preservice preparation. At a minimum, however, preservice

programs should equip new teachers with a basic understanding of social studies purposes and goals and a vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning that they can use to guide their subsequent professional development.

2. Supporting In-Service Teachers

The vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning outlined here assumes local planning and decision-making in which teams of teachers identify and clarify goals, plan the social studies program, monitor it reflectively, and make necessary adjustments. To make this possible, school districts and building administrators need to allocate sufficient in-class time for social studies teaching and provide sufficient out-of-class time for collegial planning and professional development. Although social studies is rich in opportunities for connecting content from other subjects, it features important purposes and goals of its own and must be taught with frequency and coherence for these goals to be accomplished. Throughout grades K–12, all students should receive daily instruction in a carefully planned social studies program.

Teaching staffs need collegial planning time and in-service staff development activities to ensure that all teachers develop a shared understanding of the broad goals of social studies education and thus approach them with an emphasis on building social understanding and civic efficacy. Guided by these major goals and a knowledgeable social studies coordinator, collegial planning should yield a coherent social studies program for the entire school. All teachers should know what their colleagues are doing and understand how the components assigned to their grade level fit into the big picture. Planning should be guided by the NCSS collection of curriculum planning resources (1990) and should incorporate the instructional principles outlined in this position statement. The program should include an assessment component that aligns with goals and complements the other program components (the value and attitudinal aspects as well as the knowledge and skills aspects). Teachers need support for acquiring and receiving social studies information, resources, and teaching and assessment strategies. All teachers need opportunities to obtain information about and assistance in using social studies resources from competent consultants, opportunities to visit other classrooms to see demonstrations of powerful teaching and learning, and involvement in decision-making concerning adoption of curriculum materials or other changes in the school's social studies program. New teachers need mentoring from accomplished teachers. Teachers with special interests or assignments need release time and support for attendance at state and national conferences, activity in professional organizations, local networking, and the opportunity to help develop curriculum materials or program plans. Teachers should be encouraged to identify their group and individual professional development needs relating to social studies, and arrangements should be made to address these needs.

Experienced teachers interested in doing so may apply for assessment and NCSS advanced professional certification of the quality of their social studies teaching (NCSS 1991). Whether or not they seek council certification in addition to their state certification, however, teachers who have continuing responsibility for social studies education should strive to meet NCSS's standards for certified professionals. In particular, they should: (1) continue their professional development through formal course work, attendance at conferences, professional reading, and collaboration with peers on action research or staff development projects; (2) analyze their and their students' work products; (3) keep a journal on practice; and (4) take active roles in

professional and community organizations.

Social studies education should receive vigorous support as a vital curriculum component responsible for accomplishing uniquely important purposes and goals. A social studies coordinator should be appointed for the district as a whole and for each building. The district should provide appropriate instructional time, materials and resources, facilities, and equipment for all teachers. They will need access to carefully selected textbooks and the many types of data sources that are used in powerful social studies teaching, including auxiliary texts, multimedia kits, reference materials and text supplements at various reading levels, maps, globes, physical artifacts, films and tapes, computer equipment and software, content-correlated literature selections, and equipment for simulations or special events.

Districts should encourage their social studies teachers to participate in active curriculum committees that have decision-making as well as advisory responsibilities. Finally, a district-wide policy statement on academic freedom and responsibility should be in place. Social studies teachers should be able to rely on this statement and on administrative support for their efforts to model civic participation and assist their students to confront social issues.

3. External Support from Communities and Governments

Several forms of community and governmental support will be required to sustain powerful social studies programs. Most fundamentally, communities and governments need to recognize the subject's vital purpose for citizen education and thus prepare to support accomplishment of its social understanding and civic efficacy goals and the powerful forms of teaching and learning necessary to accomplish them. This commitment implies sustaining teacher education and professional development programs and forms of support for social studies in schools as described in previous sections. These aspects of powerful social studies programs require funding and leadership support from local school districts and state governments.

Corporate and business interests can be supportive as well. Sponsoring cooperative programs, hosting field trips, supplying guest speakers, and supporting local heritage preservations that serve as school resources are just some of the ways local businesses and communities can support their schools' social studies programs. Parents can help by donating or lending cultural or historical artifacts, acting as chaperones on field trips, and visiting classes or resource people (e.g., to provide information about their occupations or their ethnic heritages).

C. The Challenges for the Future

The vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning set forth here has been informed by a growing knowledge base about the ingredients for teaching social studies for understanding, appreciation, and life application. This position statement, however, is just a beginning. The future holds many challenges that must be met if the vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning outlined here is to be developed in more detail and become the basis for standard practice in the schools.

More research on social studies teaching and learning is needed, especially research that focuses on teachers' efforts to develop social understanding and civic efficacy in their students. Studies that document the effects of powerful social studies teaching and

describe it in detail as it unfolds across a lesson or curriculum unit would be especially valuable. Also needed are studies of what students at the various grade levels know (or think they know) about the content taught in those grades and how instruction affects their thinking. This information then can be used to develop ways to adapt instruction so as to build on students' valid knowledge and address their misconceptions.

As the knowledge base develops, it will need to consider the situational characteristics of various teaching contexts. The general principle that social studies teaching and learning become more powerful when they are meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active applies to all social studies classes, but the specifics involved in bringing this principle to life will vary according to individual students and content areas. More information is needed about the particular forms of powerful social studies teaching that best suit various grade levels and content areas, how to adapt these forms of instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, and what constitutes effective pre-service and in-service social studies teacher education.

Improved learning resources, along with research on how to use them effectively, are also needed. Textbooks need to be structured coherently around powerful ideas developed in depth, and they need to be supplemented with a wide range of learning resources and activities. In the early elementary grades, multimedia kits, picture books, simplified maps, collections of artifacts (or realistic reproductions), and other instructional tools and data sources designed for students who have not yet become sophisticated readers are needed. Across the grades, computerized data bases, simulations, and games, laserdiscs, hypermedia, scanners, electronic mail connections with classrooms in other states or nations, and production and use of videotapes as teaching and learning devices have potential for social studies applications. These applications will need to be developed and studied to determine how to make the best use of their unique capabilities in the most cost-effective ways. Research and development also need to attend to the changes in the teacher's role entailed in many of these innovations. Along with access to new resources and technologies, teachers will need guidance on how to manage these multiple resources and help their students learn to use them more effectively.

Certain systematic changes in education in the United States are needed to support fully powerful social studies teaching and learning. Most of these are changes that would improve the quality of instruction across the curriculum. Critics of textbooks and learning resources in all subjects are voicing similar concerns about the need to shift emphasis from breadth of coverage to depth of development of important content, to shift from fill-in-the-blank worksheets to a broader range of activities, and to replace tests that create counterproductive content coverage pressures with authentic, varied, and goals-driven assessment components. School restructuring efforts have stressed teacher empowerment and collegial planning, although more emphasis should be placed on articulating major goals and on developing local networks of teachers who share similar teaching assignments.

Some of the current assessment reform movements are encouraging, especially those calling for authentic tasks. If these efforts are to support powerful teaching and learning, however, test users will have to be willing to accept the costs of authentic assessment. Also, social studies assessments will have to shift from a focus on generic skills to a focus on social understanding and civic efficacy goals, including those relating to the teaching of democratic values.

IV. Summary

Complementing position statements on social studies curriculum, evaluation, teacher preparation, and advanced certification published previously by National Council for the Social Studies, this position statement sets forth a vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning needed to accomplish important social understanding and civic efficacy goals. It briefly considers assessment approaches that will complement powerful social studies teaching and learning; preservice teacher preparation programs, in-service professional development programs, and forms of support for social studies education in the schools that are necessary to sustain such powerful teaching and learning; and some needed developments in research, instructional resources, and educational reform. In putting forth a vision of the ideal, this position statement emphasizes that social studies teaching and learning become powerful when they are meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active.

V. Conclusion

Thomas Jefferson, among others, emphasized that the vitality of a democracy depends upon the education and participation of its citizens. If the nation is to develop fully the readiness of its citizenry to carry forward its democratic traditions, it will need to support progress toward full attainment of the vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning outlined here.

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