PRIORITIES *in* PRACTICE

# The Essentials of Social Studies, Grades K–8

## Effective Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Kathy Checkley

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*Effective Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

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At the time this book was being written, educators interviewed could be reached at the following locations:

- Peggy Altoff, District 11, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Betsy Bratek, Greenbelt Middle School, Greenbelt, Maryland
- Christina Doepel, G. James Gholson Middle School, Landover, Maryland
- Gale Ekiss, Arizona Geographic Alliance, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona
- Mary Knightly, Kensington Elementary School, Kensington, New Hampshire
- Kara Libby, Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland
- Mary McFarland, education consultant, Chesterfield, Missouri
- Margit E. McGuire, Seattle University, Seattle, Washington
- Eileen Mesmer, Saltonstall School, Salem, Massachusetts
- Jeff Passe, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, North Carolina

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• Elizabeth Sinclair, The New School, Seattle, Washington
• Mark J. Stout, Howard County Public School System, Maryland
• Kathleen Waffle, John F. Kennedy Elementary School, Newark, California
• Joann Winkler, Liberty Elementary School, Port Charlotte, Florida
• Roger D. Wolff, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota
• Justin Zimmerman, North East Middle School, North East, Maryland

Finally, a special dedication to Tom Hoerr: you've been an inspiration to my family and so many others. This book is for you.

# Preface

*The business of public education in America is, and should be, to teach young people how to take charge of their own learning and to become responsible, informed, and engaged citizens.*

—*Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools,* American Youth Policy Forum (2005)

It is the job of schools to ensure that students develop the qualities and skills that will enable them to contribute meaningfully to the needs of future societies. In the U.S. education field's current climate of accountability, however, this essential goal seems to be overlooked in favor of test preparation.

On her darkest days, a veteran educator admits, she believes that excluding social studies from the curriculum is part of a grand scheme to keep power in the hands of a controlling few. Think about it, she says: it stands to reason that if students aren't educated in democratic processes, they won't truly understand the need to get out and vote during an election—ensuring that those in elected office *stay* in elected office. She then observes that when "large groups of people become disenfranchised, things don't go well for those societies" and warns that the United States is going to be "sunk as a nation" if social studies continues to get short shrift in schools. Still, she hopes that as more educators and policymakers become aware of the damage caused by narrowing the curriculum, they will lobby for social studies to be restored to the learning program.

In this book, you'll find a number of educators who are equally dismayed to find that when forced to choose between delivering a broad liberal

arts curriculum and boosting students' achievement on tests, a majority of school leaders will pick the latter. Yet plenty of teachers are overcoming the constraints of the current focus on testing. Innovative educators can find ways to ensure that their students will be able to hone the skills they need to actively participate in a democratic and global society.

Readers of this book will learn more about

- The challenges that elementary and middle school teachers face in keeping social studies in the curriculum.
- How to align social studies lessons with curriculum standards.
- Ways to promote students' deep understanding of social studies content.
- Why lessons and assessments should give students opportunities to solve problems, work on projects, and engage in simulations.
- How social studies can prepare students for a lifetime of active civic involvement.
- The kinds of professional development experiences that will help teachers bring the social studies curriculum to life in the classroom.

We suggest that you keep a pad of sticky notes close by as you read this book. We're certain that you'll find plenty of ideas for lesson planning, instruction, assessment, and professional development that you'll want to refer to again and again.

# Trends in Social Studies Education

*Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery.*

*—Horace Mann*

Fear can be a powerful motivator. Horace Mann, known as the father of public education in the United States, feared that uneducated immigrants, ignorant of their rights and obligations, would fail to support the democratic society to which they flocked. But, he reasoned, a common and free education could be the key to protecting the homeland from such an outcome. He argued that "every wise, humane measure adopted for [the immigrants'] welfare, directly promotes our own security" and observed that "the children of this people will soon possess the rights of men, whether they possess the characters of men or not" (Eakin, 2000). In addition to being the father of public education, then, Mann is the father of civic education: certain that schools could teach future citizens the values essential to democracy and citizenship.

There are few who would dispute Mann's assertion. But a new sort of fear has gripped many a modern educator: that of failing to meet accountability measures established by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

NCLB requires U.S. public schools to test 3rd–8th grade students in reading and math each year. Those schools that fail to bring enough of their students to proficiency in these subjects face escalating sanctions, including the establishment of a new curriculum, the replacement of school staff, and a decrease in managerial authority at the school. A school labeled "in

need of improvement" for five consecutive years risks being restructured or taken over by the state (Guilfoyle, 2006). Schools' fear of failure has resulted in a strong emphasis on math and reading instruction, particularly in elementary and middle schools, to the exclusion of nontested subjects. Among the disciplines receiving short shrift is social studies.

Horace Mann is turning over in his grave.

## Accountability Run Amok: "Our Hands Are Tied"

Mary Knightly has her own worries. This award-winning, veteran teacher of 35 years once enthusiastically taught social studies to elementary school students of varied ages. But now, to her regret, she can no longer devote as much time to the subject. "I fear for social studies education," says Knightly, a 4th grade teacher at Kensington Elementary School in Kensington, New Hampshire. "What's happened in our school is happening in many. I have talked to my fellow teachers. They're teaching, at the most, two hours of social studies and science a week. I'm teaching three periods a week." With such a dramatic reduction in time, she says, students can't build a foundational knowledge of the subjects. "It's not a healthy balance," says Knightly. "I feel almost guilty sending students on who don't have a background in science and social studies."

Knightly isn't alone. In this era of accountability, many teachers report feeling frustrated and powerless to fight decisions made about curriculum and instruction. Results of a study of 376 elementary and secondary teachers in New Jersey, for example, showed that teachers "tended to teach to the test, often neglected individual students' needs because of the stringent focus on high-stakes testing, had little time to teach creatively, and bored themselves and their students with practice problems as they prepared for standardized testing" (Cawelti, 2006, p. 65).

"We try to give kids different ways to engage with content, but it's gotten to be so challenging," says Joann Winkler, who, like Knightly, has received awards for her creativity in teaching social studies. As a 5th grade teacher at Liberty Elementary School in Port Charlotte, Florida, Winkler finds she is constrained by demands that her instruction produce "certain kinds of data." Such outcomes require a heavy emphasis on test prep, she says. With 32 years of teaching under her belt, Winkler acknowledges that

this isn't the best way to teach. Still, although she remains passionate about social studies, and although she and her colleagues would enjoy creating lessons that students find interesting and motivating, Winkler is resigned: "Our hands are tied."

It's not just teachers who find themselves bound by accountability mania, however. School leaders are also held in check. "School boards hold administrators accountable for test scores," says Jeff Passe, an education professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. As a result, these administrators become "increasingly strict about when certain things should be taught."

Or *not* taught, observes Peggy Altoff, president of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). She notes that subjects such as physical education, art, and music are likely to remain part of the learning program because schedules allow it: teachers are given planning time when their students are off at those classes. It's not as easy to hold social studies time sacred. In fact, says Altoff, since NCLB mandates have been in effect, "only four states report the same amount of time being spent on teaching social studies."

Some administrators who pressure teachers to spend less time teaching social studies may have been "thrust into the curriculum coordinator role" without sufficient professional development, says Roger Wolff, assistant education professor at the University of South Dakota. These administrators don't have a broad enough understanding of why it's important to incorporate social science in the curriculum.

Even administrators who do understand the importance of learning social studies may have compelling reasons for not addressing the topic. "My principal fully believes that social studies is important for students to learn—he was a high school history teacher, after all," says Elizabeth Sinclair, a 4th grade teacher at The New School in Seattle, Washington. Still, when the school was founded in 2002, its goal was to help children of color reverse a legacy of poor academic performance. As a result, the schedule and the curriculum were carefully planned to emphasize critical thinking skills and knowledge of subjects tested on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

Sinclair came to The New School in 2006, leaving behind a learning program that integrated social studies into a thematic curriculum. Sinclair, whose innovative social studies lessons were included in Annenberg Media's

*Social Studies in Action* video library, now finds it challenging enough to squeeze science into a day that emphasizes "absolute content blocks" for core subjects. "I miss [social studies] horribly," she says, but it's not on the WASL, and the pressure to help students improve performance on that test "is huge."

## The Balance-Wheel: Thrown Out of Kilter

The current curricular focus in U.S. schools may result from the efforts of well-meaning policymakers and sincere educators—but we know where the road paved with good intentions leads. As Marge Scherer noted in "Perspectives: The NCLB Issue," the most positive effect of the federal law has been "the focus of attention and resources on poor and minority students, English language learners, and students with disabilities"—the so-called "invisible children"—yet "the greatest shame of a failed NCLB would be that these students will suffer more from the withholding of a rich curriculum in favor of a test-heavy education" (2006, p. 7).

It would be unfortunate if excluding social studies instruction ultimately disenfranchises the very students whom educators and policymakers are trying to advance. If school is the place where children learn what it means to be citizens in a democracy, as many experts have asserted (see "Civic Virtue in the Schools"), then students who graduate without that basic understanding could well become our future nonvoters. These students may not know that there are systems in place that give them a voice in determining how they will be governed.

Many of the students Joann Winkler teaches, for example, come from "families that aren't involved in civic activities—their parents don't vote." She believes, therefore, that it's up to her—and to public schools in general—to teach students about civic responsibility. "Social studies is such a powerful part of the curriculum—I feel it helps students practice for life," says Winkler. Through social studies, she observes, students learn "about the world they're entering, about the economic system in our country, about voting, about history and why we are what we are."

By the time students reach high school, it's already getting too late to instill these democratic and civic ideals in students, says Margit McGuire, an education professor at Seattle University. It's in elementary school that

## Civic Virtue in the Schools

Like limbs that weaken from lack of use, students' democratic muscles lack vigor if they don't have a chance to use them. To halt an evident decline in civic engagement among youth, an increasing number of educators are urging U.S. schools to reinvigorate their mission to nurture democracy.

Even when civics was widespread as a school course, it generally gave students a textbook acquaintance with the three branches of government and a feeling that voting was a good thing to do. Still, young people rarely exercise the long-anticipated right to vote. U.S. Census statistics show that only 32 percent of people ages 18–24 voted in the 2000 presidential election, compared with 54.7 percent of all voting-age citizens.

"Schools need to reclaim the purpose of public education and the notion that one's education is part of a larger good and can contribute to the betterment of society," says Carl Glickman, an expert on school renewal whose new book, *Holding Sacred Ground,* examines leadership in democratic schools.

Rather than hold our schools captive with high-stakes testing, Glickman argues, we should require them to provide opportunities for students to put their learning to work in the larger community, whether that means the school or the neighborhood, the city or the state.

Also, although a student's individual goals for higher education and a career are important, schools should consider these plans as part of a larger objective to improve society and allow justice and equality to flourish, stresses Glickman.

But rejuvenating and reforming civic education won't be easy. Denee Mattioli, a past president of the National Council for the Social Studies, laments the apathy toward civic education, saying schools reflect the nation's neglect. For example, she notes, "People don't want to pay taxes for schools if their kids are grown up." Each generation needs to appreciate basic democratic values if the republic is to

survive, Mattioli continues. "If people remembered and understood that charge, schools wouldn't be having to have bake sales to make sure they have enough textbooks."

**Whole-School Democracy**

To send a consistent message about the value of democracy, schools should not reserve its practice for students alone. Teachers, foremost, must "speak truth to power," to borrow a Quaker adage about confronting authority, says Eric Nadelstern, deputy superintendent of new and small schools for New York City's Bronx borough.

"The governance structure of the school is inextricably linked to the methods of the teachers. A 'fiat-and-memorandum' principal will have teachers dictating to kids," which squelches any democratic efforts in the classroom, Nadelstern warns. "You can't do it for kids unless you first do it for teachers."

The democratic practice encourages all teachers to question authority, even that of superintendents and the school board. "We want to empower teachers to collaborate on the curriculum, speak the truth, and question the school board," Nadelstern says. "Democracy is messy, so we're not dictating from the central office how it should be done. As long as rigorous learning connects to kids' lives, we leave it up to the local schools to decide the details."

Democracy may be a messy and complicated process, but teachers can and should teach it, practice it, and pass it on in the schools despite the effort that such a reinvigorated and nuanced civic education would require, these educators say.

"Citizenship is not just what you drop in the ballot box," says George Wood, principal at Federal Hocking High School in Stewart, Ohio. "You have to live and breathe it every single day."

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*Source:* From "Civic Virtue in the Schools: Engaging a New Generation of Citizens," by R. Allen, 2003, *Curriculum Update,* pp. 1–8. 

students need opportunities to practice their roles as citizens, she asserts. In these early years of schooling, teachers can start to channel a child's natural inclination to "care deeply about what is fair and just" into a deeper understanding about how to interact with others in a positive, civic way.

That won't happen if social studies is "relegated to a third or fourth spot," contends Roger Wolff. Instead, he says, schools will be graduating a "whole decade of students who are not versed in and instilled with dispositions for civic action."

There is concern, too, for older students' academic performance. According to Jeff Passe, "High school teachers are just beginning to see kids—especially children from low-income areas—who have had nominal social studies. Instruction has been minimal and shallow." As a result, these students must work harder to meet tougher demands. It's the nature of schooling to "move from the simple to the more complex, to build from the familiar to the unfamiliar," says Mark Stout, the social studies curriculum coordinator for Maryland's Howard County Public School System. "If kids are missing big chunks [of social studies content], they aren't going to be ready for the rigor that's expected in high school."

This situation has been characterized as "an unintended consequence of NCLB," says Peggy Altoff. If that's true, she maintains, "then someone has to do something intentional about it—now!"

## First Amendment Schools

Seventeen First Amendment project schools throughout the United States are exploring ways for students to better understand their roles as citizens in a democracy as they learn a deeper practical appreciation of the five freedoms of the First Amendment (religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition). Projects at these schools, funded through the collaboration of the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center and ASCD, will serve as models that other schools can adapt to their own communities. For more information about the First Amendment Schools project, visit www.firstamendmentschools.org.

## Is Integration the Answer?

It's too late to restore social studies to a prominent place in the curriculum, asserts Alan Haskvitz, a veteran middle school teacher who pens a regular column for EdNews.org. "That war was over the moment NCLB was passed," he writes in "The Disrespecting of Social Studies" (2006). What's needed now, Haskvitz states, is for teachers to address social studies subject matter while teaching other subjects, such as math and language arts. Teachers must also "avoid the pre-fabricated lesson plan in favor of teachable moments and integrated lessons," he maintains.

Although many educators agree with Haskvitz's assertion, effectively integrating the curriculum and incorporating timely issues into lessons is a learned art, and teachers often have few opportunities to develop that ability. According to Roger Wolff, it's a stumbling block that teacher education programs could begin to address.

At the University of South Dakota, for example, Wolff and two colleagues worked together to align social studies standards with those of other content areas. Together, the three education professors—representing social studies, math, and science—taught an integrated unit, and then asked their students to create such a unit of their own. "We asked students to look at the disciplines and find the connections, to see how [the subjects] are all related," Wolff explains. As students go through the process, there is a definite "aha" moment as they discover how rich learning can be when activities intertwine different content areas.

As a result of his integrated unit, Wolff is confident that the students who graduate from his program will know how to infuse social studies into their teaching. Graduates of the program, he says, "have gone out into school systems and have been asked by their administrators to assist faculties in aligning standards and apply that process to curriculum design—in their first year of teaching. We therefore feel very good that the process has helped them."

"Whenever you get a team of teachers working on the express goal of integrating the curriculum in a meaningful way, the result is an excellent product," says Jeff Passe. Unfortunately, he acknowledges, many

states and districts have adopted scripted textbooks and instructional approaches that don't allow for teacher collaboration on curriculum and lesson planning.

Yet social studies can be used to bolster skills in other subject areas, such as English. Passe advises showing teachers "how the subject is a vocabulary engine" and how nonfiction texts—such as newspaper and magazine articles, information on Web sites, and textbooks—can help students learn to analyze what they read.

Teachers in Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland have found that reading and social studies instruction pair nicely together. Teachers know to emphasize reading skills when teaching the content, says Kara Libby, supervisor of social studies for the district. Students need practice reading informational texts because it is a testable skill, she points out. Indeed, about 70 percent of the questions on the Maryland School Assessment require students to comprehend informational texts, and many of those questions focus on social studies. "We say to social studies teachers, 'When you teach the content, use pre- and post-reading strategies,'" Libby explains. "'Look at the vocabulary and discuss it.'"

Betsy Bratek and her colleagues at Greenbelt Middle School in Prince George's County "do a lot with anticipation guides," she says. Before her 6th graders read a specific passage, Bratek gives them a list of statements. The students then have to determine whether the facts she presents are correct. "I ask students to think about what information they will need to support their answers," she explains. "They know they have to find examples in the text."

"Breaking down the text is key," agrees Christina Doepel, social studies department chair at G. James Gholson Middle School in Prince George's County. "Asking children to read six or seven pages is too overwhelming for them." She adds that it's also important to use activities that allow students "to get their hands involved."

To review social studies vocabulary, for example, Doepel's students create *foldables*—small books that result from folding paper in a particular way. In addition to writing definitions, students draw pictures that help them remember the concepts associated with the vocabulary words. "I've used this activity with students K–8, and they all love it," Doepel says. "Even older kids still like art."

In addition to facilitating reading instruction, social studies can be used to provide new insights into mathematical concepts. Although "the complaint from math students through the ages has been that math is not relevant," notes Passe, there is actually such "rich mathematical data in every social studies book that students can't help but see the relevance of math." In geography, for example, when students compare and contrast early Spanish and Iroquois housing, they consider how the environment was used to construct the houses, says Gale Ekiss, co-coordinator of the Arizona Geographic Alliance. To extend the lesson, younger students could log the number of triangles and squares that abound in each structure, while older students explore how builders used perimeter and area to construct each type of house.

This lesson, based on national and state standards, is typical of the 85 that are included in GeoMath, a resource "developed by teachers for teachers" with the Arizona Geographic Alliance in response to the frustration teachers felt at not having enough time to teach social studies. "Teachers want to teach geography," Ekiss asserts; they just need a means for doing so. GeoMath, she says, has everything a teacher needs to address social studies and math, including an outline of how each lesson aligns with standards for each subject area. That way, should an administrator ask, the teacher can show how delivering a lesson on earthquakes gives students a chance to hone math skills; for example, students might be analyzing data on seismicity to determine whether their state is more or less susceptible to earthquakes.

The Arizona Geographic Alliance also worked with teachers to create GeoLiteracy, a program that integrates geography standards with those for reading and writing. The lessons feature geography content, while the reading and writing standards guide the assessments. One lesson, for example, introduces 4th and 5th grade students to the ancient city of Jerusalem and asks them to consider why the city has an important place in the modern world. To assess learning for that lesson, students answer questions that were written to mirror the style of those found on Arizona's state tests.

Data on the effectiveness of the program, which was piloted in 20 Arizona school districts, reveal that the lessons "made a difference in reading comprehension," Ekiss states. Of the 5,000 students

who participated, 85 percent scored 80 percent or higher on the state geography assessment, 84 percent scored 80 percent or higher on the reading assessment, and 78 percent scored 80 percent or higher on the writing assessment (Arizona Geographic Alliance, 2002).

Such results don't happen by chance, says Ekiss. The lessons are successful because everything a teacher needs is included: "The lesson is there, the map is there, the graph is there," Ekiss observes. "The assessment is there, along with instructions on how to grade it." She maintains that such standardized lesson plans enable a teacher to look at a lesson one day and teach it the next.

Curricular materials like GeoMath and GeoLiteracy can help teachers challenge the "power of NCLB to push social studies out of the curriculum," agrees Margit McGuire. Yet there are caveats to consider. The good news is that many publishers now use social studies content to reinforce math and literacy, she says; the bad news is that some of those programs are "taught totally as a literacy program."

During national presentations she gives on this trend, McGuire shares samples of materials that have a social studies theme—such as making a new nation—but whose activities are designed to hone literacy skills. The social studies in the materials is addressed "in a pretty superficial way," she says, adding that busy teachers with precious little time may use the materials and then think that they've taught social studies. "It's simply not enough to have students read about making a nation," McGuire asserts. Teachers need to extend students' thinking, to guide their students into considering what the story suggests their role in a democracy might be. "While there is more fabulous literature than ever before, it's not enough to treat a literacy experience as social studies unless you come back to the underlying message and look at it in terms of what can we learn to make us a better citizen," McGuire contends.

## Getting Political

If social studies is preparation for citizenship, as educators like McGuire assert, then "that's the argument we have to make to policymakers," says Jeff Passe, who finds that the majority of policymakers "are shocked" to

learn about the marginalization of social studies. "It just never occurred to them that this would take place," he observes.

Passe and others active in the social studies arena now actively advocate for their subject. "People talk politics like never before in social studies circles," observes Passe, who is lobbying hard to ensure that each state has a supervisor of social studies. Policymakers need to hear why the subject is important and why teachers need training, he notes, and "the absence of social studies supervisors prevents the quality teaching that we can achieve."

Such a position at the district level can also be an antidote to atrophy. "I feel that there has been a resurgence for social studies in the last couple of years," says Christina Doepel, who welcomes the presence of a social studies supervisor in the district office. "We're fortunate that somebody in our county is looking out for social studies. I think you need supervisors to make sure social studies is not forgotten. Our county sees the value that social studies has in helping children become well developed and well rounded."

## Reflections ◆ ◆ ◆

Social studies educators are now activists for their subject. Now, more than ever, advocacy is a responsibility that all educators must shoulder. Educators must continue to remind policymakers and the public about the purposes of education in a democratic society. Peggy Altoff notes that "there is a lack of understanding of what social studies really is" (see "Viewpoint: An Interview with Denee Mattioli"). "Some individuals in content areas have spent a lifetime bashing social studies. We now have an opportunity for all separate content organizations to recognize our commonalities rather than emphasize our differences. We can worry about the differences once we know the content is being taught."

At which point Horace Mann can rest easy.

## Viewpoint: An Interview with Denee Mattioli

***Why do you think people have a hard time defining social studies?***

When I was in the classroom, everything from bicycle safety to fire prevention week was put under social studies. Many of those are very valuable programs, but instead of looking at them and saying this should be in an after-school program or with some other organization, special interest groups have slipped them under the heading of social studies—especially in districts that lack a well-defined curriculum. This further confuses what social studies is about.

At the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), we look at the curriculum areas—history, geography, economics, political science, and so on—and ask, "Why do students need to study these areas?" We're looking for a curriculum that will prepare students for the role of participating and contributing citizens in a democratic republic. To know our heritage and geography, to be economically responsible and savvy, and to make wise decisions based on information—all of that has to do with being a good citizen. That's all social studies. Many policymakers and the general public have lost sight of the original purpose of public education in the United States, which is to prepare citizens. That's why our Founding Fathers came up with this terrific idea of free, universal education.

***How do you answer those at the Fordham Foundation who say that social studies has become increasingly ideological and vague and that we need to go back to the basics by giving students a firm base in U.S. history?***

I think we can use the analogy that if we as a nation of educators are parents and all the curricular areas are our children—if two of them are hungry, we feed them. We don't starve the other children to make sure these two are fed. Certainly, rigorous, academic content standards are necessary—but not just history or not just American history. We feel that to reach the goal of being a strong

contributing citizen, you need knowledge in many areas. Definitely we need citizens who are knowledgeable about our own heritage, but also are able to set that heritage in the context of the world. They also need to have economic knowledge, civics, and political knowledge in order to be good citizens and make sure that this gem of history, the United States, not just survives but thrives.

Papers from Fordham like "Where Did Social Studies Go Wrong?" are not organized research but a series of individually written opinion essays. They come from one particular perspective. Some of the authors came up with very good points—yes, we do need to improve knowledge and understanding in the social sciences. The test scores, however, aren't the goal. Test scores report on whether we are reaching our goal. To continue to just criticize what's going on without really working to help make a change come about is problematic.

***What can we do for social studies teachers struggling with the possible marginalization of their curriculum due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?***

We need to listen to the teachers who are finding ways of dealing with the pressures of NCLB. We have some absolutely incredible things going on in education across this nation and at every level. We have knowledgeable, dedicated teachers whose students are doing a phenomenal job of not only learning and doing well on tests, but impacting students' knowledge outside the classroom. What we need to do is find out exactly what works through research and then learn from that research so that other teachers can use it. We also need to know why certain methodologies don't work with particular populations of students. We need to know more about how children learn—what motivates them—and that should inform how we instruct.

**Denee Mattioli is a past president of the National Council for the Social Studies.**

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