

## CHAPTER 4

## GOOD PRACTICES IN AND ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMS

Although identification of what students should learn at different age levels is useful in improving a curriculum program, improvement in social studies requires that **attention** be directed to other matters as well. This chapter addresses three such matters: sound philosophy, sound teaching, and sound organization.

## SOUND PHILOSOPHY

A social studies program that is characterized by sound philosophy will have a well-crafted rationale and wise policies regarding those issues that “come with the territory” of social studies.

## Developing a Social Studies Rationale

Chapter 1 of this framework presented a rationale for social studies, where the mission of the subject is defined (citizenship education) and an approach toward that mission was explained (drafting fundamental and guiding questions pertinent to citizenship and drawing upon academic disciplines to help in doing so). A rationale for social studies should address this question:

*“Why is social studies so important that public school students of this nation shall be required to study it?”*

To answer that question, it is important to think through answers to related questions, such as these:

*“Is the **prima ry function** of tax-supported public schools to prepare individuals for personal success in life, to prepare them to be positive contributors to society, or to prepare them for some combination of these? What unique role does social studies have within those purposes?”*

*“If a **major function** of social studies is to prepare students for informed, responsible citizenship, how should ‘informed, responsible citizenship’ be defined?”*

*“From what academic disciplines should social studies draw: history? geography? political science? economics? What about sociology, anthropology, and law? Any others? What makes each discipline important?”*

*“Should the disciplines that contribute to social studies be taught as separate and distinct from one another, or should they be taught in an integrated manner? What should be the relative importance given to each discipline?”*

*“What is the nature of social studies knowledge? To be sure, it consists of facts, generalizations, theoretical propositions, and methods of inquiry. How do those types of knowledge relate to each other? What should be the relative importance given to those different types of knowledge?”*

*“Finally, what is our vision of the students? Do we see them primarily as receivers of knowledge and wisdom that teachers and books deliver? Or do we see them as active participants in the learning process, as people who play an important part in making their own learning meaningful, as investigators, problem solvers, and decision makers?”*

Obviously, other questions may be asked and addressed. Both the questions and their answers in a social studies rationale deserve attention not only by social studies departments, but also by others in a district’s education community.

Some people may say, “This sounds too philosophical. Why bother thinking about such matters?” The fact is that all social studies programs and teachers do answer those questions in practice. They do so every time they select content, resource materials, and methods of teaching. Because social studies programs are tax-supported and compulsory, there is a moral imperative to raise such questions and answer them in a forthright manner, with opportunities for input and reaction from patrons.

Committees that draft rationales need not start from scratch. In addition to drawing upon ideas from Chapter 1 of this framework, they may also draw upon resources of the National Council for the Social Studies, such as *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* or upon introductory statements found in the various national social studies standards publications or upon other sources, many of which are listed in “References and Resources” found toward the end of this book.

## Setting Policy in Regard to Teaching Values

We define “values” as the standards people use when making judgments. Values have two facets, one objective, the other subjective. The objective facet pertains to the fact that values are concepts that have definable meanings. For example, values such as “honesty” (a moral value), “efficiency” (a performance value), and “balance” (an aesthetic value) may all be defined. The subjective facet of values pertains to the fact that values have emotional loadings attached to them. That is, most people have positive feelings toward honesty, efficiency, and balance.

Teachers of any subject must deal with values because they cannot avoid modeling and communicating values to students. Whenever they observe students cheating on examinations, littering the hall, or bullying one another, their responses or lack thereof communicate their values or those of their school.

Social studies teachers especially must deal with values soundly because the content of social studies is value laden, given the subject’s citizenship education mission. Some values are so essential for citizenship that social studies programs must promote them. Those values are reflected in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights and in inspired speeches and writings that are part of our heritage. They include the rights to life,

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liberty, justice, equality of opportunity, privacy, security, and the ownership of private property as well as the basic freedoms of worship, thought, conscience, expression, inquiry, assembly, and participation in the political process.

Social studies programs should focus on the role those values have played throughout history as well as the role they are playing in contemporary affairs. Social studies programs should also help students learn how to analyze and make rational decisions with regard to those issues that pit our most cherished values against each other. Such issues can be found in both the histories of this and other nations and in daily newspapers.

Because of teachers' daily dealings with students, the nature of social studies content, and the social studies citizenship education mission, the question social studies programs face is not whether to teach values. The question is whether the values they teach and the methods they use in dealing with values are ones that are sound. Hence, it is essential that social studies departments and school districts have soundly reasoned policy statements that govern how they will deal with values. Those statements should be consistent with the educational mission of public schools, the rights of citizens and students, and school district policies.

### Setting Policy with Regard to Teaching Controversial Issues

We define "controversial issues" as those questions people need to resolve about which they hold different points of view. In many cases, those different points of view result from people having different life experiences and perspectives. Often, those different viewpoints may be supported by one or more democratic values.

Social studies classes are obligated to deal with controversial issues for several reasons: they are present in daily life in this and other democratic societies, as is evidenced by the most cursory glance at newspapers; they are an integral part of history, indeed that part that is most interesting; they relate to social studies content (government, economics, geography, etc.); and citizens need competence in dealing with such issues. Indeed, students need to understand that decisions made with regard to controversial public policy issues often have profound ramifications for their lives and the lives of future generations. Students need to understand that part of their responsibility as citizens is to exhibit wisdom in making such decisions and that such wisdom can **only** be developed through study and thoughtful conversation. To **study** such issues and help students learn how to investigate, analyze, and discuss such issues is necessary if social studies programs are to be true to their citizenship education missions.

Just as it is important for school districts to have policy statements that govern the teaching of values in their programs, they also need policy statements on controversial issues that assure the community that they address those issues in ways that are sound educationally, that guarantee balanced treatment of topics, and that respect the rights of students and their families.

### Setting policy with regard to *multicultural education*

One issue all social studies programs face relates to the questions, “What is this nation, the United States of America? Who are we Americans?” We Americans can trace our roots from all over the world. Some of our ancestors came here, because this was the land of opportunity. Others came because they were imported as slaves. Should this be a land where we treasure what we have in common or where we treasure our diverse ancestral heritages? Such simple questions do not have simple answers. They are answered in different ways by different Americans based on their unique personal life experiences. Moreover, within every group of people the answers to such questions are far from uniform.

When social studies programs determine what they will teach and what resources they will use, they inevitably answer such questions. Their answers may please some patrons and displease others. Hence, here too policy is needed. The policy should reflect the fact that people cannot fully understand an event unless they know the perspectives of the event’s various participants, that knowing all perspectives does not diminish any perspective, but that knowing only one perspective often leads to erroneous or insensitive conclusions. The policy will also need to respect people’s First Amendment right to freedom of conscience and speech, while taking into consideration common basic values, such as equality, justice, and human dignity, which are needed for a democratic society to survive.

One possible resource that may be used when crafting such a policy is the National Council for the Social Studies position paper “Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education,” which may be found in an NCSS publication called The Tool Kit.

## SOUNDTEACHING

Missouri’s Show-Me Standards in combination with this framework’s Guiding Questions define what students should know and be able to do as a result of their studies in social studies. How such content is taught is very important.

Based upon analysis of teacher effectiveness research, Thomas Dynneson and Richard Gross have identified ten general principles found to be important in teaching any subject effectively: (1) clarity of presentation, (2) variety in strategies and activities used, (3) staying on task, (4) engaging students actively in learning processes without disruptions, (5) providing clear structure in teaching, (6) engaging students in cognitive development (i.e., thinking) activities, (7) expanding upon the knowledge base students have, (8) promoting and building upon students’ self confidence, (9) student participation, and (10) teacher enthusiasm for the subject matter being taught.\*

Using those principles, Dynneson and Gross propose what they have called “effective social studies teacher behaviors,” which we summarize and paraphrase as follows:

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\*Dynneson, T. L., and R. Gross, “Teaching Effectiveness: Ten Ways to Become a More Effective Social Studies Teacher,” (Paper presented at National Council for Social Studies Convention, Phoenix, Arizona, November 1994)

1. Developing a positive social relationship between teacher and student in order to help motivate and promote learning.
2. Improving one's professional attributes, i.e., building one's knowledge of the subject matter and one's skills in communicating ideas; using instructional technologies; planning, delivering, evaluating and revising instruction; and improving classroom routines.
3. Nurturing one's sense of professionalism in order to build respect between teacher and student.
4. Developing a sense of ownership in regard to the social studies instructional program by playing an active role in modifying the curriculum and course of study.
5. Involving students in the planning for instruction, making certain that external standards, such as national or state standards, do not threaten the sense of responsibility teachers feel for what goes on in their classrooms.
6. Designing the learning environment and instruction so that it psychologically supports and promotes the goals of instruction.
7. Arranging and rearranging the classroom and student work environment so that the physical setting supports the task at hand.
8. Establishing an atmosphere in the classroom of mutual respect, where behavioral ground rules are established, taught, monitored, and consistently applied and where students are rewarded for cooperation and achievement.
9. Establishing management principles and procedures that facilitate smooth classroom operations. The principles and procedures would apply to respecting others; being courteous; respecting classroom and personal property; behaving properly in the learning center, in small groups, and in whole-class settings; storing, distributing, and cleaning up materials; and so on.
10. Building relationships between content taught and the life experiences of the students.

Other ideas for effective teaching were developed by The Task Force on Standards for Teaching and Learning of the National Council for the Social Studies, in a position statement approved by the NCSS Board of Directors in 1992. The statement, entitled "A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies," may be found in *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Expectations for Excellence*, of the National Council for the Social Studies.\* The principles for powerful teaching and learning in social studies emphasized are summarized as follows:

1. **Make the teaching and learning meaningful — focused on important ideas** that have applicability inside and outside of school, with sustained examination of a few important topics rather than superficial coverage of many, with activities that are significant to students, and with assessment strategies that direct student's attention on the most important ideas embedded in what they are learning.

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\*National Council for the Social Studies, *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Expectations of Excellence*, Bulletin 89, Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1994, pp. 11-12.

2. Make the teaching and learning integrative — integrative in how topics are treated; in connecting events and developments studied across periods of time and across the earth; in relating knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and attitudes to action; in using technologies; and in making connections across the curriculum with other fields of study.
3. Make the teaching and learning value-based — considering the ethical dimensions of topics; providing a classroom arena that develops thoughtful concern for the common good and for application of social values; focusing on potential implications of social policies; assisting students in the development of critical thinking and decision-making skills applicable to addressing social issues; and helping students recognize opposing points of view, respect well-supported positions, become sensitive to cultural similarities and differences, and committed to social responsibility.
4. Make the teaching and learning challenging — expecting students to accomplish the instructional goals, both as individuals and as group members; modeling seriousness of purpose and a thoughtful approach to inquiry; and showing interest in and respect for students' thinking, while demanding well-reasoned arguments rather than unsubstantiated opinions.
5. Make the teaching and learning active — requiring reflective thinking and decision making as events unfold during instruction; helping students develop new understanding through a process of active construction of knowledge; engaging students in interactive discourse that facilitates the construction of meaning required to develop important social understanding; moving gradually 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; and emphasizing authentic activities that call for real-life applications using the skills and content of the field.

Reflecting on the ideas of Dyrneson and Gross and the NCSS Task Force on Standards for Teaching and Learning, paraphrased and summarized above, Missouri's social studies teachers can confirm and strengthen some of their current practices and make plans to revise and improve upon others.

## SOUND ORGANIZATION

### Scope and Sequence

Social studies programs may be organized in many different patterns, no one of which has been proved to be best. The “scope” of the program specifies what content — knowledge, processes of thinking, and habits of mind — is to be taught. “Sequence” identifies when and the order in which that content is to be taught.

Scope and sequence may be presented using one of four or more possible styles or using combinations of those styles:

Style 1. Narrative course descriptions identify and describe the most important content that is to be taught at each grade level.

Style 2. Lists of objectives are presented that identify what students are to learn at each grade level.

Style 3. Lists of questions are presented that identify what students are to investigate at each grade level.

Style 4. Matrices are presented that show when each objective in the curriculum's scope is to be introduced, developed, and reinforced.

The scope and sequence for social studies identified in Chapter 3 of this framework resembles most Style 3 above, i.e., what students are to learn is expressed in the form of questions. The Missouri School Improvement Program Standards and Indicators call for districts to describe their scopes and sequences in the form of Styles 1 and 2, although Styles 3 and 4 may also be used.

Chapter 3 of this framework presented rough guidelines for sequence in that it identified guiding questions for grade ranges, K-4,5-8, and 9-12, not for specific grade levels. Local districts certainly need to have a more specific scope and sequence than that presented in this framework. Each teacher must know what he or she is to teach at whatever grade level he or she teaches. Similarly, students need to know what they are expected to learn at their grade levels.

The authors of Missouri's curriculum frameworks have assumed that decisions on scope and sequence should be made at the local level for several reasons: First, the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 indicated that the State should respect local control of Missouri public schools. Second, no research base exists that proves one social studies sequence is best. Third, different Missouri school districts have adopted, committed themselves to, and purchased resources that support a variety of scopes and sequences, often after considerable study. Fourth, some local districts have built interdisciplinary courses into their programs (e.g., literature/history courses or science-technology-society courses) with the result that there may be no "pure social studies program" in some districts. Fifth, different textbook series reflect and support more than one scope and sequences. Finally, a state-adopted scope and sequence may reduce the capacity of local districts to make curriculum structure decisions that respond to new developments in the field of social studies.

Even though this framework does not identify a single Missouri scope and sequence, it certainly can offer general guidelines for districts to follow as they determine what they will teach and when they will do so. Following are general guidelines that may be used in addressing the scope of the social studies program:

### Scope and the Issue of Balance

The scope of the program should address the Show-Me Standards and many of the Guiding Questions specified in Chapter 3 of this framework. In addition and in ways consistent with those Guiding Questions, the scope of the program should reflect balanced instruction in several areas. Items to check include the following:

1. Is there a desirable balance among the academic disciplines that contribute to social studies, such as history, geography, government, economics, sociology, and the other

behavioral sciences? (The balance need not follow the principle of equal time for each discipline. History and geography, for example, might be allotted more time **than** other disciplines, because ideas from the other disciplines may be woven into history and geography courses.)

2. Is there a desirable balance among locales studied — community, state, nation, world — and balance among types of places and regions?
3. Is there a desirable balance in studies of the distant past, the recent past, and current times? (Many social studies programs pay most attention to the distant past, second most attention to current times, and least attention to studies of the recent past. Such a balance is questionable in view of the fact that study of the recent past is critical for understanding major issues of the present and future.)
4. Is there a desirable balance between broad surveys and in-depth studies? (Students need both a panoramic view of the world, past and present, and a close-up view of major, significant events and issues.)
5. Is there a desirable balance between knowledge outcomes and process outcomes (processes of inquiry, communication, solving problems, making decisions, etc.)?

### Scope and Missouri Graduation Requirements

The scope of the program should also address at *least* the State's minimum graduation requirements for social studies, which in 1995-96 are as follows:

1. Two units of social studies must be completed between grades 9 and 12.
2. Regular courses of instruction in U.S. and Missouri Constitutions, U.S. history and institutions must begin no later than grade 7 and continue into high school. Students must pass tests in these areas during grades 7-12.
3. Students must pass at least one semester of studies in local, state, and national government and in election processes sometime during grades 9-12. (Most districts fulfill this requirement by offering a required semester course in government.)

### Scope and the Issue of What Historical Events Should be Taught in Missouri Schools

Some people have posed the questions: "What are those most important historical events that students should learn while in school? Furthermore, could the Missouri Social Studies Framework identify those events for Missouri Schools?" Such questions, however, are much easier to ask than to answer, because no consensus exists among historians on what are the "most significant events in United States or world history," because different people -- historians included — view events from different frames of reference.

Still, when one looks at the tables of contents of history textbooks, it is clear that some topics always seem to crop up. What comprehensive U.S. history textbook, for example, would not address the topics that follow?

- European discovery of, exploration, migration to, and colonization of the Western Hemisphere;
- European interactions with Native American cultures;
- The American Revolution;
- Setting the foundations for the new republic (Constitution, Bill of Rights, judicial review, political parties);
- United States territorial expansion and its impact on relations with external powers and Native Americans;
- The early Industrial Revolution;
- Reform movements in the antebellum period (Second Great Awakening, public education, temperance, abolitionism, utopian experiments);
- The Civil War and Reconstruction;
- The rise of industry and mechanized farming following the Civil War;
- Progressive and other reformist attempts to address problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption;
- The rise of the United States as a world power (Spanish-American War and World War I);
- The Great Depression, its effect on American society, and the response of the political system with the New Deal transforming American federalism and initiating the welfare state;
- The origins, course, and consequences of World War II;
- The Cold War (Truman Doctrine, containment policy, Korean War, Cuban Missile Crisis, and Vietnam War);
- “The Great Society” and struggles for and conflicts over racial and gender equity;
- Contemporary appraisals of and conflicts over New Deal and Great Society programs; and so on.

Of course, within those and other topics there are many specific events, developments, and individuals who played a variety of significant roles. Indeed, a major problem confronting teachers of history is to select wisely events for emphasis, because there can never be enough time “to cover” everything that is important. Moreover, when history programs try to cover too much, they often end up boring and frustrating their students, who come to view history as the study of one dry, dead fact after another that someone has selected for them to memorize.

One response of historians to the problem of what to emphasize and how to make history interesting and meaningful has been to encourage teachers to help students gain a broad, comprehensive picture of the history being studied, be it United States history or world history, and then to select specific topics to study in depth. **To assist in that task and drawing upon ideas of the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, we recommend in-depth studies within the following topics in United States history during K-12 social studies programs with the caveat that local districts are certainly free to add other topics they consider to be important:**

1. The gathering of people and cultures from many regions of the world; the several religious traditions that have contributed to the American heritage and contemporary American society; and the interactions among the diverse groups who have inhabited the United States.
2. The evolution of American political democracy, its ideas, institutions, and practices from

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colonial days to the present: colonial experiences with government, the Revolution, the Constitution and Bill of Rights, slavery, expansion of the suffrage, the Civil War, emancipation, and civil rights.

3. The development of the American economy: geographic and other forces at work; the role of the frontier and agriculture; the impact of technological change and urbanization on land and resources, on society, politics, and culture; and the changing relationships between government and the economy.
4. The changing role of the United States in the outside world; relations between domestic affairs and foreign policy; American interactions with other nations and regions; the United States as a colonial power in Latin America and the Philippines; the United States in two World Wars, the Cold War, global economic relations and foreign policy issues after the Cold War.
5. The changing character of American society and culture, of arts and letters, of education and thought, of religion and values.
6. The distinctively American tensions between liberty and equality, liberty and order, region and nation, individualism and the **common** welfare, and cultural diversity and civic unity.
7. Family, local, and state history and how they relate to major developments in American history.
8. “Successes” and “failures” of the United States in crises at home and abroad. What has “worked” and what has not, and why

**As for topics in world history, we recommend in-depth study of the following topics during the K-12 social studies program, also with the caveat that local districts be free to add other topics they consider to be important:**

1. The evolution and distinctive characteristics of major Asian, African, American, and European societies, cultures, and civilizations; their achievements in the arts, sciences, and philosophy.
2. The connections among civilizations from earliest times and the gradual growth of global interaction among the world’s peoples, speeded and altered by changing means of transportation and communication.
3. Major landmarks in the human use of the environment from Paleolithic hunters to the latest technologies; the transformation in early times through the industrial transformation in recent centuries; changing relationships between people and their environments and the consequences.
4. The origins, ideas, moral codes, institutions, and spread of major religious traditions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.
5. The evolution of political and social institutions in different cultures; the evolution of

- democratic societies; the tensions between the aspirations for freedom and security, liberty and equality, distinction and commonality in human affairs; the uses and control of violence within and among peoples and nations; the consequences of war and peace.
6. Comparative study of the art, literature, and thought of representative cultures and of the world's major civilizations.
  7. Comparative history of locally selected themes and developments, such as revolutionary, reactionary, and reform periods; uses of the environment; patterns of social interaction across genders, age groups, social classes, ethnic groups, and races; and the changing nature of war and war's effects on civilian populations.
  8. Major developments within Western Civilization, including:
    - a. The political, philosophical, and cultural legacies of ancient Greece and Rome for Western Civilization.
    - b. Medieval European society and institutions; relations with Islam, Asia, and Africa; feudalism and the evolution of representative government.
    - c. The culture and ideas of the Renaissance and Reformation; European exploration; the origins of capitalism and colonization.
    - d. The English Revolution and its ideas; and the practices of parliamentary government at home and in the colonies.
    - e. The culture and ideas of the Enlightenment, comprising the scientific revolution of the 17th century and the intellectual revolution of the 18th.
    - f. The American and French Revolutions, their sources, results, and world influence.
    - g. The Industrial Revolution and its social consequences; its impact on politics and culture.
    - h. The European ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries and their global influence: liberalism, republicanism, social democracy, Marxism, nationalism, Communism, Fascism, Nazism.
    - i. The new 19th century imperialism, ultimate decolonization, and the consequences of both for colonizers and colonized.
    - j. The two world wars, their origins and effects, and their global aftermath and significance.
    - k. The making of the European community of nations; new approaches to cooperation and interdependence.
  9. Close study of the history of at least one non-European society and at least one society that cannot simply be defined as "Western" or "non-Western," such as a society in South or Central America.
  10. Varying patterns of response to industrialization and its accompanying effects in representative European and non-European societies.
  11. Selected instances of historical success and failure, of amelioration and exploitation, of peace and violence, of wisdom and error, of freedom and tyranny; in sum, a global perspective on a shared humanity and the common human condition.

## Sequence

As for the sequence of courses in social studies programs, the sequence should be based on sound principles. As noted above, there is no consensus in this nation on a single best sequence for social studies programs. Every sequence, even if very good, will require tradeoffs, because it is impossible to cover everything that is desirable in the time students have in school. For examples of a variety of sequences, see the Appendix and examine the resources listed in “References and Other Resources,” found toward the end of this framework. To check the quality of the local district sequence, determine whether the district sequence permits a positive “yes” answer to each of the following questions:

1. Does the sequence allow for effective teaching of the scope of the program? That is, does the sequence allow students to study adequately all Fundamental Questions, all academic discipline perspectives, and the most important Guiding Questions found in this framework?
2. Do social studies courses at each level build upon learning from earlier grades without having the problem of excessive redundancy?
3. Are social studies courses organized around topics that have power for integrating content and skills to be learned?
4. Are topics introduced at times appropriate for the students’ maturity and areas of responsibility?
5. Are topics taught at levels where stimulating, challenging, interesting instructional materials are available?

## CONCLUSION

This framework has been drafted to assist Missouri’s school districts in the design of their social studies curricula. We on the Framework Committee had the goal of producing a framework that would be thought-provoking and concise. We feel we have been at least one-half successful: that is, the framework is thought-provoking. If the framework is not so concise as we had hoped, that should come as no surprise because social studies is a complex field of studies. Several academic disciplines — history and the various social sciences — all contribute substantially to it, and each of those disciplines has a rich body of content and processes that have direct relevance to the citizenship education mission of social studies.

If the framework is not concise, it is organized in a practical way. The strands are structured around four easy-to-remember Fundamental Questions and five well known academic perspectives. Districts will use the framework in different ways, which is consistent with the spirit of the Outstanding School Act of 1993. It is the intent of the framework committee that the framework will stimulate productive thinking and promote widespread conversation about the purposes of social studies and about what content, processes, and teaching strategies are needed for accomplishing those purposes. In a deeper sense, however, the challenge of the framework is even more ambitious because its value is intimately connected with how well Missouri’s social studies programs contribute to the quality of citizenship in the state.