

PART ONE

Introduction to Social Studies Education

- Chapter 1** Social Studies Education: What and Why
- Chapter 2** Teaching Diverse Children



Chapter 1

Social Studies Education: What and Why

Chapter Outline

1. Goals for Social Studies: Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy
2. Curriculum Scope and Sequence
3. Curriculum Standards: National, State, and Local
4. Five Key Trends
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Key Concepts

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- Social understanding
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- Curriculum goals
- Scope and sequence
- Curriculum standards
- Grade and unit topics
- Conceptual themes
- Achievement gap
- 21st century skills
- Trends

PICTURE THIS

As they enter the classroom, the kindergarten children are excited to find a large strip of paper going down the middle of the floor. Their teacher, Jacob Stern, tells them to hang up their coats and come sit beside the paper strip. The strip, he tells them, is a highway connecting two distant towns. Mr. Stern takes a toy car and starts driving it along the highway. "What might happen as someone drives along?" he asks. The children suggest a number of possibilities: running out of gas, getting tired, and being hungry. "What services might be necessary for people as they drive from town to town?" Tanisha suggests a gas station. A milk carton is placed along the highway and named "Tanisha's Gas Station."¹



MAIN IDEA *The purpose of social studies education is to help students develop social understanding (i.e., knowledge of people and places near and far [geography] and now and then [history]) and civic efficacy (i.e., the ability to think and act as a democratic citizen in a diverse nation and an interdependent world).*



When I was in elementary school in Englewood, Colorado, just south of Denver, I loved social studies. I had brilliant teachers, and they taught us social studies every day, every week, and every month. It was serious social studies, not social studies “lite.” They introduced us to the knowledge and skills of the social sciences while preparing us to hold the highest office in the land: citizen. It was challenging, it was fun, and it was with social studies material that my reading and writing skills developed.

Those of us from Lowell Elementary School appeared to our middle school teachers to be the smart kids, which was not the case; we were just well taught. Prior knowledge always makes a student look smart. Our elementary teachers gave us that gift: By the time we got to middle school, we already knew something about what these new teachers wanted to teach us. We had a foundation they could build on. Best of all, the teachers at Lowell didn’t simply load us up with facts and skills. They taught us ideas and ignited a lifelong interest in them.

My experience in elementary school fueled more than my love of social studies subject matter. It also fueled my interest in how children can develop a solid foundation in social studies before they go on to middle and high school. I think of that often, and it pervades this book. In the primary grades (kindergarten–3rd), what should children be learning about social studies? And then how can they best build on that in the intermediate grades (4th–5th)? And then in the middle grades (6th–8th)? Simply put, social studies education is powerful, and not having access to it, for whatever reason, is disabling intellectually, socially, and morally.

Without historical understanding, there can be no wisdom; without geographical understanding, no cultural or environmental intelligence. Without economic understanding, there can be no sane use of resources and no rational approach to decision making and, therefore, no future. And without civic understanding, there can be no democratic citizens and, therefore, no democracy.

This is why social studies education matters. When children are empowered by knowledgeable and skillful teachers with the information, ideas, skills, and attitudes and values that compose the social studies curriculum, their judgment is improved. Consequently, they can reason historically, help solve community problems, embrace diversity, fight intolerance and bigotry, protect the environment, and, with deep understanding, empathize with the hopes, dreams, and struggles of people everywhere.

Goals for Social Studies: Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy

There are two primary goals of social studies education, and they are the guiding lights of most social studies curriculum standards. “Standards,” as we will see later in this chapter and throughout the book, are statements that describe what students should learn—the desired results of instruction, also called objectives. But curriculum standards—whether national, state, or local school district standards—are not to be confused with the broad goals or purposes of curriculum and instruction. *Standards make no sense unless we know the goals they are aiming to achieve.* To get at the goals of social studies, let’s begin with a definition.

According to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), social studies

. . . is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. 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.²

On one side of this definition is the subject matter that is studied. “Subject matter” is the what of teaching and learning—the curriculum. It includes the facts (also known as information or data), ideas, skills, issues (short for “controversial issues”), and methods of inquiry drawn from the seven social sciences: history, geography, civics and government (political science), economics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. The humanities—philosophy, ethics, literature, religion, music, and the visual and performing arts—are involved as well.³ These fields of study or “disciplines” serve as resources: The social studies curriculum draws on them, blending and integrating them with two additional ingredients—students’ cultural experiences and society’s needs. But to what ends? What is the purpose?

On the other side of the definition is the purpose, “civic competence” or democratic citizenship: “the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.” Civic competence is the readiness and willingness to assume citizenship responsibilities. These responsibilities include more than just voting. For in a democracy, it is also one’s responsibility to serve on juries, to be lawful, and to be just. (“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” famously said by Martin Luther King, Jr.⁴) One is expected to be tolerant of political and cultural differences, one is expected to participate in creating and evaluating public policy, and it is one’s duty to be civic-minded—to think not only of oneself and one’s own rights and freedoms but also of the good of the whole community.

In a nutshell, then, social studies education has two goals: social understanding (i.e., knowledge of human societies) and civic competence (i.e., democratic citizenship). When developing any social studies unit or reading any set of curriculum standards for social studies, keep an eye on these two the goals.

Schools typically approach these two broad goals by way of three subgoals: knowledge, attitudes and values, and skills. More specific objectives (or “standards”) are typically listed under each subgoal. When readers examine their state and local social studies curriculum standards, they will most likely find that the standards take this form or one that is similar. Please take some time now to find out.

Knowledge

Which social knowledge is most important? We can answer this question in three ways: disciplines, themes, and topics.

One way to determining which social knowledge is most important is to refer to the *disciplines* (also called *fields*) of study. These are the seven social science disciplines and the humanities. Within these disciplines, knowledge is systematically created, interpreted, critiqued, and revised continually in a never-ending process of disciplined (i.e., it’s systematic, not random or without rules of inquiry) knowledge construction. But these are large fields containing huge amounts of ideas, information, and methods of inquiry.

Another approach is to identify a set of basic content *themes*. Themes help curriculum planners and teachers narrow the scope somewhat and give them a better idea of *which* social knowledge deserves the most attention. The *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* created by the National Council for the Social Studies identifies 10 such themes. They have become the best-known knowledge themes for social studies instruction in the elementary and middle grades and have been incorporated into a number of state and local social studies standards frameworks:

1. Culture
2. Time, Continuity, and Change
3. People, Places, and Environments
4. Individual Development and Identity
5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
6. Power, Authority, and Governance
7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
8. Science, Technology, and Society
9. Global Connections
10. Civic Ideals and Practices

Please take a minute now to look at *A Sampler of Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. You can find it at this textbook’s website at www.myeducationlab.com. Find the brief descriptions of each of the 10 themes. The remainder of the *Sampler* spells out each of these 10 standards and gives teaching examples called “snapshots.” This will be a helpful resource for you as you plan lessons and units.

A third way to answer the “Which knowledge is most important?” question is to identify topics. There is no shortage of topics, and of course they cannot all be taught and no one would want to learn them all. One scholar, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., produced a list of over 5,000 topics that he thought elementary school children in the United States should learn in order to give them a common knowledge base.⁵ Without this, he argued, there can be no common culture that bridges our many cultural differences. But most educators, while sympathetic to Hirsch’s thesis that shared knowledge is important, found his list too long and too fragmented to be of much help in curriculum development. A more typical and manageable set of topics for unit development in each of the elementary grades appears in the next section on curriculum scope and sequence. For example, elementary students should know:

- Great river systems of the world
- Desert cultures and forest cultures
- Food, clothing, transportation, and shelter (now and then, near and far)
- Ancient societies and modern societies
- Geographic regions of the United States
- The American Revolution and Constitution
- Rights and responsibilities of citizens

Attitudes and Values

The second subgoal of social studies learning—attitudes and values—is directed less at cognitive knowledge and more at emotion, feeling, and beliefs about right and wrong. Particular attitudes (also called dispositions, traits, and virtues) and values are essential to democratic citizenship. Sometimes these are divided into two categories and listed separately, as we will see in Chapter 3, but for now we can lump them together in order to distinguish them from knowledge and the third subgoal: skills. Without attitudes and values, like a boat without a rudder or a hiker with no compass, democratic government and civic life would be impossible. The following are typical of what is listed in state and local curriculum guidelines.

1. Being committed to the public values of this society as suggested in its historical documents, laws, court decisions, and oaths (e.g., from the *Declaration of Independence*, “all men are created equal”; from the Pledge of Allegiance, “liberty and justice for all”)
2. Being able to deal fairly and effectively with value conflicts that arise when making decisions about the common good (public policy)
3. Developing a reasoned loyalty to this nation and its form of government. (Note that the Pledge of Allegiance is made not to a person, but to a form of government: a “republic”; that is, a constitutional democracy)
4. Developing a feeling of kinship to human beings everywhere—to the human family

5. Taking responsibility for one's actions and fulfilling one's obligations to the community

Skills

The third subgoal—skills—identifies what students should know how to do. Of course, *doing* involves *knowing*; skillful behavior is skillful to a great extent because of the knowledge that supports it. A child is skillful at something because he or she knows how to do it well. A skill, then, is also called *know-how* or *procedural knowledge*. Skills are often subdivided as follows:

- I. Democratic Participation Skills
 - A. Listening to and expressing opinions and reasons
 - B. Participating in classroom, school, and community decision making, especially participating in group discussions of public issues (classroom, community, international) with persons with whom one may disagree; leading such discussions; mediating, negotiating, and compromising
 - C. Working cooperatively to clarify a task and plan group work
 - D. Accessing, using, and creating community resources
- II. Study and Inquiry Skills
 - A. Using and making time lines, maps, globes, charts, and graphs
 - B. Locating, reading, and analyzing information from a variety of resources, such as books, encyclopedias, the Internet, newspapers, and libraries
 - C. Writing reports and giving oral presentations
 - D. Distinguishing between primary and secondary sources
 - E. Forming and testing hypotheses
- III. Intellectual Skills (critical thinking and problem solving)
 - A. Comparing and contrasting
 - B. Making and evaluating conclusions based on evidence
 - C. Identifying and clarifying problems and issues
 - D. Distinguishing fact from opinion
 - E. Inferring cause-effect relationships

As you will see later in this chapter, there is today a flurry of activity to identify what are being called “21st century skills.” These cut across the school subjects (math, science, social studies, language arts) and hope to present “a holistic view of 21st century teaching and learning.”⁶ Critical thinking, collaboration, and media literacy are emphasized. This is an exciting trend that may help schools innovate and transform teaching and learning for the current era.

REFLECTION Many school subjects comprise knowledge and skills, but social studies emphasizes attitudes and values, too. How are they different, and why are both important?

Curriculum Scope and Sequence

So far we have been considering the goals of social studies teaching and learning. Now it is time to understand the idea of “scope and sequence.”

Building a firm foundation in an earlier grade to support learning that should occur in a later grade is the reason curriculum directors and standards authors carefully plan the scope and sequence of a social studies program. The *scope* of the program refers to the subject matter—the knowledge, values and attitudes, and skills—that the program is to include. The *sequence* is the order in which the various subject matters are to be presented.

As for scope, it is not the purpose of the elementary school to teach the social science disciplines apart from their relevance to children’s lives or society’s problems and needs. Disciplinary knowledge should be taught in ways that will help children gain insight into the social and physical world in which they live. When children are making islands and mountains on the classroom floor or learning to draw maps of the playground, they are dealing with geography in simple ways. When they are asked to explain why they need agreed-upon rules in the games they play and then dramatize the signing of the U.S. Constitution, and then create a classroom constitution—a rule book they agree to follow—they are having their first brush with history and government. Moreover, the teacher is connecting the social studies curriculum to students’ lives outside school. When students compare and contrast the playground bully to the elected classroom president, they are beginning to understand basic ideas from political science (law and legitimate authority). In these ways, the subject matter is connected to what the children already know and do. But the curriculum also broadens their horizons, taking them to distant places and times—to the signing of the Constitution in Philadelphia, the life of a scribe in Cleopatra’s court, the sisters and their cousins who carry drinking water from the well to their village in the Sahara desert, and village life in one of the first farming communities thousands of years ago. So, the social studies curriculum is connected to the child’s life, *and it enlarges that life outward to include the less familiar, the far away, and the long ago*. Of course, role-playing and simulations—playing, pretending, and imagining—help to make all this vivid and concrete. Being asked what really happened and how they know that to be true, again and again, familiarizes them with the “disciplined” ways of knowing that mark the social sciences.

As for curriculum sequence, ordinarily topics that have a concrete and familiar focus for children are included in the primary grades—topics such as homes and houses, schools and stores, local rivers and lakes, the clothes (what anthropologists call “costume”) the children are wearing and the foods they are eating and where these come from and how they are grown and shipped. Topics that are more remote in space and time, such as the nation, the United Nations, and regions of the world, are focal points in the intermediate and middle grades. *It must be emphasized, however, that this does not mean that first-graders spend a year studying their own families, or that second-graders study only the local neighborhood or third-graders only*



Dramatizations
with simple sets bring
geography to life.

(Photo courtesy of Anthony
Magnacca/Merrill)

the local community. Rather, a compare-and-contrast approach should be used, for it builds intellectual strength and conceptual power, and broadens students' horizons. For example, children should learn how local houses and apartments are similar to and different from shelters long ago and far away. The same is true for families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Here is a popular scope-and-sequence plan from the National Council for the Social Studies.

Kindergarten—Awareness of Self in a Social Setting

Grade 1—The Individual in Primary Social Groups: Understanding School and Family Life

Grade 2—Meeting Basic Needs in Nearby Social Groups: Neighborhoods

Grade 3—Sharing Earth-Space with Others: Communities

Grade 4—Human Life in Varied Environments: Regions

Grade 5—People of the Americas: The United States and Its Neighbors

Grade 6—People and Cultures: The Eastern Hemisphere

Grade 7—A Changing World of Many Nations: A Global View

Grade 8—Building a Strong and Free Nation: The United States

Grade 9—Systems That Make a Democratic Society Work: Law, Justice, and Economics

Grade 10—Origins of Major Cultures: A World History

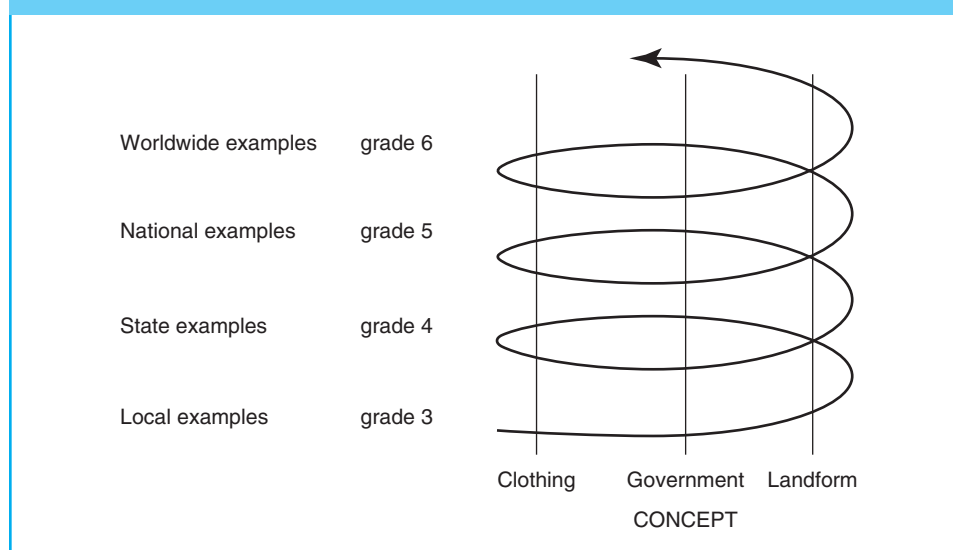
Grade 11—The Maturing of America: United States History

Grade 12—One-year course or courses required, such as U.S. Government & Politics; Comparative Government & Politics; Problems of Modern Society; International Studies⁷

A powerful sequencing principle is the “spiral” curriculum. As the brilliant psychologist Jerome Bruner described it, “ideas are first presented in a form and language (that) can be grasped by the child, ideas that can be revisited later with greater precision and power until, finally, the student has achieved the reward of mastery.”⁸ A concept like “family” can be grasped—in a very simple way—by the five-year-old with reference to her own family, families that live nearby, and the families of her friends and relatives. She notices the similarities and differences across these nearby examples and constructs in her own mind the idea of “family.” But later, in a unit on family life in India and Kenya, she encounters new and different examples—including the Kenyan Masai family with many wives and children and not a cat or dog but a cow. Then, in a high school Law and Society class, she learns about family law (custody issues, marriage benefits, civil unions, etc.). In college, she might write a thesis called “The Changing Family in Europe and Africa.” Through years of study of a single concept, the student’s understanding of it becomes increasingly complex—both differentiated (she can talk about the similarities and differences that exist within families across history and geography) and elaborated (she has a detailed understanding of various examples and of the popular and scholarly debates that occur over the definition of “family”). Figure 1.1 displays one sketch of a plan for spiralling three concepts.

Shall we pull all this together? Look again at the 10 themes identified in the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. How might these themes be used with a scope-and-sequence plan of this kind? It is important to note that the 10 themes are ideas or, more precisely, concepts. Furthermore, as the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* make clear, these themes are recommended as the basis for instruction in each grade, kindergarten through 12th. What we can do is select a grade level from the

Figure 1.1 Spiral curriculum.



scope-and-sequence plan here (or one provided by your local school district) and use the 10 themes to help plan conceptually rich units and lessons. Let's select, as an example, the grade 3 emphasis—communities—and think of some focus questions that will engage children with each of the 10 themes.

What does this involve? The example that follows uses two resources to create a powerful third-grade social studies curriculum. I took the third-grade topic “Communities” from the preceding scope-and-sequence recommendation and then elaborated the scope of that topic by using the 10 conceptual themes from the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*.

Take some time now to draft a similar example for another grade level. This will provide experience in thinking conceptually about the social studies topical emphasis of a given grade level. We applied the 10 conceptual themes to the topic of communities, but the same process can be followed for the second-grade emphasis—neighborhoods—or the fourth-grade emphasis—geographic regions—or the fifth-grade emphasis—United States history—and so on. You may need the accompanying Sampler to bolster your understanding of the 10 themes.

GRADE 3 SHARING EARTH-SPACE WITH OTHERS: COMMUNITIES

1. *Culture*. How does life in our community differ from life in our sister cities in Japan and Russia?
2. *Time, Continuity, and Change*. What were the turning points in our community's history?
3. *People, Places, and Environments*. How did our community come to be located where it is, and how would our lives be different if it were located on the edge of the sea, in a desert, or high in the mountains?
4. *Individual Development and Identity*. How does learning in school differ from learning that takes place elsewhere in our community—on the job, on the playing field, at home, at a city council meeting?
5. *Individuals, Groups, and Institutions*. What after-school clubs do young people belong to in our community, and how do they differ from those in our sister cities in Japan and Russia?
6. *Power, Authority, and Governance*. What are the three branches of government in our community, and who serves in them?
7. *Production, Distribution, and Consumption*. What things do people in our community want and need? What do we make in our community and what do we have to import? How are these different from the wants and needs in our sister cities in other countries?
8. *Science, Technology, and Society*. How do our values influence the use of buses and cars in this community?
9. *Global Connections and Interdependence*. What three products are imported in the greatest quantities to our community? Are any products exported?
10. *Civic Ideals and Practices*. Who is eligible to vote in this community? Where can they register to vote? What percentage of them voted in the last presidential election? In the last local election? What can our class do to encourage eligible voters to vote?

This is one of the most important curriculum-planning habits any teacher can develop. Its gist is to apply the 10 NCSS conceptual themes to the subject matter topics emphasized at a given grade level. *In so doing, the scope of the topic is expanded and deepened so that a student's understanding is also expanded and deepened.* Without this kind of planning, the teacher may be limited to skating across the thin surface of a topic, communicating facts about it perhaps, but not helping students to organize the facts into big ideas that they can then apply to the next topic, and the next, and so on.

With this kind of curriculum planning, students not only learn the topic that is currently emphasized but also learn it in a way that will help them grasp more about subsequent topics in the curriculum sequence. What results is a snowball effect that empowers students in each subsequent grade. Researchers call this the *Matthew effect*, named after the idea expressed in the biblical Book of Matthew: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The rich get richer because they are able to invest their surplus, earning still more, which they can reinvest, and so on. The analogy to education is that the knowledgeable become more knowledgeable. The knowledge they already possess enables them to learn still more. *Children become more knowledgeable because their prior knowledge serves as a fertile seedbed in which subsequent knowledge can take root.*⁹ A mind furnished with powerful concepts is fertile ground for the germination of new ideas.

Unit Topics by Grade Level

This section provides examples of unit topics taught in grades K–8 in schools across the nation. These examples should not be construed as a model curriculum; they will not be precisely the same as those found in any specific school program. Rather, the intention here is to help readers gain a better idea of what subject matter may actually be taught at different grade levels.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten programs ordinarily deal with topics that help to familiarize children with their immediate surroundings. The home and school provide the setting for these studies. With some kindergarten children, it is possible to include, in a simple way, references to the world beyond their immediate environment.

Rules for Safe Living

America the Beautiful

Working Together at School

Our Earth

People Change the Land

Hooray for Holidays

Grade 1

Grade 1 studies are based in the local area, such as the school and neighborhood, but the local area is connected to the larger world. Basic work with history and geography

begins. Units should provide for easy transition from the near at hand to the far away and back again at frequent intervals.

Who We Are and Where We Live
Families at Work
Families Around the World

Our Country Now and Long Ago
Explorations Near and Far
Cities, Islands, Jungles

Grade 2

The grade 2 program provides for frequent and systematic contact with the world beyond the neighborhood. By studying transportation, communication, food distribution, and travel, children begin to learn how their part of the world is connected to other places on Earth.

Comparing Holidays
Exploring Our Past
We the People: Elections

Food, Clothing, and Shelter (cultural universals)
Transportation and Communication
How Neighborhoods Change

Grade 3

The grade 3 program often emphasizes the larger community concept: what a community is, types of communities, how communities provide for basic needs, how they are governed, their history, and their variety around the world. A comparative approach is recommended.

Rural and Urban Communities
Native and Newcomer Communities
Washington, D.C.: Our Nation's Capital

Community Workers
Our City's Government
Tokyo: Japan's Capital



"My" neighborhood,
school, and house.
Maps reveal the
spaces of our lives.

(Photo courtesy of Silver
Burdett Ginn)

Grade 4

In grade 4, the geographic regions of the United States are often stressed. Home-state history is also common (often by legislative requirement). A comparative approach is recommended: comparing the home state with other states and the home region with other regions.

History and People of the Home State

Regions of the United States: The West, Southwest, Midwest, Northeast, and South

Deserts and Forests of the World (world regional comparisons)

Rivers of the World (world regional comparisons)

The Three Branches of Democratic Government

Grade 5

Almost all schools include the geography and history of the United States in the grade 5 program. The program may focus on the United States alone or the United States plus Canada and Latin America. The 5th-grade emphasis should be coordinated with the 8th- and 11th-grade programs in order to revisit difficult concepts (e.g., colony, constitutional democracy, slavery, civil war, culture, pluralism, region, justice, civil rights). Commonly, units coincide with historical eras. In some states, students are introduced to all eras in grade 5; in others, coverage extends only through the topics in the following left-hand column. The final unit of the school year may focus on one of the U.S. neighbors, Canada or Mexico. In other districts, this unit occurs in grade 6.

The American Land

The Native Americans

European–Native Encounters

The American Colonies

War for Independence

Creating a New Nation

The Institution of Slavery

The Civil War

The New Nation’s Westward Expansion

The Industrial Revolution

The World Wars

The Civil Rights Movement

Grades 6 and 7

Sixth-grade programs may include the study of Latin America and Canada, the history and geography of the Eastern Hemisphere, ancient civilizations, or world geographic regions. Each of these patterns is common. A major limitation of grade 6 programs is that they attempt to deal with too many topics, often resulting in a smattering of exposure an inch deep and a mile wide. Not only is this not powerful learning, but it’s also boring! The same criticism applies to the seventh grade. Stronger programs emerge if teachers carefully select a few units representative of basic concepts that have wide applicability. For example, a class need not study each poor nation to gain some understanding of the problems of developing countries. An in-depth study of two would provide both depth and contrast.

The content of the grade 7 program depends on that of grade 6. The Eastern Hemisphere and world regions are popular choices for this grade. World geography

is also included in some districts, as are studies of the home state. California schools shift from ancient civilizations in the sixth grade to medieval and early modern times in the seventh. Note in the following that the term *hemisphere*, not *civilization*, is used. To the extent that these terms still have meaning in a rapidly globalizing world, Europe is a continent located in the Eastern Hemisphere but Western civilization, and Asia is a continent located in the Eastern Hemisphere and Eastern civilization.

Western Hemisphere Emphasis

Cooperation and Conflict in the Americas	The Prairie Provinces
Three Incan Countries	The Amazon
The Organization of American States	Canada and Mexico

Eastern Hemisphere Emphasis

The Birthplace of Three Religions	The World Wars
Ancient Civilizations	The Holocaust
The Dark Ages and the Renaissance	Collapse of the USSR
Empires and Revolutions	Africa Today

Ancient Civilizations

Early Humans	The Agricultural Revolution
Mesopotamia, Egypt, Kush	India and China
Hebrews, Greeks, and Their Legacies	The Rise and Fall of Rome

World Geography (comparative regional study)

The Five Themes of Geography	Map Projections (Mercator, Peters, Fuller, etc.)
Africa	South America
Asia	Oceania
Europe	North America

Grade 8

The study of the United States is widespread in grade 8. The program usually stresses the development of U.S. political institutions and consists of a series of units arranged chronologically. A biographical approach (lots of details in Chapter 13) effectively integrates social studies and language arts.

Natives and Colonizers: Cultures and Conquest	Creating a Democracy
The Institution of Slavery	A Divided Nation
Birth of an Industrial Giant	Immigration
The United States and the World	Globalization

Curriculum Standards: National, State, and Local

You have probably noticed in this class and others that there is much talk about curriculum standards. This is because there has been over the past two decades a concerted effort to “raise standards” in American education. As a consequence, curriculum standards have been written by national, state, and local educational authorities, and testing has increased dramatically—the latter to find out if the new standards are being met. Caution is needed: The flurry of activity around standards and testing has become like a blizzard on the Colorado plains of my childhood. It’s difficult to see clearly in any direction. Here, briefly, is the story.

Curriculum standards are statements that describe what students need to learn. They try to answer one of the most controversial questions of all time in every society: What kind of people do we want our children to become? What should they know and be able to do? Not surprisingly, people disagree over the answer to this question, for the answer depends on what they value and how they are positioned relative to other people. Do they value historical knowledge or only practical know-how? *Whose* history and *which* know-how?

A number of national curriculum standards committees in a variety of subject areas were convened across the nation in the mid-1990s. For the subject of social studies, five sets of national standards were written. These are *voluntary* standards; no state or school district is required to implement them, yet most have drawn on them to some degree as they prepare local curriculum frameworks. But why are they important to you? *They are a rich source of ideas for planning your social studies lessons and units.* Sometimes you will see an objective that you will want to copy directly into your plan. (Feel free to do this; they are written to be used. But remember to credit your source.) At other times you will get terrific ideas for student learning activities.

You can find these voluntary national standards on the Internet. At the top of the list that follows is the best single set of standards for elementary and middle school teachers of social studies because it draws on and integrates the other four, which were developed for the separate disciplines of history, geography, civics/government, and economics.

Social Studies (Integrated)

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. Developed by the National Council for the Social Studies. A Sampler of these standards, revised in 2010, can be found at this textbook’s website at www.myeducationlab.com

History

National Standards for History. Developed by the National Center for History in the Schools, University of California, Los Angeles. (www.nchs.ucla.edu/standards)

Geography

Geography for Life: National Geography Standards. Developed by the National Council for Geographic Education, Washington, D.C. (www.ncge.org)

Civics/Government

National Standards for Civics and Government. Developed by the Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, CA. (www.civiced.org)

Economics

Voluntary National Standards in Economics. Developed by the Council for Economic Education, New York. (www.councilforeconed.org)

The chapters that follow, especially Chapters 3 through 5, highlight each of these sets of standards. And don't forget: A *Sampler* of the first set, the integrated social studies standards developed by the National Council for the Social Studies, accompanies this textbook at www.myeducationlab.com.

In addition to these *national* standards, each of the 50 *states* and most of the *school districts* within them have curriculum standards of their own. How have state and district curriculum standards been influenced by the various sets of *national* curriculum standards? The answer varies. There may have been no influence at all, or a state or district may have adopted a set of national standards wholesale. Something in between is more likely. Most states view the national standards documents as resources, with teachers and curriculum directors pondering them but not adopting them wholesale. According to most reports, few states feel obliged to use them. (The U.S. Constitution makes education a state-by-state project, not a national one.) As one Texas official put it, "If there is a conflict between the Texas standards and the national standards, this is Texas. And, by God, we would choose Texas standards."¹⁰

Most important, however, is to find and examine the social studies standards for your state and local school district and read them. To help make sense of what you read, please keep in mind the preceding discussion in this chapter about curriculum *goals* and *scope and sequence*.

Five Key Trends

A social trend is a social force. A trend has power—the power to carry you, your thinking, beliefs, customs, and identities, in one direction or another. The dictionary defines *trend* as a prevailing direction or current. Trends can be hard to see, but they are also hard to ignore. When you step into a river, you are moved by its current and moved not just anywhere but in a particular direction.

Unique trends are influencing teachers who are beginning their careers today. Had you applied for a teaching position in the late 1950s, the successful launching

of the Soviet Union's satellite *Sputnik* would have loomed over your interview with the personnel director. He or she may have been carried by the strong current of "beating the Russians to the moon." You may have replaced your classroom supply of finger paints with beakers and microscopes as so many teachers were required to do. Had you applied to teach in 1970, the war in Vietnam and antiwar protests might have shaped the interview. You may have been asked to take a loyalty oath—a statement swearing your loyalty to the United States and its laws. You may have sewn a peace symbol to your jeans jacket.

Of course, today's currents are different. Teachers are being asked to take the vision of the public school more seriously than ever before, offering high-quality education to each child, welcoming children of all cultures, and closing the achievement gap between White students and students of color (Trend 1 following). Teachers and schools also are being held accountable more than before by the use of "high-stakes" tests. This is affecting the teaching and learning of social studies, sometimes pushing it to the sidelines of the elementary school curriculum (Trend 2). Meanwhile, globalization is intensifying—at once exciting, disorienting, and threatening. Accordingly, "21st century skills" are taking on new meaning and urgency. Teachers are expected to innovate and collaborate with one another and to teach their students to do the same (Trend 3). At the same time, education for democratic citizenship (Trend 4) is a current that moves us in the direction of a more vibrant and just society. Democracies are fragile, after all, and teachers are expected to be democratic educators—stewards of "we the people." Finally, integrating literacy instruction with social studies instruction has long been considered a wise practice, and it is now a hot trend (5). These trends are introduced here and revisited throughout the book. During an interview for a teaching position, you most likely will be asked about one or more of them.

Trend 1: Closing the Achievement Gap

The public-school movement of the mid-1800s was geared to getting children into schools at public expense (private schools for the wealthy were already well established). That public-school movement was quite successful. But once access to schools was extended to all our children, access to good *curriculum and instruction* within them depended largely on the social class, race, and gender of the child. To some extent, it still does.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that the segregated school system was failing to provide equal education for all children, and communities were forced to racially integrate their schools. Yet the curriculum standards to which African American children were held and the instructional support they received inside the newly integrated schools sometimes were, and still are, lower than those for White children. Today, schools are *re-segregating*, which is separating the urban poor from the suburban middle class. As a result, there are what Jonathan Kozol famously called "savage inequalities" between schools within the same metropolitan area—maybe only a half mile apart.¹¹

As we will see in Chapter 2, poor children are often held to lower standards, and students of color (especially Native American, African American, and Latino

students) are disproportionately from poor families where there may be fewer books in the home, less reading aloud to children, and parents with fewer years of schooling themselves. Moreover, middle-class children of whatever race or ethnicity do not have access to the same curriculum and instruction that are generally available to children from well-to-do families who attend exclusive private schools. As a result, an achievement gap persists between White and non-White students and between students from lower- and higher-income families.

Today's teachers are expected to work hard to educate the diverse children of today's classrooms and to create more successful ways of doing so than have been developed thus far. Access to (i.e., inclusion in) high-quality curriculum and instruction is the goal. To this end, today's teachers are expected to know the content and skills they are teaching—from world geography to reading-comprehension skills—as well as instructional methods that will help children learn these things. Teachers are also expected to acknowledge and root out their own prejudices and stereotypes—which all of us have to some extent—and thereby to recognize the intelligence, strengths, and talent in each child. Teachers are expected to set challenging expectations and provide a strong and supportive instructional environment for every student. As we shall see in the next chapter, this means not only that teachers must examine their own attitudes about race, gender, and cultural differences, but also that they must learn about the home cultures of their students, which in some cases may be markedly different from their own and the culture of the school.

Trend 2: Assessment, Accountability, and the *Global Achievement Gap*

By 2001, there was a high-stakes testing movement in the schools. Today, many parents and educators believe it has gotten out of hand. America's public schools currently administer more than 100 million standardized exams each year. Any teacher will tell you that the pressure is intense to raise children's scores on these tests.

As we will see in Chapter 7, there are three main purposes of testing: (1) to improve teaching and learning; (2) to sort and place students in special programs; and (3) to hold schools accountable to parents and the public. *Trend 2 is all about the third purpose of assessment.* But why? Why this pressure for accountability?

The pressure comes from many sources. Near the beginning of his presidency, Barack Obama announced "Race to the Top." In this program, states compete for federal funds that will help them reform schools in four areas:

- Adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices
- Turning around our lowest-performing schools

Back in 2002, President George W. Bush enacted No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This act required all states to implement statewide accountability systems that:

- Established academic standards in each subject
- Identified strengths and weaknesses in the educational system, including “failing schools”

These federal government efforts to get states to reform their school systems fueled the testing-and-accountability frenzy we see today across the country. But it is due also to widespread concern for the nation’s international competitiveness. Many people worry that American students are falling behind students in other nations. As the *Partnership for 21st Century Skills* puts it: “Equally important (to the achievement gap *within* the nation) is the *global achievement gap* between U.S. students—even our top-performing students—and their international peers in competitor nations.”¹²

In his influential book, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, Thomas Friedman wrote: “When I was growing up, my parents told me, ‘Finish your dinner. People in China and India are starving.’ Now, I tell my daughters, ‘Finish your homework. People in India and China are starving for your job.’” This rhetoric reflects and at the same time fuels the anxiety that our nation will not compete successfully in the new century because our schools don’t demand enough of students. The same rhetoric was popular in 1958 after the Soviet Union “beat” the United States into space travel, and then in 1983 during Japan’s economic “miracle,” and again today as China and India soar.

As a consequence, testing time in schools has increased dramatically. Just a decade ago, yearly testing in elementary schools may have taken only one week. According to a third-grade teacher in California, yearly testing has now lengthened to three weeks. “Although learning did take place during this time through the review of subject matter,” she said, “the school felt like it was in ‘suspended animation’ until all tests were completed. And, teachers were encouraged to give test reviews when students were not actually taking tests.”¹³

Is all the testing helping? This is hotly debated. Here’s one problem: Since NCLB was implemented, the number of English language learners (ELLs) graduating from high school has decreased. Why? Despite fulfilling their other graduation requirements, they failed one or more high-stakes tests. Is decreasing high school graduation really what we want? As we’ll see in Chapter 2, high school graduation is a major life event that influences everything from annual income to civic participation and tolerance for diversity. On the other hand, an African American school principal said to me, “If it wasn’t for this testing, I wouldn’t be able to get my teachers to teach the kids of color with the same high expectations they have for the White kids.”

Here’s a second problem: It is not only the administration of such tests that concerns teachers—the time and energy they spend on them—but also their effect on *what* is taught to children and *how*. Evidence shows that teachers reallocate instructional time so as to teach to the test, and their principals often demand it. The result is called *curriculum narrowing*, which is the intense focus on reading and

math (and now, in some places, science) to the exclusion of social studies, art, literature, and music. And it doesn't happen equitably: Poor children in urban schools are subjected to more curriculum narrowing than are well-off children in suburban schools.¹⁴

Trend 3: Globalization and 21st Century Skills

Globalization is not new. Long ago, Columbus, Cortés, and the Pilgrims were key players in globalization. But today globalization is different because it is *intensifying*. It has multiple dimensions, some bad and some good. One kind of globalization is widening the rich-poor gap around the world in the name of new markets, “free trade,” and cheap labor. A recent report warns, “Thanks to *globalization*, driven by modern communications and other advances, workers in virtually every sector must now face competitors who live just a mouse-click away in Ireland, Finland, China, India, and dozens of other nations whose economies are growing.”¹⁵ Another kind of globalization—political rather than economic—is spreading human rights; pressure is being put on oppressive governments for liberal reforms such as freedom of speech and religion as well as gender and racial equality. Still another kind of globalization—information and communication technology (ICT)—has brought us social networking, virtual “friends” and avatars, micro-blogging, and online auctions, encyclopedias, and video games; meanwhile airplane travel, computers, and cell-phone technology are defeating distance itself and shrinking the world. This communications revolution is, in turn, fueling just about everything else.

How are educators responding? One popular way is to strengthen world language instruction in the elementary grades. In an increasing number of schools, *all* children (not only the children of immigrants whose mother tongue is something



Flags of many nations fly in the halls of Stanford International School in Seattle.

(Photo courtesy of Stephen Camicia)

Guests are welcomed in many languages at Stanford International School.

(Photo courtesy of Stephen Camicia)



other than English) are studying a second language beginning in kindergarten. In other words, students whose mother tongue is English are increasingly expected to learn a second language *and to learn school subjects such as math and social studies in that second language*. Accordingly, elementary schools are increasingly being transformed for language immersion. At Stanford International Elementary School in Seattle (see the two photos), instruction is provided in English, Japanese, and Spanish starting in kindergarten. At another elementary school across town, Beacon Hill International Elementary School, the languages are English, Mandarin, and Spanish. This trend is taking the monolingual, English-speaking-only portion of the U.S. student population in a very different direction from where it has been; it is taking this group, like many of their classmates and much of the world, toward multilingualism.

In addition to this world languages emphasis, the new school reform initiative mentioned in Trend 2, the *Partnership for 21st Century Skills*, is aiming for “a holistic view of 21st century teaching and learning” that focuses on 21st century student outcomes. Key skills and themes are:

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Creativity and Innovation Skills
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills
- Communication and Collaboration Skills

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- ICT Literacy

Life and Career Skills

- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction

Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
Productivity and Accountability
Leadership and Responsibility
Global Awareness
Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy
Civic Literacy
Health Literacy
Environmental Literacy

But let's be careful not to get carried away by "21st century skills" hype. Critical thinking and problem solving, for example, or creativity and information literacy are not new. Over two millennia ago, Plato wrote a wonderful treatise about them in *The Republic*. As one wit quipped, "Perhaps at the time, these were considered '3rd century BCE skills?'"¹⁶ Also, global awareness is already a central feature in the social studies curriculum: World geography (societies near and far) and world history (humanity now and then) are at its core. As we saw in the unit topics suggested earlier, grade 1 often features families not just locally but *around the world*, grade 2 has transportation and communication *around the world*, and grade 3 features communities *around the world*. Grade 4 has deserts, forests, and rivers of the world. Grades 6 and 7 are aimed squarely at learning about *the world and its peoples*. The trend now is to look again at these core aspects of the social studies curriculum and strengthen them alongside the "21st century skills." This means, for example, that students should study not only their own community but also, quoting the Partnership's *Social Studies Skills Map*, they should "access information about communities around the world from a variety of information sources."¹⁷

Trend 4: Democracy

The democratic ideal celebrates government "of, by, and for the people," as President Lincoln said in his speech at Gettysburg, and it does not tolerate repression or discrimination. Political scientists call this *liberal democracy*. If democracies are political systems in which the people govern, usually by electing representatives who govern, then liberal democracies (as opposed to illiberal ones) add to elections something else: individual liberties and rights—such as the rights specified in the *Bill of Rights* of the U.S. Constitution or the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The idea is that people can practice any religion they choose, or none, and they have the freedoms of speech, press, association, and protest. "I disapprove of what you say," goes the saying attributed to Voltaire, "but I will defend to the death your right to say it." This is a core principle of liberal democracy.

Accordingly, democracy is much more than a political system; it is a way of life—a way of being with one another, and not just with friends and family but also with *strangers*, whether in the city hall, a faculty meeting, or the classroom. It is certainly not a perfect path; in fact, it is frustrating, contentious, and exasperating. The only thing worse than democracy, the saying goes, is all of the alternatives.

That democracies fall short of these aspirations is a plain fact, and it is the chief motive behind social movements that struggle to close the gap between the actual and the ideal. Thus, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., demanded in his 1963 March on Washington address not an alternative to democracy, but its *fulfillment*. Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., he said:

[W]e have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the *Declaration of Independence*, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. . . . We have come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.¹⁸

If democracy is to be the vision that holds our diverse society together, then the people must be educated for it. The simple truth is that there can be no democracy without democratic citizens. This is because the people themselves, as Lincoln and King said, create and sustain democratic governments. And these citizens don't fall from trees. People aren't born already grasping basic principles of democracy, such as liberty, equality, justice, and the separation of church and state. They aren't born knowing why so many democracies fail and so few last. They aren't born able and willing to talk with strangers about the common good. These things are not, as history makes very clear, born into our genes. Rather, they are social, moral, and intellectual achievements—the products of a planned curriculum.

Teachers, therefore, need to see themselves as democracy educators, and this education, as we shall see in Chapter 3, should begin in kindergarten. These five-year-olds are experiencing their first sustained emergence from the private worlds of home and family into the public world of citizens. Research has been clear that if we expect democratic behavior from adults—tolerance of diverse religions, for example, and knowing how to participate in government—then we must begin their democratic education in the primary grades and build from there.

Trend 5: Making the Literacy–Social Studies Connection

Last but certainly not least, and maybe the most important of all: The newest trend in integrated (a.k.a. interdisciplinary) education is to teach social studies through reading and writing instruction and vice versa. Actually, talented teachers have long done precisely this. But because reading and writing achievement are now subjected to intense, high-stakes testing, which sometimes pushes social studies instruction to the sidelines, this wise practice is now becoming more common. Indeed, it's a hot new trend.

Literacy researchers understand that “studying language is the foundation of all schooling, not just of the language arts.”¹⁹ In social studies, students construct knowledge of the world using language. It is not as if reading, writing, speaking, and listening can be walled off from the content areas (social studies, math, science, literature, poetry, music, etc.); rather, these skills are the gateway to and the medium for learning any subject. This is true both for early learning, such as learning the

difference between countries and continents, and for advanced learning as well, such as understanding the difference between democratic and aristocratic countries on the one hand and between the economies of Europe and Africa on the other.

Literacy researchers also understand that even in the earliest elementary years “learning academic language is critical for successful literacy *and* academic achievement, both for monolingual English speakers and students who are English language learners.”²⁰ Academic language is typically disciplinary language, that is, the language used in academic disciplines from geography to history and chemistry. It is most often the language of textbooks, classrooms, and tests. Throughout the elementary and middle school years, students today are exposed to a greater variety of academic genres and types of texts and are increasingly expected to learn from them. *Informational* texts (e.g., a textbook comparison of the Navajo and Cherokee nations) are increasingly being taught and read alongside *narrative* texts (e.g., an illustrated trade book that tells the life stories of Geronimo and Chief Joseph). This variety makes unique reading comprehension demands on students, and each genre requires significant vocabulary development. In fact, one predicts the other: Children’s vocabulary in kindergarten (e.g., their ability to define words) predicts their reading comprehension by grade 2.²¹ The only national test of reading ability, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), regularly measures students’ reading ability on multiple kinds of text—informational, narrative, and charts, tables, and graphs.

What this means is that if teachers regard the teaching of reading and vocabulary as something that is done only during the reading block using reading basals and ignore the other subjects and their content-specific texts and vocabulary, they are stunting the academic growth of their students—*both* the monolingual English speakers and the ELLs. A number of instructional models developed for teaching academic content to ELLs tightly integrate the two goals—language learning and content learning. One of the best known and successful of these models, “sheltered instruction,” has this as its core purpose. It seeks to “make the subject matter concepts comprehensible while promoting students’ English language development.”²²

Because later I devote two chapters (10 and 11) to the integration of literacy and social studies learning, let us bring this introductory chapter to an end.

Conclusion

Why is there a social studies curriculum in the schools? Social studies is at the center of a good school curriculum because it is where students learn to see and interpret the world—its peoples, places, cultures, systems, and problems; its dreams and calamities—now and long ago. In social studies lessons and units of study, students don’t simply experience the world (they always do anyway, in school and out) but are helped systematically to understand it, to care for it, to think deeply and critically about it, and to take their place on the public stage, standing on equal footing with others.

The goals of the social studies curriculum are social understanding and civic efficacy. Social understanding is knowledge of human beings' social worlds. This knowledge is drawn from the social sciences and the humanities along with students' lives and society's needs. Civic efficacy is the readiness and willingness to assume citizenship responsibilities. The purpose of this introductory chapter was to examine these goals and various scope-and-sequence plans for achieving them. I showed how to use the 10 themes from the NCSS curriculum standards to elaborate the scope of the social studies curriculum emphasis for any grade (i.e., any point in the sequence). And I ended the chapter with trends that will shape the beginning years of your teaching career.

Of course, teachers don't only teach reading, writing, and the content areas; they teach children. The children themselves are the focus of the next chapter. Although a science textbook might take a biological approach to such a chapter, it is appropriate that a social studies textbook take a demographic approach, as readers shall see.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

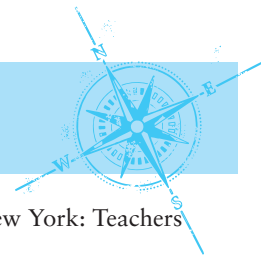


1. Look back at the *Reflection* sidebar near the opening Goals section of the chapter and at your response to the questions asked there. Then, with a partner reread the definition and the two goals of social studies education given earlier and the explanation that follows. Work together to clarify the distinction between *social understanding* and *civic efficacy*, and discuss the ways knowledge, values and attitudes, and skills are each involved.
2. What are your “sister cities” in the world? Called “town twinning” in Europe, the idea is to pair geographically distinct communities for the purpose of global understanding and fostering cultural links, student exchanges, pen pals, and the like. They are useful resources in elementary social studies units because they provide meaningful comparisons to the local community. The relationship affords opportunities for class-to-class writing, video conferencing, collaborative projects, and exchanges. Visit *Sister Cities International's* website to find out how to request a sister city or to learn which cities are already paired with yours. Then sketch with a partner a unit in which children at a particular grade level compare their own town with two or three “sisters.” What should they compare (food, clothing, and shelter; longitude and latitude)? Remember to consult the Curriculum Scope and Sequence section of this chapter.
3. Go online to locate a copy of the social studies curriculum framework for the state in which you reside or to which you want to move. How is it organized? Is the goal statement divided into knowledge, attitudes and values, and skills, as presented in this chapter? Is the curriculum scope and sequence similar to what was presented in this chapter? If not, how do they differ?
4. *Lesson planning:* Twenty-two model lesson plans are spread throughout chapters 2-12 of this book. Look now at the last page of the Table of Contents to see the list. With a partner, choose any three of the plans and study them to find the similarities in ways they are organized.
5. *NCSS Standards:* Read theme 1 in the social studies standards *Sampler* that accompanies this textbook at www.myeducationlab.com and the “snapshot” of a creative teacher at work. What ideas do they suggest to you for your own classroom? Record your ideas in your planning journal.



- To check your comprehension of the content covered in Chapter 1, go to the Book Resources in the MyEducationLab for your course, select your text, and complete the Study Plan. Here you will be able to take a chapter quiz, receive feedback on your answers, and then access review, practice, and enrichment activities to enhance your understanding of chapter content.
- Also in the Book Resources section you may view the sample standards and vignettes from the new NCSS Curriculum Standards by selecting **NCSS Sampler**.
- You may also access a variety of topically organized Assignments and Activities in MyEducationLab for this book.

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