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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD: ELEMENTARY TEACHER CANDIDATES DESCRIBE THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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Recent research indicates that social studies is being de-emphasized in the elementary school, particularly in favor of greater attention to reading.¹ Historically, there is evidence that social studies has not been a strong component of the curriculum in elementary classrooms although it often appears in state and local courses of study.² In the early grades (K–3) the traditional focus has been on teaching social studies through units on the self, family, and community workers.³ These topics may be supported by the use of a textbook or by children's fiction. A specific social studies time frequently is found in the upper grades during which the social studies textbook traditionally serves as the major resource in the curriculum.⁴ Instructional strategies such as whole group or individual reading occur and sometimes are supported by having students fill out study guides and/or answer questions at the end of the chapter in preparation for an eventual unit or grading period examination. These traditional formats are widespread but variation exists. Some schools and teachers implement curricula and instructional strategies that are nontraditional and constructivist, as reported in manuscripts on practice published in journals such as *Social Studies Research and Practice*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, *The Social Studies*, and *Social Education*. Although such publications indicate that nontraditional teaching of social studies occurs along with the more common traditional forms, the concern in recent years has been with whether any form of social studies education is found

at the elementary school level⁵. Three questions are considered in the study reported here based on the results and conclusions of recent research, “What is happening in social studies education within the K-6 classroom?” “How is K-6 social studies being taught?” and “What constitutes the K-6 social studies curriculum when a de-emphasis occurs?”

One heavily reported factor causing concerns over the possible de-emphasis or nonexistence of elementary social studies is the national focus on high stakes testing, especially since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001.⁶ The heavy focus on implementation of the National Reading Panel recommendations and on NCLB Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reporting has brought children’s development of reading skills to the forefront of teachers’ attention throughout the elementary grades.⁷ Meanwhile, at the other end of K-12 schooling, many states have instituted high school exit examinations, which may include a social studies component. If elementary school students are involved in much less, or no, social studies instruction, it seems that over the next few years, those high school exit examination scores in social studies are likely to decrease.

Recent studies primarily have used survey research to identify a decline in attention to social studies education at the elementary school level.⁸ Teachers in elementary (second and fifth grades) and middle school (eighth grade), were reported to spend fewer than four hours a week on social studies in 70% of the classrooms surveyed by James S. Leming, Lucien Ellington, and Mark Schug in 2006.⁹ Among those who taught social studies, Leming et al. reported that half did so by integrating it with the language arts program. Such integration was accomplished by using themes in the literacy program’s texts rather than from sources such as the national social studies standards, resulting in a disarticulated social studies curriculum.¹⁰

Most states have courses of study that include social studies and the expectation that the course of study is the minimum curriculum. Existing research data indicate that teachers are not teaching the minimum course of study. A rationale for this lack of implementation is suggested by Phillip VanFossen based on a survey of elementary teachers in Indiana as having three sources: "...(1) perceived lack of administrative support for implementing state social studies standards; (2) lack of state-wide assessments for social studies at K-5 level; and (3) teachers' lack of a clear understanding of the goals and mission of the social studies at the K-5 level."¹¹ An example of lack of administrative support at the state level occurred recently in Alabama in the context of a memorandum to elementary schools indicating that those elementary schools with concerns about whether AYP can be met should put their focus on literacy and limit teaching of social studies or science.¹²

Others have documented the influences of a lack of state-wide social studies assessments when elementary teachers must deal with assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, and occasionally science.¹³ Judy Pace, in one of the few studies using interviews, investigated fifth-grade teachers in California finding evidence that the "squeeze" on history-social science occurs disproportionately in low-performing schools with large minority and low income populations, where curricular mandates prevail.¹⁴ Her interviews shed light on elementary teachers' decision-making in history-social science and indicate how it is influenced by state testing, the local community, and other factors.

Teachers' lack of a clear understanding of the goal and mission of K-6 social studies may result from their own lack of social studies instruction as elementary students, from experience only with traditional social studies instruction, and from a lack of intensive social studies methods coursework in their teacher education experiences. As one looks across teacher

education programs, one typically finds several literacy courses in the elementary education program with fewer, often only a single course each, in social studies, mathematics, and science education. Also occurring are programs with integrated language arts and social studies methods courses wherein novices may not realize that major social studies concepts must be well taught as social studies concepts and may not always be well taught when addressed only as a topic for a writing exercise or through a set of children's literature. Combined courses also are found in which teacher education candidates participate in one methods course that is split with 50% devoted to social studies methods and 50% to science methods. When such minimal attention is given to elementary teacher education candidates' preparation for teaching social studies, it can be assumed that they will lack a clear understanding of the mission and goals of K-5 social studies.

While some evidence is provided via survey research and also some via other methodologies such as interviews, it is important to further document what is occurring in elementary classrooms via a methodology that may provide data to help fill out a portrait of elementary (K-6) social studies education. One perspective that can be considered is that of teacher candidates who are spending a considerable amount of hours in an elementary classroom clinical placement in conjunction with a social studies methods class. A social studies methods class typically involves a small slice of the elementary teacher preparation program as has been noted above. Teacher candidates who are in a concurrent clinical placement will compare what is being discussed in their methods class with what they observe occurring in their clinical placement. In many instances, candidates have a strong respect for their cooperating teachers, welcome mentoring by the cooperating teacher, and affiliate with the teacher's views.¹⁵ Such rapport often is positive but it also can inculcate and reinforce traditionalist views or neglect of

one or more elementary curriculum content areas. The study reported here used teacher candidates' journals as a source of data to explore what was happening in a sample of elementary social studies classrooms, whether de-emphasis of social studies was occurring, and what effects were seen in classroom curriculum and instruction when a de-emphasis was occurring.

Methodology

This study used the electronic journals of a cohort of sixty elementary teacher candidates in a southeastern state enrolled in a three semester credit hour social studies methods course. The candidates were placed in a semester-long field experience in K-6 classrooms. These classrooms were in a mix of settings: rural, lower socioeconomic status (SES) schools in a small city, middle and higher SES city schools, and suburban schools around the small city. These candidates already had completed 272 clinical placement hours in two previous semesters. Candidates' placement schools were changed each semester in order to give them experiences in schools with different settings. During the semester in which they took the methods course, they were in their placement classroom three days per week for ten weeks plus two weeks full-time at the end of the fifteen-week semester, acquiring 320 more hours of experience. The candidates developed and, near the end of the semester, taught a social studies unit. Candidates developed ten interview questions to identify prior conceptions of the unit topic among their students after completing a background research paper on the unit's topic. They carried out the interviews individually with five of their students, chosen at random, over a 20-30-minute time period, transcribed the interviews, and constructed an evaluation of the prior knowledge and alternative conceptions found. Then, the unit was developed and taught. Single lessons were taught prior to teaching the unit, and the candidates were involved in other social studies related instructional activities.

Thirty-nine of the candidates were placed in grades K-3 while 21 were in grades 4-6. Each candidate had been assigned to a grade level at which he or she previously had not been placed. The purpose of such placement was to give candidates an opportunity to work with students at different grade levels and in different schools over the four semesters in this upper division undergraduate teacher education program. These teacher candidates would be full-time student teaching interns during the following semester. All of these teacher education candidates were female, five were African American, and they ranged in age from 21 – 38 with 90% between the ages of 21 and 24.

The electronic journals recorded social studies teaching in their classrooms when it was perceived to occur and/or when the cooperating teacher indicated it was occurring. The candidates used two questions to structure their responses, “What is happening in social studies education in my classroom?” and “How is social studies taught?” The two questions were intentionally broad to allow for variations in classrooms. The course has many electronic components using the Interactive Virtual Course Management System (IVCMS)¹⁶ such as the journal, a discussion board, a portfolio, a library of resources, drop boxes, an individual grade book, and a weekly outline of topics, tasks, and resources. The candidates had experience with the management system in previous coursework and were competent in its use.

The journal entries were analyzed by one faculty member who was a course instructor and one faculty member who was not a course instructor for these teacher candidates. The entries were examined for patterns describing social studies curriculum components occurring in the classroom, instructional strategies used by the cooperating teachers, and strategies approved by the cooperating teachers for the candidates’ own social studies teaching.

Findings

Among the sixty teacher candidates, 1,540 journal entries were recorded, an average of two entries per candidate per week. Each candidate had at least one entry per week while five averaged three per week. The findings are reported in regard to four patterns frequently found in the journals, (1) explicit teaching of social studies by grade level, (2) emphasis on interdisciplinary units, (3) types of text resources used by grade level, and (4) types of internet usage. As the findings are reported, limitations must be kept in mind. The candidates were novices with a considerable number of hours of clinical experience. Despite that experience, they had not had to assume the full range of responsibilities of an elementary classroom teacher. In previous semesters, they had worked in different schools at different grade levels and so had some range of experience. That experience still was limited in regard to the differences found in children's development at various grade levels and in how instruction and curriculum are matched to children's developmental level and prior experiences. These candidates typically had no previous affiliations with the school in which they were placed and were outsiders encountering the school's culture. As outsiders, they might not know how to interpret what they observed, and they might not understand the context in which instruction occurred as would a teacher within the school who might understand and interpret those instructional experiences differently. As outsiders, however, they might be able to see instruction through a lens that was not limited by familiarity with the school culture and traditions.

Explicit Teaching of Social Studies by Grade Level

Teacher candidates in grades K-3 voiced concerns in 356 entries about their inability to observe or participate in social studies instruction. Early in the semester, at the end of their first week in the schools, candidates noted simply that during the three days they had spent in the

classroom that week, no social studies was taught. During their clinical work in week two, 26 candidates asked their cooperating teachers about social studies instruction. Eighteen cooperating teachers told them that they did not teach social studies because there was too much to be done in teaching reading, and reading was critically important in determining AYP status each year. Eight candidates reported that their cooperating teachers said they taught alternate social studies and science units because there was not time in the school day to teach a unit in each subject. Three reported science being taught in one semester in their school, with social studies taught in the other semester.

Several cooperating teachers shared doubts about what was occurring in their classrooms. One entry reported a cooperating teacher as saying, "I think reading is the foundation for everything we and the students do in school but it does not, in my humble opinion, stand so far above every other subject that the other subject, social studies, does not deserve to be taught." Another was reported as asking, "How can a child go an entire year without studying any history or any other part of social studies?" A third teacher was reported as wondering, "Do any of us even celebrate holidays at school any more? If we do, couldn't even these days be used to teach a little social studies?" A fourth teacher was reported to have said, "I do not believe it is acceptable to sacrifice one discipline to achieve excellence in another, because this causes students to be unbalanced in the disciplines that are sacrificed. The school curriculum has to cultivate well-rounded, productive citizens. If our curriculum is not balanced, as is happening now, then students will fall behind in most subjects, so what good will it be if they read well but have never read deeply enough to truly understand an important concept like freedom?"

Later in the semester, one journal entry noted "In my third-grade classroom, my teacher seems to have found the time for me to teach some social studies. The kids enjoyed it and

appreciated learning something that was completely outside of everything they had done all year! Doesn't this suggest that he could find the time too?" Another entry said,

I cannot understand how the principal can not only condone this not teaching social studies in first grade, but be so open about it and discourage teachers from teaching a favorite social studies unit." An entry from a candidate in a kindergarten classroom near the end of the semester said, "I realize that in the real world, we have limitations on what we can and cannot do, but this whole situation with social studies has left me dumbfounded.

Other candidates and their cooperating teachers in K-3 placements accepted and justified the situation. One cooperating teacher was reported as saying, "In the elementary classroom it is very hard to achieve excellence without sacrificing something, and I am sacrificing social studies." A candidate noted, "Today, there is so much pressure put on teachers and that affects the curriculum because if you want to keep your job, you had better do what they want you to do, and that means ignoring social studies in favor of reading. That is just how it is and what you have to do." One candidate summed up the rationale often given for dropping social studies from the curriculum, "It is essential that young children learn to read and to read well. If that means it takes the whole school day and nothing else is taught, it is in the best interests of the child."

Fewer candidates, just 21, were in grades 4-6 placements. It might be assumed that in these upper grades, most students could read, so more social studies would be taught because less time would be needed for reading instruction. While the journals reported this to be the situation in twelve classrooms, problems with explicit teaching of social studies occurred in nine classrooms.

In three of the nine classrooms, the candidates reported no teaching of social studies other than that done by the candidate. A candidate placed in one of these classrooms noted, “My teacher said these kids are too low functioning to do social studies because it has so much reading and you can’t do much else besides read in social studies. So, we are going to work on the reading instead.” In the second classroom, an entry said, “My cooperating teacher thinks social studies is just too boring for these children. So, they will not like it at all. That’s why she doesn’t do it.” The candidate placed in the third classroom reported, “My cooperating teacher gave up teaching social studies a while ago. He says there is just too much other important material that has to be taught.”

In six other classrooms explicit teaching of social studies was reported, but it was inconsistent, typically alternating with science. Five of these candidates worried about their situations early in the semester as they began identifying a topic for the unit they would develop. Prior to agreeing to work with a candidate in the clinical placement, cooperating teachers had been notified that a social studies unit would be developed and then taught in the two weeks at the end of the semester. This scheduling allowed candidates sufficient time to identify a topic, research the topic, interview students to identify alternative conceptions and prior knowledge in regard to the topic, plan the lessons and assessments, and revise where needed before teaching the unit. In these five classrooms the candidates were told that they could not do their unit in the last two weeks of the semester despite their full time presence in the classrooms during those days. The reason given was that science was taught during those weeks, not social studies. After quite a bit of intervention by course instructors, the classroom schedules were altered so that candidates could teach their social studies units during this time period. All of the candidates noted in various entries that they had checked the state’s guidelines for minutes to be spent in

teaching social studies and realized that the alternating pattern reduced the time spent in both subjects by 50 percent. One candidate then reported, “My teacher said we don’t really have to worry about those state guidelines because they are just guidelines and they don’t enforce them in any way.” Another reported, “The attitude in this school is that, really, social studies and science just aren’t so important, so the heck with the guidelines.”

Emphasis on Interdisciplinary Units

The candidates’ journal entries described the curricular organization used by teachers when social studies instruction was considered to be occurring. An emphasis was found on interdisciplinary units that often had a strong language arts focus with little attention paid to social studies concept development. The entries indicated that in 52 of the classrooms, there was an emphasis on interdisciplinary integration. Some cooperating teachers explained this emphasis as reflecting the social world as an integrated, complex world best understood by an interdisciplinary approach. One candidate wrote,

My cooperating teacher has been teaching for 18 years and she really knows her stuff. She can see where one idea is related to another idea. So, she always teaches interdisciplinary units on what she calls big ideas, like interdependence. She really does look at interdependence in different ways like interdependence between students in the classroom and between plants and insects and she spends a long time on a unit. So, she doesn’t teach but one unit during a six week grading period. She told me, though, that I should not expect to be able to do this well right away, because you have to really know how to put together a good social studies unit before you can authentically integrate social studies ideas into an interdisciplinary unit. But, I can work toward it.

Another candidate indicated that her cooperating teacher,

... said she integrated everything into one unit because it all hangs together. But, when I ask her to help me draw a web that has the individual subjects on it so I could see how it all comes together, and the pieces from them that are in the unit so I can better understand it, she just puts down reading and language arts ideas, so I don't think her units really are interdisciplinary.

Other candidates noted that their teachers used a rationale for interdisciplinary, integrated units like that recorded in one entry,

You know, we have to really spend a lot of time on reading because of AYP. There is only time at the end of the day for social studies and science units. Really, mostly, we run out of time and don't get to it. So, you look at a unit and try to stick in some social studies, science, and even math because lots of time you don't have a great deal of time for math, either. Then, you call it an integrated unit, and it kind of is one.

Finally, one entry summed up a perspective among the cooperating teachers often described in the entries.

It is possible, and necessary, to integrate all subjects. We understand that literacy is imperative, but by neglecting other subjects, especially social studies and science, we are giving students the impression that these subjects don't matter. So, we have to try to integrate these subjects into an interdisciplinary unit and then point out to students that this is a social studies or science idea.

Types of Text Resources by Grade Level

Textual resources served as the source of the social studies curriculum in the candidates' journal entries. The candidates demonstrated familiarity with the national social studies standards and the state course of study in social studies. All of their lesson plans identified the national and

state social studies standards addressed in the plan. The journal entries, however, referred to standards only on three occasions.

Candidates working in K-3 classrooms never referred to a social studies textbook in their journal entries. Among these candidates, the stories in the reading series or programs were referred to as providing appropriate topics for social studies. One candidate indicated this view in an entry, "If there is a story in the reading series about Ben Franklin, then we can use it for social studies and do more about him." Another entry noted, "We have a couple of stories about going somewhere in the reader, so we can do some map work and then we can talk about transportation, about the vehicles the characters used to get there. That's how we integrate social studies." Yet another entry said, "There are about four stories in the series that are about families. So, when we are working with one of those stories, we do some social studies about families. When the next story about families comes up, we do some more on families and so on through the year."

While the pattern of determining the social studies curriculum in the K-3 grades by using reading story topics to structure the social studies program was common, some entries indicated teachers were finding ways to provide a better structured and organized social studies curriculum. One candidate's journal entry described how

My cooperating teacher has these boxes labeled with the names of stories in the reader. When someone asks, she says the box has materials to go along with the story. Actually these are unit boxes and she has a whole unit for social studies in there that she does and says she is teaching those stories. But, lots of her units were first developed before this reader came in. She has found a way to have a strong curriculum in social studies while satisfying the reading coaches who check up on teachers.

Another entry said

A lot of the teachers in this school emphasize the state course of study in social studies and point out where the reading stories don't allow for a connected set of social studies ideas. So, they have school themes and each grade level works on a theme, like communication or citizenship. When a reading series story fits the theme they highlight that with the children. But the theme drives it, not the particular reading story.

The journal entries of candidates working in grades 4-6 described the social studies curriculum as being derived from topics found in the reading series stories only on four occasions. The national and state standards were referred to as guides for the social studies curriculum in the entries of 25 percent of the candidates working at grades 4-6 classrooms. For about half of these candidates, however, the social studies textbook was the curriculum guide. The textbook sometimes was reviewed to determine where it correlated with the state course of study, but this was reported to occur in just 10 percent of the classrooms. Many of the candidates, however, indicated that they knew the state course of study in social studies was redesigned on a regular basis, and then a committee selected social studies textbooks that aligned as much as possible to the state course of study. So, the rationale for using the textbook as the curriculum guide without referring to the course of study was that, as one entry said, "A committee decided this social studies series is pretty well matched with the course of study, so we don't have to look at the course of study. Even if the match isn't 100 percent, it's probably pretty good."

Half of the candidates working in grades 4-6 reported that their students frequently read the textbook and filled in study guides as a means of note taking. A PowerPoint presentation was used as a support for the textbook material, mostly as part of a lecture in the classrooms of 25

percent of the candidates in grades 4-6 placements. A candidate in a fourth grade placement noted in her journal,

When I was in a second grade placement last semester, the reading stories were the source of the social studies curriculum as they were used to identify topics to teach. Now, in the fourth grade this semester it suddenly is different because all the teachers in my school use the social studies textbook to say what the curriculum is, even though the teachers in the kindergarten to third grade classes don't use the textbook but just the reading series, so there is a big change in the curriculum. We do have a clear social studies time.

This entry's description was similar to the situations described by half of those candidates in grades 4-6 placements. Journal entries from seven candidates described a mixed set of other resources as used intermittently (excluding Internet usage): a guest speaker, a field trip, related fiction and non-fiction trade books, and original documents. Each of these was reported in entries by one or two of the candidates.

Specific teaching strategies showed a reliance on trade books used in the reading program or the reader itself to set the social studies curriculum in lower grades and a reliance on teaching from the textbook in upper grades.

Internet Usage

Internet usage by students was reported in the journal entries as involving students at all grade levels (K-6) in activities deemed part of the social studies curriculum by the cooperating teacher. Usage increased as grade level increased: in grades K-1 the entries reported an average of once per week, in grades 2-3 the average was two times per week, in grades 4-6 it was five per

week. All of the candidates reported strict control of students' Internet usage with significant filters installed on computers and with pre-selection of sites students could visit.

In kindergarten through second grade classrooms, students visited sites that were primarily pictorial and designed for use by very young children with little or no ability to read. These sites were reported in the journal entries as mostly entertainment and often tangential to the social studies topic being addressed in class as noted in the following entry.

My kindergarteners read this story in reading class about going on a bus ride. They went in pairs to the computers and looked at a set of pictures the teacher had found and they showed old style and new buses. Then, they drew and colored a school bus. But, we did not talk about those children who ride in a car or an SUV to school or walk to school.

And, some of the sites had other forms of transportation also there and we did not talk about them, so I don't think the kids always picked out the right picture as the bus.

Three entries indicated that these young students' Internet usage was relevant to the social studies curriculum and well structured. As an example is this entry,

We use Internet a lot in my first grade classroom as my cooperating teaching is pretty tech savvy. Yesterday, we read a story about a grandparent. Then the teacher surprised the students by having them use computers that showed them pictures of the grandparents of students in the class and they had to find the grandparent that was theirs. She had done this early in the year – get pictures from their families and had digitized them. She plans to use those pictures in all kinds of activities through the whole year. Then, she had the children go to an Internet site that played a song that was from the decade during which their grandparents mostly were in their teens or 20s. Then they went back to the photos and looked at the clothes their grandparents were wearing. Last, they drew “then and

now” pictures with the clothing. Tomorrow, they are going to use a map of the USA and we will help them find where their grandparents live and put a mark there. We already have that map set up on the computer and after that we will help them click on the town and look at some pictures of it. We will save it on the computer so we can go back to it occasionally.

The journal entries indicated heavier Internet usage in grades 4-6. About 40 percent of the candidates working at these grade levels reported asking students to, as one said, “research the Internet to find out what you can about ...” These entries indicated students were not given an outline, clear directions, and/or a structured set of questions to which they should respond. Instead, they often were told to “find out the facts about the Civil War,” or “locate the important facts about how our state government works,” or “find out everything you can about why we have banks.” The major concepts related to the topic were not identified, so there was no attempt to describe the relationship between the major concepts. Many of the candidates indicated they were modeling the approach they observed their cooperating teacher using. Others noted that their cooperating teacher did not think his abilities in using technology were strong and so, as one candidate wrote, “He just wanted me to do some tech stuff with the class because he hardly ever does anything with technology but he couldn’t really give me any ideas about what to do.” These candidates considered this approach to be an appropriate replacement for the textbook’s discussion of the topic or as a supplement to it. The results of an Internet search by an individual or a small group generally was reported to the class as a presentation or was given to the teacher as a set of notes taken. None of the presentations described in the entries were organized by a common structure used by all the students. The students presented as they wished ,with the result that it was difficult to draw conclusions or categorize findings. As one entry noted, “It just all got

muddled because one student talked about this and somebody else talked about that and I just couldn't help them make any connections. I guess they need some kind of structure or format so we can do some comparison and contrast." Only twice did journal entries describe a class discussion of findings from the Internet search. In about 60 percent of the Internet searches, other than presenting a report of the findings to the class or giving the teacher notes on the findings, there was no other teaching of the major concept(s) under study. No lecture, discussion, inquiry activity, or other further investigation of the concepts was reported.

In about 25 percent of the candidates' classrooms, WebQuests were used by their cooperating teachers in social studies and the candidates were encouraged to construct one for social studies instruction. The WebQuests most often were used later in a unit, sometimes as a culminating activity and an assessment. They were used later in the unit because, as one entry indicated, "Students have to really first know something about a topic before they do a WebQuest. Otherwise it kind of just comes out of nowhere and they really don't see where it fits or where it is going. Then, they don't have much motivation to work on it." A range of quality in WebQuests was reported along a continuum from narrow tasks requiring specific factual responses to open-ended tasks that fostered student inquiry and problem-solving.¹⁷ Internet usage often was described as the means to support and scaffold social studies at all grade levels, but students rarely were given clear tasks nor did they often use inquiry-oriented WebQuests.

Discussion and Conclusions

The study reported here used teacher candidates' journals as a source of data to explore what is happening in a sample of elementary social studies classrooms, whether de-emphasis of social studies is occurring, and what effects are seen in classroom curriculum and instruction when a de-emphasis is occurring. The findings were reported in regard to four patterns

frequently found in the candidates' journal entries, (1) explicit teaching of social studies by grade level, (2) emphasis on interdisciplinary units, (3) types of text resources used by grade level, and (4) types of Internet usage.

These candidates represent a limited sample and only schools involved in clinical placements for this teacher education program. A large number of entries, however, were written and examined, providing a pool of data from which the four patterns emerged. The portrait that can be constructed from this data indicates that, in the classrooms in which these candidates were placed, social studies does not occupy a major role in the curriculum, is disarticulated in the K-3 grades, and is textbook-driven in the upper grades. The NCLB legislation and the stresses associated with high stakes testing to determine annual yearly progress (AYP) are drivers in the rationale given for the minimal role of social studies in the curriculum. Without a study of historical antecedents in these classrooms, the schools of which they are a part, and of their school systems, it is difficult to determine whether NCLB has strengthened an already-existing rationale or has led to the construction of a new rationale.

An examination of earlier work indicates that NCLB may have strengthened an already existing rationale for minimization of social studies in these elementary classrooms.¹⁸ Such a rationale supports the existence of a low priority for social studies. The data reported here show a low priority assigned to social studies in many of these classrooms but also show that some cooperating teachers question that low priority. At least one teacher is subverting the established system in one school by disguising social studies unit boxes as boxes of materials for teaching a reading series story. The need for such subversion, however, indicates the extent of marginalization of social studies, which goes beyond de-emphasis to discontinuance in the K-3 grades.

Although discontinuance of social studies seems to be occurring in many of these K-3 classrooms, teachers are working in some semblance of social studies by taking the topics of reading stories and doing a bit of social studies in relation to those topics. The result is a disarticulated, patchwork social studies curriculum that cannot consistently address the national standards. There was little mention of addressing the state social studies standards in classrooms when the reading story topic dictated the social studies curriculum. Because social studies textbooks were not used in K-3 classrooms, even the level of alignment with the state course of study such use would provide did not occur. The conclusion is that neither the national nor state standards were addressed in most of these K-3 classrooms.

Social studies in grades 4-6 differs from that described as occurring in grades K-3 in these classrooms. Here, there is alignment with the state course of study and its standards, and by extension with those of those national standards addressed in the state course of study. Such alignment results from the adoption of social studies textbook series by a state textbook committee that selects those as closely aligned as possible, although the alignment will not be complete. A traditional approach is reported in many of these upper grades classrooms with little use of materials and resources that encourage discussion, inquiry, problem solving, or decision making. While social studies has a greater emphasis in grades 4-6 than in the K-3 curriculum, it is an emphasis on final form statements with little investigation into the evidence supporting such statements.

The Internet was used often as a resource in these classrooms. Although the Internet has become a well-established resource in education, it was utilized in these classrooms without clear goals. Students searched for open-ended information with no guidelines to support the search or to help them sort out trivial or tangential information from that which is important to the

meaningful understanding of a concept. Very often, no other teaching occurred, hence the Internet search must suffice as the means of instruction about a concept. When students shared the findings of their Internet searches with their peers, they did so without any guidelines or structure that would allow for comparison and contrast.

WebQuests are one means of setting a relatively open-ended task that allows students to use a variety of Internet resources to investigate a problem of interest to them on a social studies idea under study. Their use was reported in one quarter of these classrooms as a culminating activity and/or assessment so that students could use their developing knowledge of a unit's concepts to pursue a task or problem. Because a range of WebQuests of differing quality were reported, these offered opportunities for inquiry in some classrooms and served as a question and answer review in others. The use of Internet, whether or not WebQuests were a part of such use, generally suggested that it was traditionally applied and did not often support students in open-ended investigations leading to meaningful construction of social studies knowledge.

Although social studies education occurred more often in grades 4-6 than in grades K-3, the quality of upper grades social studies mostly was weak. It may be that a de-emphasis on social studies appears in different forms in lower and upper elementary grades. Dependence on reading textbook chapters and taking notes on study guides in upper grades classrooms with the few other resources often used in a narrow manner can be construed as a de-emphasis of social studies. When teachers spend little time preparing for social studies instruction as happens when teaching focuses on reading a textbook and filling out a study guide, they place greater value on other responsibilities and thereby de-emphasize social studies. The study's results, therefore, indicate the current de-emphasis on elementary social studies is resulting in a patchwork

curriculum conveyed by instructional strategies that have limited potential for facilitating meaningful learning in social studies.

In this new century, the meaning and role of social studies in elementary education likely is being redefined. Such a redefinition is impacted by factors internal to schools and internal to our society, as well as to factors external to schools and to the society. Our elementary students are citizens of a globally interdependent society whose worldwide ties are expected to strengthen throughout this century. As we struggle to define 21st century citizenship, social studies must have a central role in elementary education because that is where the foundations for meaningful understanding are laid. Yet, the trend in the first decade of this century is toward the marginalization of social studies rather than toward its centrality in the curriculum.

There is no simple solution as social studies' marginal role in the elementary school was documented in the past before NCLB and AYP. Recent legislation may have only deepened the marginalization of social studies. Greater advocacy for elementary social studies aimed at the public in general and at legislators specifically is needed. Social studies instruction based upon textbook reading, and filling in study guides or responding to chapter questions has not resulted in public views or even teacher views of social studies as vigorous, necessary, or interesting. Professional organizations at all lessons must advocate for elementary social studies' as a meaningful part of the curriculum that has a central role in helping students become active 21st century citizens..

Teacher educators must focus on involving teacher candidates in methodologies that facilitate knowledge construction, are challenging, and are meaningful. Outreach to schools through teaching at clinical sites and by bringing practitioners together in powerful teacher education program advisory boards are but two means of creating dialog that is based on viewing

each other as equal partners in the development of teacher candidates. Such a perspective can open doors to pro-active social studies program development.

Further research perhaps can construct the links between a de-emphasis on social studies in the elementary grades and students' lack of a meaningful understanding of their citizenship in a democratic society not only in the elementary grades but through the secondary school. Such linkage might provide an impetus for public discussion of a need for social studies education and of the type and form of social studies education that is most needed in a democratic society in the 21st century.

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