Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

Heritage Education in the Social Studies. ERIC Digest ......................... 2
WHAT IS HERITAGE EDUCATION? ................................................. 2
WHY DOES HERITAGE EDUCATION BELONG IN THE CORE CURRICULUM OF ......................................................... 2
HOW IS HERITAGE EDUCATION CONNECTED TO THE SOCIAL STUDIES ........................................................................... 3
WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF EXEMPLARY HERITAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS? ................................................................. 4
REFERENCES AND ERIC RESOURCES ........................................... 6
GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION: ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS ...................................................................................... 7
ED ........................................................................................................... 7

ERIC Identifier: ED300336
Publication Date: 1988-11-00
Author: Hunter, Kathleen
Source: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education Bloomington IN.

Heritage Education in the Social Studies. ERIC Digest.
Curriculum reformers of the 1980s have called for emphasis on core content in the curriculum, knowledge that should be learned by all students to equip them for intelligent and fruitful participation in their society. Ernest Boyer (1983, 302), for example, has said: "A core of common learning is essential. The basic curriculum should be a study of those consequential ideas, experiences, and traditions common to all of us...." Knowledge associated with heritage education belongs in the core curriculum, as part of the common learning of young Americans.

This ERIC Digest addresses the following questions about heritage education: (1) What is it? (2) Why does it belong in the core curriculum? (3) How is it connected to education in the social studies? (4) What are the qualities of exemplary heritage education programs?

WHAT IS HERITAGE EDUCATION?

Heritage education is an approach to teaching and learning about history and culture that uses information available from the material culture and the human and built environments as primary instructional resources. The heritage education approach is intended to strengthen students’ understanding of concepts and principles about history and culture and to enrich their appreciation for the artistic achievements, technological genius, and social and economic contributions of men and women from diverse groups. Heritage education nourishes a sense of continuity and connectedness with our historical and cultural experience; encourages citizens to consider their historical and cultural experiences in planning for the future; and fosters stewardship towards the legacies of our local, regional, and national heritage.

Heritage education occurs whenever we interact with the world around us. It also occurs in elementary and secondary schools whenever teachers introduce examples of the material culture and built environment into lessons in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social studies. By directly experiencing, examining, and evaluating buildings, monuments, workplaces, landscapes, and other historic sites and artifacts--objects in our material culture and built environment--learners gain knowledge, intellectual skills, and attitudes that enhance their capacities for maintenance and improvement of our society and ways of living.

WHY DOES HERITAGE EDUCATION BELONG IN THE CORE CURRICULUM OF
Heritage education is compatible with proposals for a core curriculum and common learning advanced by Ernest Boyer, William Bennett, and many other curriculum reformers of the 1980s, because it includes "consequential ideas, experiences, and traditions common to all of us"--achievements and values tangibly represented by our built environment and artifacts. More than forty percent of the terms listed by Hirsch as essential to cultural literacy in the United States have a reference point in our built environment (1987, 152-215).

As part of a core curriculum in schools, heritage education supports the unity of the United States, a force for cohesion in a society marked by pluralism. Heritage education, properly conceived, also emphasizes the rich diversity of the American people, which is reflected in the built environment. Thus, teaching and learning about the built environment enhance learning of a fundamental paradox of our American nation--unity with diversity.

Knowledge and appreciation of national unity with social diversity are requirements of cultural literacy and citizenship in the United States. Tension between preservation of common values and acceptance of new cultural influences and experiences is an inescapable part of our American heritage. So is a workable blending of continuity and change, of preservation of a common heritage and integration of new ideas and experiences into it, thereby recreating a sense of cultural coherence and commonality from the fresh contributions of newcomers.

HOW IS HERITAGE EDUCATION CONNECTED TO THE SOCIAL STUDIES

The content of heritage education fits easily into established subjects of the social studies curriculum, such as history and geography. Consider five main themes of education in geography: (1) location, (2) place, (3) human-environment interactions, (4) movement of people, ideas, goods, (5) formation and change of regions (Joint Committee on Geographic Education 1984). Teaching and learning about each of these five themes are greatly enriched through use of the built environment. The same point can be made about main themes of historic literacy, such as time and chronology, continuity and change, common memory, historical empathy, and cause-effect relationships. These ideas can be included in the curriculum more realistically and interestingly through use of historic places and artifacts.

During the 1980s, there has been a strong revival of interest in history and geography as staples of elementary and secondary education in the social studies. According to John J. Patrick, director of Indiana University's Social Studies Development Center, the current emphasis on history and geography "bodes well for the contributions that historic preservation and heritage education might make to improvements in the curriculum of our schools. The objects of historic preservation can be connected to a
The best means for including heritage education in the curriculum is infusion--integration with existing curriculum patterns--rather than creation of new courses or stand-alone units of study. Established goals and subjects in the social studies provide numerous points of entry for teaching and learning about artifacts and the built environment. And the content of heritage education provides opportunities for connection of the social studies to other subjects in the curriculum, such as languages, literature, and fine arts.

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF EXEMPLARY HERITAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS?

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1949, is committed to education of the public about the importance of knowing, valuing, and preserving its heritage. In line with this commitment, the National Trust's Task Force on Heritage Education has stated that exemplary programs should reflect

-- an accurate, objective, and balanced interpretation of

sites, landscapes, structures, and objects, establishing

the appropriate context for and conveying the reality of

the place in the American historical and cultural experience;

-- the rich historical and cultural contributions of men

and women from diverse regional, racial, and ethnic
groups, and the legacies of these contributions in the

texture and shape of our built environment;

-- the expressions of America's historical and cultural

experience found in local, state, and regional

environments;

-- an interdisciplinary approach to the study of American

history and culture, incorporating information from the
liberal and fine arts and sciences;
-- a vision for a quality of life for Americans as this is
presented in the “preservation ethic” espoused by the
historic preservation community;
-- an instructional design and curriculum content that has
been developed with and for teachers at various grade
levels, in cooperation with well-prepared historians and
preservationists who will remain involved in
implementation of the program;
-- integration with the existing curriculum developed for
each grade level within the elementary and secondary
system, and adaptation to the realities of the local
educational environment;
-- support for the educational mission, goals, and
priorities of the elementary, secondary, and higher
education systems articulated by the major national
professional organizations and by local, state, and
federal agencies;
-- support for the values and practices of informed
stewardship towards America’s historical and cultural
legacies in landscapes, sites, structures, and objects.

Exemplary programs in heritage education move students beyond the pages of
textbooks and worksheets to interpretation of evidence from various sources:
documents, artifacts, and various objects of the built environment. Video programs and
photographs (slide shows and bulletin board displays) are especially effective means of
bringing examples from the built environment into the classroom. Students can be
required to use these visual materials as sources of evidence about the past, in the same way that written primary sources are used in a sound history course. Teachers might also use field trips to historic landmark sites as sources of data to interpret, analyze, and evaluate.

In conclusion, high-quality programs in heritage education enhance the teaching and learning of core subjects in the social studies, such as history and geography. Through this enrichment of the core curriculum, heritage education contributes to the common learning and cultural literacy of students.

REFERENCES AND ERIC RESOURCES


TO KNOW. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. Joint Committee on Geographic Education. GUIDELINES FOR

GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION: ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS.


This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI88062009. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.

Kathleen Hunter is Director of Education Programs, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Title: Heritage Education in the Social Studies. ERIC Digest.
Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Guides---Non-Classroom Use (055); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);
Available From: Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405.
Identifiers: ERIC Digests, Heritage Education

###