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# SOCIAL STUDIES
## *CURRICULUM*

1936—FOURTEENTH YEARBOOK
DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENCE

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DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENCE
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1201 Sixteenth Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C.

# The SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

## FOURTEENTH YEARBOOK



THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENCE
OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES
1201 Sixteenth Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C.

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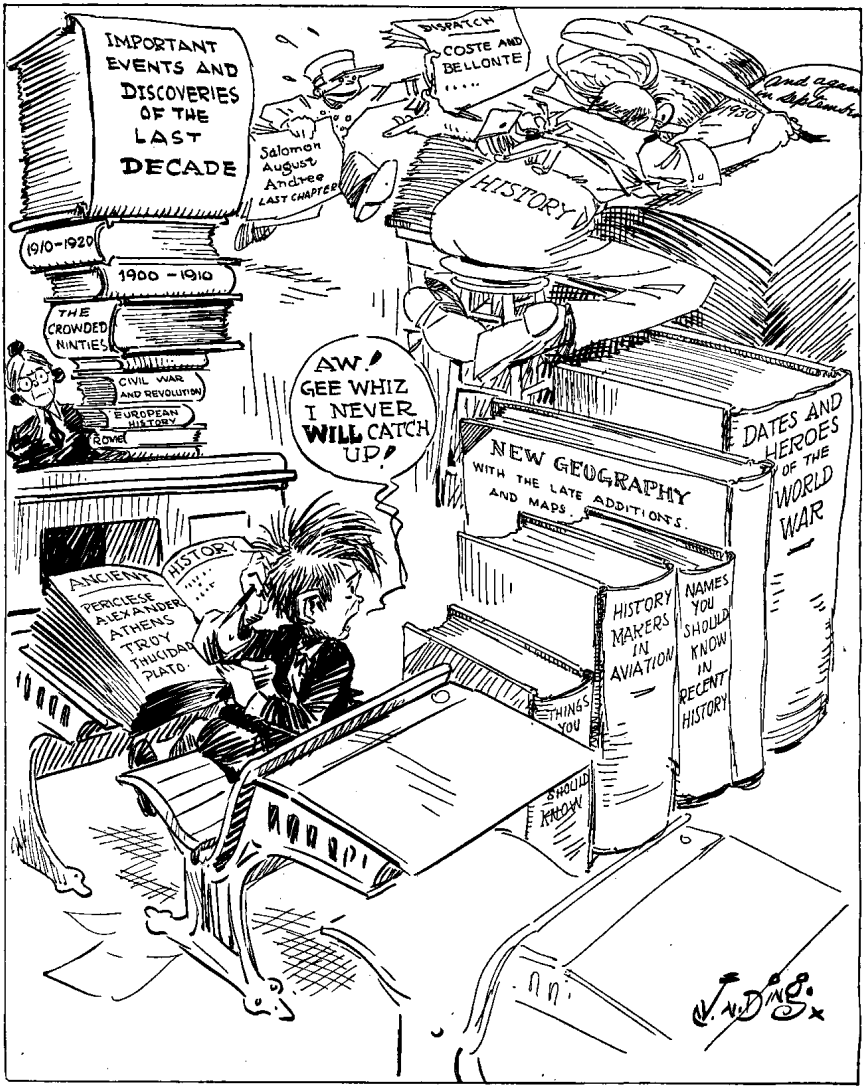


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# FOREWORD

THE NEED FOR A REEXAMINATION of the social studies curriculum has been a growing conviction in the minds of the members of the Department of Superintendence for several years. At the Washington convention in February 1932 this feeling crystallized in the form of the following resolution:

> We recommend that the Executive Committee appoint a committee which shall prepare and send to the active members of this Department at the earliest practicable moment suggestive changes for such adjustments in the social studies curricula in our junior and senior high schools as our present social and economic situation has made necessary and vital.

It is from the foregoing resolution that the Commission on the Social Studies Curriculum received its original direction. However, the nature of the final report of the present Commission has been definitely influenced by the work of three earlier commissions.

The first of these major influences has been the publications of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends (1933). Its comprehensive report and monographs present, in vivid form, the nature of recent social changes in the United States. Superintendents of schools and teachers alike are finding these publications authoritative statements of social facts and phenomena.

In the second place an influence was exerted by the Department's able Commission on Education for New Social and Economic Relationships which prepared the 1935 Yearbook. Members of the Department, by a comparison of the two volumes, will find that the contents supplement each other in their general outlines. The 1935 Yearbook traces a number of recent social trends and suggests the contribution that education may be expected to make to American democracy. Upon this general base the present yearbook rears a superstructure of the purposes, principles, and practises to be incorporated into the social studies curriculum. The next step is for each superintendent to enlist teachers in developing a specific social studies curriculum adapted to the needs and the hopes of his local community. Without this final step, which no national commission would presume to dictate in this day and age, much of the effort expended by the Department will have been wasted.

The preparation of this 1936 Yearbook has been influenced, also, by the productions of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association. The several volumes of that investigation have been widely distributed and are familiar to many superintendents of schools.

No attempt is made in the present volume to decide between the use of the two terms "social studies" and "social sciences" in the social instruc-

tion of elementary and secondary schools. Thruout the various chapters the two terms denote the same parts of the curriculum. In using either term the Commission refers to the courses or topics in history, civics, geography, economics, social problems, sociology, and similar subjects which are usually (see Chapter V) recognized as constituting the social studies curriculum. At the same time (see Chapter I) the Commission recognizes that every worthwhile subject makes a contribution to the socialization of the individual and that the so-called subject lines are necessarily arbitrarily drawn. Those interested in the respective merits of various terms are referred to Tryon's *The Social Sciences as School Subjects,* Part XI of the Report of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association.

There will be a few persons who may feel that the present yearbook has not taken sufficient notice of the international aspects of the social studies curriculum. Some will look for a specific chapter which would tell them how to develop the world consciousness necessary for citizens in our democracy. It should be obvious, particularly from a reading of Part II, that many opportunities exist for properly introducing pupils to the problems of the economic and the cultural relationships among modern nations. A chapter on world affairs would have distorted the plan and the purposes of the present volume, while dismissing with inadequate treatment a topic which might well require an entire yearbook.

## Acknowledgments

In a project of this sort many more persons deserve credit than these preliminary pages would indicate. Every member of the Commission has called upon associates in his institution or school system for assistance in the preparation of materials. The footnotes and bibliographies cited thruout the text indicate a debt to many who have already made significant contributions to the social studies curriculum. By drawing upon and adding to the available sources the Commission members prepared chapters which were critically reviewed at numerous meetings. The volume in its present form represents the viewpoint of the Commission as a whole.

As in the case of earlier yearbooks the Commission recognizes the helpful assistance of the Headquarters Staff in Washington, D.C. Sherwood D. Shankland, executive secretary of the Department of Superintendence, handled the business details and contributed from his experience with similar commissions. William G. Carr, director of research of the National Education Association, participated actively in all deliberations. Frank W. Hubbard, associate director of research, served as secretary of the Commission, circulated questionnaires, prepared necessary outlines, and edited the volume for publication.

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UNDERLYING THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM and methods of instruction are certain principles which are the necessary characteristics of a democratic society and essential to the effective operation of American society in particular. These principles are set forth in the Constitution of the United States, state constitutions, great statutes, and the primary writings of the American tradition, and are clearly designed for application to a changing society. For the social studies curriculum the following are basic and imperative:

(1) *Government with the consent of the governed as contrasted with government by dictatorial force imposed by stratagem and violence. Government with the consent of the governed requires the establishment and preservation of impartial election machinery, purity of the ballot, freedom of candidacy, open presentation of issues, liberty of press and discussion, an educated electorate, and the right of the people to alter their fundamental laws by established processes as changed conditions call for alterations in the powers and forms of government.*

(2) *The use of government, economy, the natural endowment of the nation, and the technical arts for the promotion of the general welfare and for the creation and maintenance of the highest possible standard of life and well-being for all the people, as distinguished from the privileges of any class.*

(3) *The preservation of personal liberty—full religious liberty and freedom of press, speech, assembly, and petition—as opposed to capricious and irresponsible tyranny.*

(4) *The preservation of the rights of property lawfully acquired against arbitrary seizure and confiscation, and the application of the rule that property is to be taken only for public purposes and by due process in which burdens fall with the same weight on all persons similarly situated.*

(5) *The protection of private rights against arbitrary action, by the maintenance of fixed processes guaranteeing speedy and open hearings in courts of law, right of counsel, right of jury trial, and right of impartial judgment.*

(6) *The enforcement of law by duly constituted officials alone and the repudiation of all private persons and organizations that try to take upon themselves the functions of judges and executioners.*

(7) *The assumption of full individual responsibility in the discharge of private and public obligations.*

These principles form the basis of orientation for instruction in the social studies in the American public schools. The schools do not operate in a vacuum. They can discharge their obligations to the nation only by applying these principles in the choice of themes of instruction, the selection of materials, and the determination of classroom procedures. Only by the constant observation of such guides, or points of reference, can teachers of the social studies give vivid meaning to programs and methods and avoid losing themselves in a wilderness of arid and insignificant details.

# A PREVIEW

SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS have listened in recent years to perplexing discussions of the problems of a changing society. These discussions have often been theoretical, technical, and highly controversial. Altho such oratorical and literary tilts are stimulating, there comes a time when the practical school worker must face the question: "Of what significance to education is dynamic social evidence and how can it be used in the classroom?" Since there is no single or final answer to the question, this yearbook presents a number of viewpoints and possible procedures. By combining these suggestions with local experience superintendents and their staffs will be able to plan for their pupils an increasing number of significant social activities. This preview states fourteen of the major practical questions upon which the yearbook attempts to throw some light and toward the solution of which it attempts to contribute.

## Factors Conditioning the Social Studies

Among the major and minor factors conditioning the social studies, those of prime importance for the purposes of the present yearbook are as follows: (1) the nature of society, (2) the role of education and the school, and (3) the nature of the learner and the learning process.

*How does the nature of society affect the social studies?*—A program of social studies is never spun out of pure theory in a vacuum. Its content and form are conditioned, and in part determined, by the nature of the society in which it is formulated and by the nature of the social studies themselves. More specifically the major influences are:

(1) *The accuracy of social knowledge*—Terminology and concepts in the social studies are not as exact or as unchanging as the elements in physical science.

(2) *The type of society for which it is prepared*—The program will bear some relation to the society and the age in which it is framed.

(3) *Dynamics of social living*—American society is changing under the impacts of science, invention, enterprise, and thought.

(4) *Trends in American economy and culture*—Over long periods general trends become marked, e.g., the increasing mechanization of industry and agriculture.

(5) *The American heritage of ideas*—The social studies have to deal with the intellectual and cultural heritage found in the great documents of American history and the writings of statesmen, poets, philosophers, scientists, novelists, and essayists.

(6) *Conceptions of human values*—The program must include human strivings and aspirations for the true, the beautiful, and the good.

(7) *Growing social knowledge*—From year to year investigators, research workers, and trained observers are adding to our knowledge of society and its processes, supplying descriptions ever more accurate and painstaking.

The above points are developed at some length in Chapter I, pages 19 to 24.

*Of what significance to the social studies is the role of education and the school?*—The nature and the purpose of education in any society are determined by the dominant forces within that group. Under a dictator the role of education is definitely prescribed and arbitrarily limited. In American democracy the functions of the school have developed experimentally. In the past the people, thru their chosen representatives, have determined how much education they wished to have and how the schools should be conducted. Since the primary need has been for the transmission of racial culture, the schools have directed their efforts largely to that end.

The shift of the dominant economic base of American life from agriculture to industry has precipitated social and cultural maladjustment. At once several pertinent questions require answers: Should public education continue to transmit the racial inheritance only, or should it also present students with a realistic picture of modern society? To what extent should teachers attempt to exert influence in deciding the more controversial issues upon the social frontier? To what extent should the school curriculum, particularly the social studies, be utilized to give the American people new conceptions of human values and social issues? Obviously if education is to assume these new responsibilities, the relative social and economic illiteracy of teachers must be eliminated. For a fuller treatment of the topic see Chapter II, pages 25 to 31.

*Why are the social studies concerned with the nature of the learner and the learning process?*—The investigations and theories of the various schools of psychology throw light on the problems of curriculum and methods in the social studies. For example, some kinds of learning are explained by the process of conditioning, others by trial and error, others by association forming, and still others by the apprehension of relations and insight. In addition, the concept of purpose, emphasized in Hormic psychology, and the understanding of emotional reactions, provided by the psychiatrist, have a bearing on attitudes and motivation. Besides this the psychology of social experience shows more specifically how the child's socialization is an outgrowth of a series of acts of learning which are set in motion by the nature of the society in which he lives. The child's learning is limited by his inherent human nature, his intelligence, and his stage of development at any particular age, but within the limits set by these factors the content and direction of the learning which constitutes his socialization will be determined by the attitudes, habits, and ideas of his social group. For a more complete picture of these specific points see Chapter III, pages 32 to 48.

## The Social Studies Curriculum

With regard to the content of the social studies curriculum the present yearbook deals with the following eight topics: (1) the nature and the role of the social studies; (2) the status and trends of the social studies curriculum; (3) the social studies program as a whole; (4) the selection of content; (5) grade placement; (6) types of internal organization; (7) the construction of units; and (8) the utilization of community resources.

*What are the nature and the role of the social studies?*—The social studies may be considered narrowly on the routine level, or broadly and comprehensively on higher levels reaching upward to an all-embracing philosophy. A social studies program for the schools is a compromise between the comprehensiveness and specialism of scholarship and the requirements and necessities of schoolroom organization and presentation. A recognition of the two sides of the operation is essential to attainment of the highest possible level of combined theory and practise.

The social studies are concerned with human relations primarily, and other things incidentally. The social studies involve thought as well as knowledge about human relations, and thought enters into the selection and organization of social facts for schoolroom presentation. It is the human relations aspect of the social studies which distinguishes them from other school subjects; but the distinction is not absolute.

The several branches of learning included in a social studies program are concerned with particular types or aspects of human relations—economic, political, cultural; and history, as all-embracing, seeks to find the unity of social relations in time development.

The following purposes enter into the selection and organization of materials for classroom instruction:

(1) To give pupils the truest and most realistic knowledge that is possible of the community, state, nation, and world in which they are to live and make their way.

(2) To prepare pupils for promoting a wiser and more effective cooperation among regions, areas, individuals, groups, communities, and nations.

(3) To develop character—to give pupils a love of truth, an appreciation of the beautiful, a bent toward good, and a will and desire to use knowledge for beneficent social ends.

(4) To train pupils in the intellectual processes indispensable to the functioning of society—acquisition of knowledge, skill in use of knowledge, skill in selecting and verifying facts, skill in exploring and stating social issues, and skill in discussing and weighing them.

A generous freedom of study and teaching is necessary to acquiring and presenting a realistic picture of society, its forms and tensions. A way must be steered between the extremes of dogmatic indoctrination and the

indifference of "absolute neutrality." Preparation for teaching the social studies calls for wide knowledge of the facts of social relations, acquaintance with the literature of social aspiration, and the attainment of the judicial spirit. For further discussion consult Chapter IV, pages 51 to 62.

*What have been the recent trends in the social studies curriculum?*—A sampling study of the topics, courses, grade placement, and time allotments in the social studies reveals certain significant facts. Apparently six-year elementary schools are doing more toward enrichment thru additions to the social studies curriculum than are the eight-year schools. The eight-grade school tends to crowd subjects into the seventh and eighth grades which under the junior high-school plan are more evenly distributed over three grades. This statement is particularly true for such subjects as state history, current events, community civics, citizenship, and social problems. At the senior high-school level three-year schools appear to crowd the final year with more subjects than do the four-year and six-year schools. At all school levels there has been a definite trend toward enriching the social studies program by increasing the attention given to civics, social problems, and other non-historical subjects. For further details see Chapter V, pages 63 to 90.

*What should be the nature of the social studies program as a whole?*—At least twice in the development or revision of a course in social studies it is essential to view the program as a whole. When the work is first projected, a general pattern must be set up for the course in its entirety. Later, when the work is nearly completed, there is need to survey the entire program to make sure that the major purposes have been served, that adopted standards have been met, and that the course is consistent with itself.

Among the principles which may be used by the superintendent and his staff in evaluating the entire program are the following: (1) comprehensiveness and balance, (2) vertical articulation, (3) horizontal articulation, (4) reality of learning situations, (5) self-integrated learning, (6) adaptation to maturity of learner, (7) adaptation to community characteristics, (8) adaptation to individual differences, (9) flexibility, (10) scientific evidence of validity, and (11) contribution to general objectives.

For a full discussion of these principles and examples of the topics which might be included in the entire program see Chapter VI, pages 91 to 140.

*What principles and procedures should guide the selection of content for the social studies?*—Not so many years ago the general content of the social studies curriculum was blocked out by national or regional committees. The specific content was filled in by textbook writers. Today teachers and administrators are making curriculums which are more flexible and better

adapted to local needs. To avoid the obvious dangers in the present plan three major criteria should be kept in mind:

(1) *Accuracy*—Teachers are bound by the tenets of a scholarship to which we owe a large measure of allegiance to see that no known untruth be taught as true.

(2) *Usefulness*—The pupil has a right to expect that which is taught him in the schools to be applicable to and helpful in meeting the situations of normal living.

(3) *Learnability*—An accurate and useful curriculum may be ineffective if provision has not been made for the limitations and differences in the abilities of pupils.

Numerous studies have been made to determine whether content is true, useful, and learnable. In respect to the mechanical methods one is forced to conclude that there is no substitute in curriculum-making for informed and sensitive intelligence on the part of those who make the course of study. A discussion of the three criteria and of the research in the field will be found in Chapter VII, pages 141 to 164.

*What can and should be done about grade placement in the social studies?*—The question of grade placement has two major aspects: first, sequence or planning the order of experiences so that the learning is most efficient; second, adaptation to maturity or the allocation of experiences to the level where the experiences will be most meaningful and educative.

There are three ways in which the problem of grade placement may be approached: (1) present practise; (2) opinion of individuals or groups; and (3) evidence of ease of learning, child interest, and utility to pupils. Thru these methods the general placement of materials may be tentatively decided but upon each teacher rests the decision as to the appropriateness of social studies experiences in terms of a given time, place, and class.

Present practise and expert opinion have been in the past and are today the major influences in grade placement. Experimental testing of materials under actual classroom conditions has made some progress. Combined with the systematic collection of objective data, classroom tryouts and expert opinion may be expected to become even more effective. For a review of investigations of grade placement and a discussion of the problems involved, see Chapter VIII, pages 165 to 177.

*What should be the internal organization of the social studies?*—The organization of materials in the social studies curriculum is a perplexing problem because of the complex nature of human relationship and the necessity of selecting definite aspects of the subject for study and analysis at a particular time.

In determining the general plan of organization the administrator must be guided by certain practical considerations, such as the attitude and preparation of the teaching staff, available textbooks, and supplementary references. He must also consider the general plan of organization of the

schools; the extent to which traditional subjects should be preserved or ignored within the social studies field and in the curriculum in general; and the adaptation of materials to the maturity, ability, and experience of the pupils.

The major goal in organization is to provide those relationships in the materials of instruction which will most effectively facilitate learning. Obviously in many cases these relationships cannot be determined in advance so that any plan of organization in a course of study must be somewhat arbitrary and may be quite artificial. However, if materials are organized with certain generally recognized principles in mind (see Chapters VI, VII, and VIII) there is more likelihood that the learning environment in the classroom will function on a high level. Some of the plans in use today for organizing social studies do not measure up to expert opinion or the findings of research. While a skilled teacher may overcome the handicap of poor arrangement of content, he is placed under necessarily difficult circumstances. For examples of various ways of organizing the content consult Chapter IX, pages 178 to 232.

*How should curriculum materials be prepared?*—Experience in the past few years has been that the preparation of curriculum materials by teacher committees increases the educational understanding of those participating in the work, and hence improves the quality of instruction in the classroom. This statement is particularly true when certain weaknesses of the procedure, such as the lack of adequate scholarship on the part of committee members, are adequately provided for.

One of the most promising plans is the organization of materials into areas which include a problem or a series of problems of present social significance. Altho called by various names the term "unit" is probably most widely used. One form of the unit in the social studies course of study may include the following: (1) overview; (2) objectives; (3) suggested activities or approaches; (4) problems to be solved by the pupils; (5) suggestions for evaluating the work of pupils; and (6) bibliographies. These points are developed at some length in Chapter X, pages 233 to 245.

*What use should be made of community resources?*—There have always been teachers who preferred textbook superficiality with its ease of management to first-hand experience with its obvious instructional difficulties. But also there has always been a pageant of master teachers who have sought to keep education close to concrete and real things. One of the hopeful signs in connection with presentday instruction in the social studies is the increasing tendency to push out the four walls of the classroom until they encompass all aspects of community life. Pupils do not merely read about group living—they observe many social processes at first-hand,

they participate in activities within the limits of their maturity, and they contribute in important ways to the community's advancement. A number of practical illustrations of how to utilize community resources will be found in Chapter XI, pages 246 to 278.

## Teaching, Evaluating, and Revising Social Studies Programs

In connection with instruction and appraisal in the social studies program the present volume deals with three topics: (1) the teacher and classroom technics; (2) evaluating the outcomes of the social studies program; and (3) reconstructing the social studies program in the local community.

*What technics and methods should teachers use in a modern social studies program?*—The teacher today has the very difficult task of teaching pupils to think for themselves in a rapidly changing world. For this reason the role of the classroom teacher has never been more important.

In the social studies the supreme need is for well-trained teachers whose work is freed from petty criticism and whose motives are not misinterpreted. It is easy for laymen to be misinformed about social studies instruction particularly with regard to the handling of controversial issues. The situation calls for tolerance and fair play on both sides. Perhaps a code of "fair practise" drawn up by parents, teachers, and pupils would promote effective conditions of learning.

The wise teacher of the social studies will not throw aside old methods because they are old, nor will he embrace new methods merely because they are new. Any method—whether problem, or project, or library-research—will be used where it will be most effective. One who would be a master teacher in this sense must have acquired the habits of orderly thinking, must have a knowledge of child nature, and must have developed an understanding of human relationships thru participation in community affairs. For a discussion of the nature and advantages of various methods consult Chapter XII, pages 281 to 311.

*What evaluation should be made of the outcomes of the social studies program?*—Continuous evaluation is essential to determine the degree of effectiveness of the social studies program and to obtain an intelligent basis for curriculum improvement. An adequate program of appraisal provides evidence of the degree to which all of the important purposes of the social studies are being realized. To this end teachers will increasingly use a variety of evaluation methods instead of limiting themselves to written examinations. A comprehensive plan of appraisal also involves cumulative studies of pupils beyond the years of formal schooling so that the relative permanency of these educational experiences may be determined. Specific