



ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES

TEACHING FOR TODAY
AND TOMORROW

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Elementary Social Studies

Teaching for Today and Tomorrow

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Elementary Social Studies

Preface

Two old friends who had not seen each other for many years met at a conference of the National Council for the Social Studies in Chicago. One was an elementary classroom teacher and the other a university social studies methods professor. They had dinner, and the discussion that ensued was the beginning of this book.

As is usual when teachers meet, the conversation turned to shop talk. The topic centered on preparing future teachers for the classroom, most especially for teaching elementary social studies. The consensus was that social studies instruction tends to be more “read about and recite” and is often perceived to be more boring than most other subjects. The next question was Why? To us, the two old friends mentioned above, social studies topics are interesting, and the people and places studied are certainly not boring. So maybe the problem is not social studies itself but the way it is taught. *Elementary Social Studies: Teaching for Today and Tomorrow* is an effort to prepare the future teacher to do a more interesting and effective job of planning and teaching social studies.

We, the authors, represent two distinct teaching environments: the elementary classroom and the university classroom. Too often, there is little communication between the two. Those at the university level are more often concerned with research and theory, while those at the elementary level focus upon what works with children. We think both views have much to offer to the preparation of future teachers. We’ve spent much time deliberating the needs of the beginning teacher from both theoretical and practical aspects. The result of these deliberations was to produce the topics that are the core of this book.

As you read this book, keep in mind the following assumptions:

- This is a true elementary social studies methods textbook. It is about *how* to teach social studies, not a short course in the content of social studies. We have purposely omitted the history of social studies, various organizational structures, and other historical but not very useful information. We assume that students have had courses in the social sciences as an integral part of their university experience.
- Social studies can be learned by personal involvement as well as by reading. According to Piaget, children of elementary school age are in the concrete operational stage. They need hands-on experiences. Educators have applied this concept to science and mathematics with good results. Why not

apply it to the teaching of social studies? To go one step further, why not apply it to the preparation of social studies teachers? The format of this book is designed to involve you, the student, in the learning process. Therefore, each chapter concludes with activities that will help you teach and reinforce the instruction of social studies concepts.

- Good planning is the core of good teaching. Organizing a lesson or a unit; planning the teaching, questioning, and evaluating strategies; and carrying them out is what teaching is all about. We have included questioning and evaluating as an integral part of the planning process, not as an add-on.
- Social studies is important, alive, and definitely not boring. All that is needed to make it so is a well-prepared teacher who is willing to go beyond the textbook and explore the real world with her or his students.

We have enjoyed writing this book because we believe social studies is important. If only one person becomes a better social studies teacher as a result of our efforts, then all the time and energy spent producing this text will have been worthwhile.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Upon completion of the writing task, there is finally time to reflect on the project and the many people who have been either directly or indirectly connected with it. We thank all of you who have helped in any way, and we apologize to those we may have inconvenienced.

We express gratitude for the support of Ruth Evans and Richard Brueckner. Only those who have written can truly appreciate the value of a supportive spouse.

We also thank the people at Allyn and Bacon for their help and support, especially our editor, Sean Wakely, who believed in us and our book. Thank you to our copy editor, Lynda Griffiths, for making sense of our manuscript and keeping us on schedule. Thanks also to our reviewers for their helpful criticisms, comments, and suggestions: Buckley R. Barnes, Georgia State University; Keith D. Berkeley, University of South Carolina; JoAnne Buggey, University of Minnesota; and Don Varner, Northeast Oklahoma State University. We have had differences of opinion and, in some instances, of basic philosophy, but you have strengthened the book with your sometimes blunt, sometimes humorous, and always sincere comments.

Last, but most important of all, we want to thank the children of Earle Brown Elementary School in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, and Hanna Vowles Elementary School in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, who served as models for photo-

graphs and, in doing so, represent all children in all schools. Children are the reason for the existence of the teaching profession. Without them, teachers would have no one to teach, and there would have been no need for this book. A special thanks to all children just for being children and to all teachers who teach.

Finally, we want to dedicate this book to all the elementary teachers who are indeed “teaching for today and tomorrow.”

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