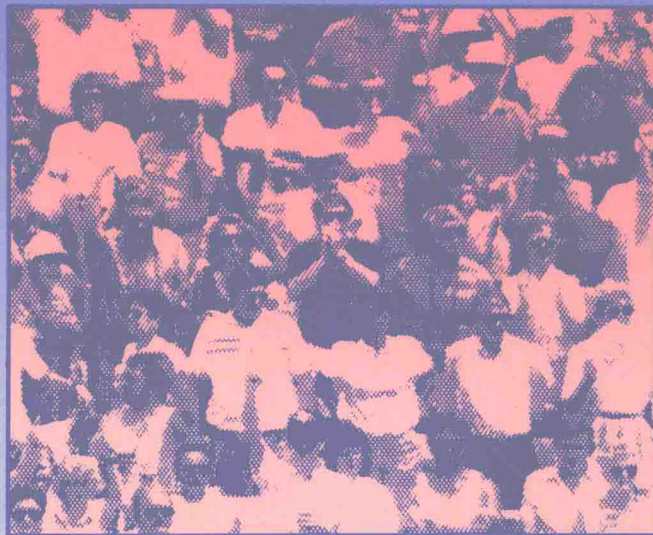


Second Edition

ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES

A Practical Guide



June R. Chapin
Rosemary G. Messick

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Elementary Social Studies: A Practical Guide, Second Edition

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ELEMENTARY
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Preface

We have made three assumptions in this book about your teacher-preparation program: first, that you come to the professional sequence of your program with a general background in those academic disciplines that serve as a foundation for elementary social studies; second, that you, like students in most professional programs, are scheduled for only a one-semester, one- to three-credit course in teaching social studies; and third, that you have other courses in your program that expose you to learning theory, curriculum planning, the teaching of concepts and generalizations, and instructional technology.

You can predict the scope of this text by its title. Our intention is to expose you to what is *basic* and *specific* to teaching the social studies in elementary grades. Although the text focuses on topics essential to elementary-classroom social studies instruction, additional elements have been woven purposefully into the exposition. The vignettes, their analyses, and much of the text itself are meant to augment your knowledge about classroom instruction and curriculum in general. Chapter introductions and definitions of terms provide you with links to your other professional courses in the areas of curriculum and learning. Exercises, lesson plans, and other activities suggest instructional resources to pursue in your own teaching. An instructor's manual to accompany the text furnishes a test item file, mainly multiple-choice, with a separate answer key.

Some topics in this text are common to any basic social studies methods textbook. Some, however, are distinctive. They include Chapter 4 ("Social Studies in the Primary Grades"), Chapter 5 ("Social Studies in the Fourth through Eighth Grades"), Chapter 6 ("Elementary Citizenship Education"), and Chapter 8 ("Language Arts Skills in the Social Studies"). Other chapters include basic and essential definitions and structures for social studies instructional organization, planning, matching instructional strategies to topics, learning about cultures, teaching special skills, and evaluation.

The social studies typically receives little attention in elementary school, especially in the primary grades. Our hope is that you will come to see the social studies as a vital part of the school day at all levels, not only as an application area for basic skills and values but also, and more importantly, as a bridge between the school and the experiences your students will have outside the classroom.

We continue to learn from the experiences of our own students, from classroom teachers with whom we work, and from our university colleagues throughout the country. We are grateful for their valuable contributions to this text, although we alone are responsible for any errors in it. Between us, we have taught in the Midwest, overseas, and, for many years, in California. We have seen teachers make a positive difference in the lives of children and feel privileged to watch children gain opportunities through education. We believe that the social studies can help you make dreams a reality for the children you teach, and we invite you to work with us toward that goal.

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CHAPTER 1

The Elementary Social Studies Curriculum

In chapter one, we learn that the traditional social studies curriculum is being heavily criticized and that changes may be coming in the future. Specifically, we treat the following topics:

1. Images of the Social Studies
2. Why Teach the Social Studies?
3. Definitions of the Social Studies
4. National Curriculum Patterns
5. Importance of Textbook Series
6. Mounting Criticism: Scope and Sequence

IMAGES OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Welcome to the world of social studies! What do you remember about your elementary social studies program? If any of the following activities seem familiar, jot down on a piece of paper whether or not the memory is pleasant.

- ▶ Clipping out items from a newspaper for Friday current events
- ▶ Doing a research report on Daniel Boone from your school's encyclopedia
- ▶ Finding out the latitude and longitude of a long list of cities
- ▶ Learning about the Pilgrims at Thanksgiving
- ▶ Visiting a site where your state's Native Americans lived
- ▶ Writing a contest essay on American government
- ▶ Answering the questions at the end of a textbook chapter

Writing to foreign consuls and embassies for information about your assigned country

Reenacting pioneer life

Making a papier-mâché globe

Writing a personal history book

Drawing neighborhood maps

Working on a committee where one person dominated

Learning about the immigrant group from which you came

Exercise 1.1 WHAT WORKS BEST?

Now add to this list the activities that you remember experiencing in elementary social studies. Try to include both pleasant and boring times. Compare your list of what you liked and didn't like with others in your class. Are there activities that everyone remembers enjoying? Are there other activities that everyone disliked? Your image of what elementary social studies is stems mainly from your own experiences.

Exercise 1.2 HOW IMPORTANT IS SOCIAL STUDIES?

How do you rank the importance of social studies in the elementary curriculum? Look at the following list of traditional subjects taught in elementary school.

Health/physical education (PE)

Language arts

Mathematics

Reading

Science

Social studies

Now rank these subjects in order of importance to you, 1 through 6. Share your list with other members of your class. Most elementary teachers and students rank social studies fourth or lower. If your ranking was within this range, what do you think influenced your response?

Elementary teachers often have negative attitudes toward the social studies as a result of their own school experiences, perhaps because of the following:

Learning about social studies largely emphasized trivial facts.

The dominant instructional tool was the textbook.

Most social studies activities concentrated on large group recitation and lecture.

Emotional or affective objectives were not included as part of the curriculum.

Two other reasons may account, at least in part, for the less-than-enthusiastic attitude that many elementary teachers have toward the social studies: lack of preparation and lack of interest. Many of you have taken only a few social science or history courses in college. You may feel underqualified or reluctant to tackle the sometimes controversial subject matter of the social studies. Many of you may feel strongly that reading and math programs are basic in elementary education; however, a social studies program is also basic. In fact, a good social studies program can go far toward improving skills in other subjects, including reading, writing, and arithmetic.

A good social studies program can contribute to producing good citizens. The educational reform reports of the 1980s have reaffirmed the importance of the social studies in citizenship education. Children become adults and as citizens they must make thoughtful decisions. Our "Nation [is] at Risk"¹ unless we have the background and skills needed for that difficult task. In addition, effective citizenship depends upon a willingness or attitude to participate in our government. However, attitudes toward authority and government are formed early, in the elementary grades; they do not wait until later in the middle school years to appear.

We believe in the *vital* importance of social studies instruction, both in providing students with basic skills needed in the real world and in preparing students to become responsible, thoughtful, participating citizens. If we are successful in transmitting this belief to you, social studies teaching, at least in your classrooms, may not suffer the neglect that otherwise often occurs at the primary level.

This text will help you find ways of teaching the social studies that you and your students will learn from and enjoy. Social studies *can* be taught creatively and thoughtfully. As a result of your efforts, students may find that social studies is their favorite subject. More importantly, through *your* social studies instruction, your students will acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to participate as active citizens in our society.

WHY TEACH THE SOCIAL STUDIES?

The social studies is about people. No other area of the curriculum is more concerned with human relations than the social studies, which is designed to help us understand ourselves as well as others—from our families and nearby neighbors to those who live halfway around the world. Each of us is concerned about self, family, and friends. The social studies, therefore, builds on an area of inherently high interest.

Children studying the social studies today will live much of their lives in the twenty-first century. They will experience a world rapidly changing as knowledge

¹ *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. Prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, April, 1983).

dramatically expands. Their occupations and the skills they need to function in a modern, information-based society may change rapidly as well. As teachers, we must always be conscious of how we can help our students live successfully in the coming years; we must prepare them *now* for the twenty-first century and not wait until it arrives.

In addition to *teaching* students about human relations, social studies plays an important role in *preparing* them to become active citizens. Students need to know their rights and their responsibilities as American citizens. They will have to make intelligent choices within the context of our democratic society about what kind of community and world they wish to inhabit. We want to encourage their concern about the quality of life in their community, their nation, and the world.

Achieving peace and justice poses an enormous challenge to all people. Students must not only incorporate basic American values such as equality, freedom, and respect for people and property, but they must also be able to put those values into action through effective participation in the classroom, school, community, nation, and world. A goal of the social studies (as well as of schooling in general) is to help students *reflect* on their own experiences and values. Mastery of the social studies ensures that students will be informed and reflective when they begin to participate in both American culture and the global community.

Creative social studies instruction offers the possibility of producing humane individuals willing to help one another and to make the best of the world. All elementary teachers want their students to *know* things, but they also want to influence their students in what they will become. They want them to be good people—caring, thoughtful, and humane, rather than selfish and cynical. Therefore, an important goal of the social studies is to support the development of humane and thoughtful values in students, who become informed and participating citizens.

The social studies curriculum is defined in terms of four major categories:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Values
- Citizenship (often called social participation)

The *rationale* for elementary social studies is summarized in four major goals:

- To provide *knowledge* about human experiences in the past, present, and future
- To develop *skills* to process information
- To develop appropriate democratic *values* and attitudes
- To provide opportunities for *social participation*

These four goals are not separate and discrete; rather, they are intertwined and overlapping. (See Figure 1.1.) You may find that in some state frameworks, the third and fourth goals are treated as one objective; social participation is regarded as a democratic value. In other cases, social participation is defined as a skill (the second

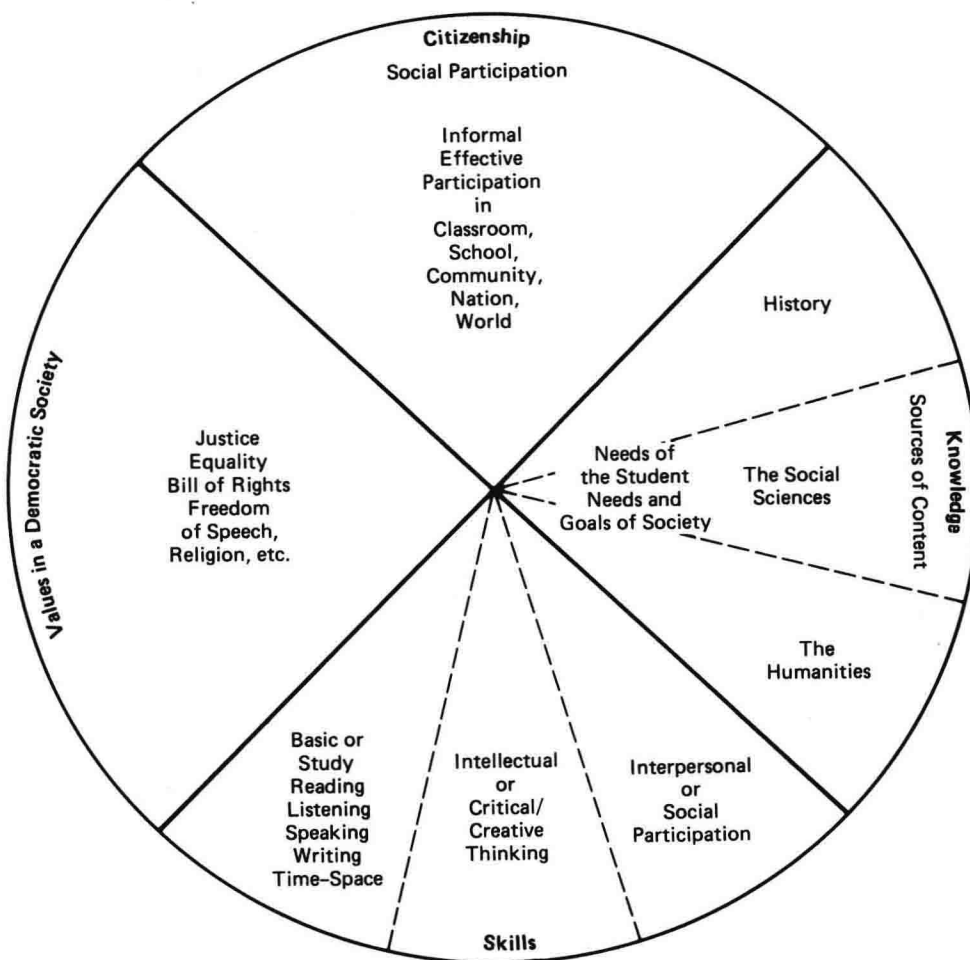


Figure 1.1 Goals of the social studies

goal). Values may sometimes be called *civic* values, to differentiate them from *personal* values. But regardless of how the goals are defined, together they form the basic objectives of a social studies education.

Frequently, the process of learning has emotional values attached to it. Did you *hate* math in school? Did you *love* music? For example, when students study pollution, they usually acquire opinions or attitudes about it. Emotional experiences can have a striking impact on both subject area and skill development. The development of content and skills cannot be divorced from the values that govern their use. Certain skills may be taught in school, but there is no guarantee that students will make use of them. Unless students have a commitment to, a need for, or a

willingness to use the skills they have learned, those skills will be of little value either to the students or to society. All of this underlines the fact that although we often speak of the four main goals of a social studies education, we must not forget their inherent interrelationships.

DEFINITIONS OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Although we have listed four main goals, educators do not always agree on what *content* should be included in the social studies.

Traditionally, the social studies draw upon seven disciplines: history, geography, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. (See Table 1.1.) We study people in the context of their environment, past and present. The combination of history, geography, and the social sciences helps explain the events, individuals, and ideas that have produced both continuity and change in our world. Content from the humanities—literature, art, music—and from science can also stimulate social studies instruction.

Exercise 1.3 CONTENT FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

What do *you* think the social studies should include? Write down the topics that you would expect to teach. Would you include subjects such as career education, consumer education, drug-abuse education, child abuse education, law-related education, sex-equity education, AIDS education, multicultural/multiethnic education, or environmental education?

Although definitions of the social studies may vary, the definition that *you* accept is important. Every elementary teacher should be able to define his or her objectives in teaching the social studies, as well as his or her own decisions about its content.

TABLE 1.1 DISCIPLINES OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES

<i>The Past</i>	<i>The Present</i>	<i>The Future</i>
History	Geography	Future science
Geography	The social sciences:	
Anthropology	Economics	Where and how might people
	Political science	live in the future?
How did our world/nation/ community come to be the way it is?	Sociology	
	Anthropology	
	Psychology	
	Where and how do people live now?	

The following information defines three main social studies traditions as outlined by Robert Barr, a social studies educator, and his colleagues.² Note that many of the approaches emphasize the broad goal of citizenship education but differ on how to achieve this goal.

Social Studies Taught as Citizenship Transmission

Purpose—Citizenship is best promoted by inculcating right values as a framework for making decisions.

Method—Transmission: Transmission of concepts and values by such techniques as textbook, recitation, lecture, question and answer sessions, and structured problem-solving exercises.

Content—Content is selected by an authority interpreted by the teacher and has the function of illustrating values, beliefs, and attitudes.

Social Studies Taught as Social Science

Purpose—Citizenship is best promoted by decision making based on mastery of social science concepts, processes, and problems.

Method—Discovery: Each of the social sciences has its own method of gathering and verifying knowledge. Students must discover and apply the method that is appropriate to each social science.

Content—Proper content is the structure, concepts, problems, and processes of both the separate and the integrated social science disciplines.

Social Studies Taught as Reflective Inquiry

Purpose—Citizenship is best promoted through a process of inquiry in which knowledge is derived from what citizens need to know to make decisions and solve problems.

Method—Reflective Inquiry: Decision making is structured and disciplined through a reflective inquiry process which aims at identifying problems and responding to conflicts by means of testing insights.

Content—Analysis of individual citizen's values yields needs and interests. These, in turn, form the basis for student self-selection of problems which constitute the content for reflection.

Citizenship Transmission

What do you think the tradition of social studies taught as citizenship transmission means? Every nation or societal group brings up its children to reflect its own values and culture. Primitive groups as well as the most advanced technological societies

² Robert D. Barr, James L. Barth, and S. Samuel Shermis, *Defining the Social Studies*, Bulletin 51 (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1977).