

**Social Studies IS Being Taught in the Elementary School:
A Contrarian View**

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This study questions the belief that little or no social studies is being taught in regular elementary education classrooms. That belief is based on time studies and a body of research that looks at curriculum and teacher interviews and concludes that the social studies time block has been decreased in elementary classrooms, therefore little or no social studies is being taught. In light of the previous research, we decided to conduct a study that asked is social studies being taught, and if so, how is it being taught? A list of key social studies concepts for grades 1-5 were used to survey approximately 100 elementary school teachers in a southwestern school district. Teachers used a Likert Scale to rate how often they taught each concept. From the initial survey, 10 teachers were interviewed regarding how they approach teaching social studies concepts and were asked to share sample lesson plans with the researchers. Analysis revealed that elementary teachers (grades 1-5) were teaching most social studies concepts in traditional time blocks incorporating content integration from a variety of curriculum areas, such as reading, art, mathematics, and science. Sample lesson plans obtained from the teachers showed the use of content integration and the focus on social studies concepts. The

researchers reveal how one group of teachers attempted to cope with reduced teaching time for social studies do to state testing.

Introduction

There is a popularly held belief in the world of education that social studies is a non-essential portion of the curriculum that is to be taught only after the basics of reading and mathematics have been thoroughly covered (Hinde, 2005). This belief is historically supported in the evolution of social studies as a discipline during eras where the nation pushed a “back to the basics” view of curriculum in hopes of educating United States’ students to be the intellectual equivalent of their Asian counterparts (Howard, 2003). This viewpoint has continued in the era of No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB) where students and teachers are held accountable for what goes on in public schools through the use of standardized tests. Accountability is a powerful motivator and serves to provoke teachers to change their practices which may often results in instructional shortsightedness (Brighton, 2002), especially regarding the social studies curriculum.

With the focus of curriculum redesigned to designate a larger portion of the instructional day toward reading and mathematics, social studies is often left behind. Many teachers and students don’t seem to mind leaving social studies behind because it is viewed as such an ambiguous field of study (Zhao & Hoge, 2005). Both national and state standards define the objectives that are to be taught in the social studies, but the content is so broad and the objectives are so numerous that the curriculum can seem overwhelming to teachers who do not feel prepared to teach the content. Teachers have often reported being uncomfortable teaching social studies due to their lack of content knowledge and having unsuitable texts or resources (Zhao & Hoge, 2005). Furthermore, there is no incentive for students to learn the material

for it is generally not a part of state examinations and as it is presented it does not show immediate application to their lives.

Viewing the Problem

With time constraints in the daily schedule, mandated decisions on what is to be taught and tested, and a lack of significance in the placement of curriculum importance, it's no wonder that many educators believe that social studies is not being taught in elementary classrooms. In addition, there are others who believe that blocks of time for teaching social studies are being eliminated from the elementary curriculum. However, what cannot be deduced from previous studies is whether or not the key concepts of the social studies curriculum are still being taught. If teachers take the key concepts of the curriculum and weave them throughout their instructional day and across discipline lines, the concepts would still be taught. They would simply be presented in a format that varied from what is traditionally known and accepted. If this were the case, social studies would be integrated within disciplines which receive the lion's share of the instructional hours per day.

This study questions the belief that social studies concepts are not being taught in regular elementary education classrooms. Yet, when considering the purposes and research behind concept teaching, it may become apparent that social studies is being taught in elementary schools, just not in the allotted portion of time that would traditionally regard departmentalized curriculum planning. Thus, the question that intrigues us is are the standards or key concepts in the social studies curriculum being taught through curriculum integration with reading, language arts, mathematics, and other curricular areas?

**What Do We Know About Elementary Social Studies
*Minimal Time Spent Teaching Social Studies***

Many elementary teachers report that they simply do not have time to teach social studies and therefore it is often reduced to a place of minor importance (Kaplan, 2002; McCall, 2004; Rock, et al., 2006; Van Fossen, 2005; Vogler, et al., 2007). Researchers have indicated that social studies is viewed as not being important, and is sometimes considered as an enrichment or second-ranked subject (Hinde, 2005; Houser, 1995; Thornton & Houser, 1996; Wade, 2002). Likewise, Marzano (2003), estimates that teachers are required to cover an average of 200 standards and 3,093 benchmarks in fourteen separate content areas. In order to cover that many benchmarks, teachers would need 15,464 hours of solid instructional time. In a typical 180-day school year, teachers have approximately 9,042 hours of actual time spent teaching (Marzano, 2003). Of those hours, primary grades emphasize reading instruction over all other content areas because administrators and teachers feel pressured to devote their time and energy to those areas that are tested.

According to Wade (2002), research has documented that 75 to 90 per cent of social studies instructional time is based on the textbook. Dependence on this type of a teaching method and time restraints place the students in a passive role and makes social studies concepts seem remote. Important concepts may never become part of students' intellectual conceptual framework because they are being taught a finite set of facts about isolated events or periods of time. In addition, some schools report very little or no social studies instruction occurring in kindergarten through third grade. They seem to regard social studies as a subject that should be taught only when there is free time available (Atwood, 1986; Brophy & Van Sledright, 1993; Houser, 1995; Wood, 1989; Zhao & Hoge, 2005).

In a study conducted by the Council for Basic Education (2004), elementary principals reported a decrease in instructional

time for social studies in grades K-5 since the year 2000 (Hinde, 2005). It seems that the current trend is for students to have little exposure to social studies in the primary grades. In addition, elementary teachers are thought to be subject matter generalists and are typically unprepared to teach social studies. The complexity of teaching such concepts in the truncated time frames of the history and social studies curriculum in elementary schools is a recipe for superficial knowledge development (Van Sledright & Franks, 2000).

Zhao and Hoge (2005) conducted a study in three different school districts in northeast Georgia. Fifty elementary school teachers and their students were interviewed about social studies teaching and learning. The data collected from that study indicated that nearly all students held negative attitudes toward social studies. They did not understand the importance of the curriculum or how it related to their everyday lives. When asked specific content questions the students showed limited knowledge of basic topics. The authors of the study concluded that the students were receiving little or no social studies instruction. They also reported that social studies received insufficient time and resources compared to the amount devoted to reading, writing and math. The primary teachers interviewed reported teaching only the three R's, because of their school's emphasis on those subjects and the support of school administration for that curriculum (Zhao & Hogue, 2005). Social studies was simply not given enough attention.

Integration Ideas

One solution to the fragmented teaching approach has been curriculum integration where teachers relate curriculum areas so that fewer subjects are taught in isolation from one another. The idea is an old one with proponents who suggest the pupils can perceive knowledge as related and that process will allow them to retain previously acquired subject matter for a longer period of

time as compared to learning content in isolation as factual data (Ediger, 1998 & 2000; Knudsen, 1937). By wrapping other content areas in a cocoon of social studies, teachers could solve their time crunch problem (Christensen, Wilson, et.al., 2001). Integration would also give students opportunities to see how social studies concepts fit into the entirety of human experience, including art, literature, politics, government, philosophy and psychology (Cannon, 2002).

Curriculum integration is the most frequently used method at the elementary level for teaching a variety of concepts within a limited time period. The holistic design of teaching units of subject matter may also lend itself to integration. Studies show that students who experience integrated curricula have more positive attitudes toward learning and experience significant advantages within their learning environment (McBee, 2001). Despite the fact that curriculum integration is difficult for educators, the curriculum becomes more meaningful in the lives of the students and integration advances the relevance of classroom learning (Hargreaves & Moore, 2000; Parker, 2005).

The important thing for teachers to remember is that integration is a method and not a goal for learning. Lessons are not integrated for the sake of integration but for the purpose of reaching a specific learning goal or objective. This structure is necessary if students are to understand and remember what they have learned. Students need to deal with meatier ideas such as the concepts that organize and structure facts (Van Sledright & Franks, 2000).

According to Ediger (2000), the development of content relationship are lacking in elementary curriculum. However, if teachers practiced effective integration there would be an opportunity for social studies concepts to be taught in the elementary curriculum. Teachers could teach a richer content embedded within a larger context which will help students construct a broader network of understanding. Developing

conceptual understanding in students who study social studies is vital in moving them away from rote memorization of factual data (Brophy, 1990; Gagnon, 1989; National Center for History in the Schools, 1994).

The Effect of No Child Left Behind

School districts have a degree of autonomy in all areas of the curriculum, and in the area of the social studies curriculum there is greater freedom due to the fact that it is not a subject involved in high-stakes testing (Zhao & Hoge, 2005). Data indicate a reduced emphasis on teaching social studies and history in the primary and intermediate grades as a result of No Child Left Behind's emphasis on reading and math achievement through standardized testing (Seif, 2003). If social studies is not tested, odds are more likely that it will not be taught. In states with high-stakes testing in other core curricular subjects, social studies is seemingly being ignored. The curriculum in general, is being narrowed to a host of tedious skill and drill type activities receiving great amounts of instructional time. When facts are emphasized on tests, they also become the emphasis of classroom instruction and teachers revert to the practice of lecture-dominated classes where best practices are not nearly as important as test practices (Brighton, 2002).

Many classroom teachers may not be supporting efforts to increase time spent teaching social studies because they are too worried about their test scores in other areas and do not want to invest time in those areas where it is not likely to influence results (Savage, 2003). Teachers also attribute their students' lack of interest in social studies to the subject not getting a fair share of effort in curricular planning and to the increased emphasis on reading and mathematics (Zhao & Hoge, 2005). According to Howard (2003) the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act has had a negative influence on social studies instruction with elementary teachers reportedly shortening social studies lessons.

Teaching Conceptually

Concepts are general and broad umbrellas that allow us to sort and categorize a variety of specific bits of knowledge including: Numbers of people, objects, events, and other phenomena. Concepts are hooks on which we can hang new information (Martorella & Beal, 2002). Multiple concepts can be clustered together and organized into broader instructional themes, but singular concepts are easier to teach because of the specificity necessary for building a child's schema. Conceptual frameworks allow teachers to reduce the number of topics covered and integrate thinking so that students can create patterns and connections between related ideas. Students are encouraged to apply their thinking to conceptual and transferable understandings (Erickson, 2002).

The National Council for the Social Studies (1994) recommends 10 conceptual themes in the social studies standards to organize essential understandings for grades K-12: 1) culture; 2) time, continuity, and change; 3) people, places, and environments; 4) individual development and identity; 5) groups and institutions; 6) power and authority, and governance; 7) production, distribution, and consumption; 8) science, technology, and society; 9) global connections; and 10) civic ideas and practices (Erickson, 2002). These concepts are not distinct from social practice but are grounded in students' experiences. According to Zhao and Hoge (2005), students have the greatest difficulty with abstract concepts related to time or place because teachers do not provide enough life-related activities for students to relate those concepts to their own experiences.

Teaching conceptually is teaching with global encompassing themes which group standards together into meaningful units of study. Teachers should think of the standards as providing scaffolding to link multiple concepts, skills or topics (Brighton, 2002). According to Christensen and colleagues (2001), teachers appear to be moving from the notion that social studies is

a group of skills or isolated facts to be taught by transmission to the view that social studies should be a conceptual framework for all teaching and learning. Social studies can be an integral part of the entire curriculum when serving as a method for planning integrated concept instruction. Instead of social studies focusing on content and teacher transmission of ideas, it is becoming more of a student-centered focus where life skills are being incorporated into the teaching of all subjects. This type of constructivist teaching weaves different curricular goals and materials together and enables students to construct new knowledge for themselves.

Purpose of the Study

Bodies of research exist which document teachers' lack of time spent teaching social studies (Kaplan, 2002; McCall, 2004; Hinde, 2005) with some studies claiming that social studies is not being taught at all in primary classrooms (Goodlad, 1983). However, social studies may still be taught, just not in the traditional time block during the elementary school day. Social studies may be taught as individual concepts integrated throughout the curriculum. This study addressed what remains to be explored in current trends for teaching social studies curricular standards. Findings from this study can be related to practicum experiences in teacher preparation programs at the university level and may also benefit the novice teacher trying to juggle multiple subjects and curriculum requirements. This research may also be beneficial for those who teach social studies methods courses in relating the subject matter to practice and toward subject integration so that the discipline is not marginalized in the elementary classroom.

Therefore, the purpose of this two-phase, sequential mixed methods study was to obtain statistical, quantitative results from a sample of teachers and then follow up with a sample of participants to probe or explore those results in more depth. In the first phase, a quantitative research question compared how often 100 first through fifth grade teachers in a southwestern school

district taught individual social studies concepts. In the second phase, qualitative interviews were used to probe significant survey results by exploring aspects of their concept teaching with 10 of the total group of participants surveyed in the district to find out how they taught social studies concepts.

The questioning portion of this study asked teachers if they taught specific concepts that would be included under the umbrella of the social studies curriculum. Teachers indicated how often they taught the concepts and whether or not they taught social studies in their elementary classrooms. Those who taught the concepts were questioned more in-depth about how they made the concept teaching process work with other curricular areas. Insights into the juggling of multiple disciplines and teaching strategies to accomplish the central purpose of teaching the concepts were documented through the use of interviews. Thus, the research question that focused this study asked if social studies concepts are being taught in elementary schools, and if so, how are they taught?

A survey design (Creswell, 2003) was utilized to provide a numeric description of what social studies concepts were being taught at the elementary school level of instruction (Grades 1-5). The survey design identified the purpose of the research and indicated why the survey was the preferred type of data collection procedure for the study. The survey was cross-sectional with the data collected at one point in time in the form of self-administered questionnaires. The instrument designed for this research included the use of a Likert scale for teachers to indicate how often they taught various social studies concepts. The scale ranged from *Never Taught* to *Taught Often*. Each survey instrument included a cover letter, demographic and behavioral items and closing instructions (See Appendix A). The concepts included on the survey were taken from the Oklahoma Priority Academic Student skills document (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2005), The California Concept Collection (California Council for the Social Studies, 1988), and the NCSS Standards (NCSS, 1994).

A pilot study of the survey was conducted with teachers in grades one to five in two elementary schools to review the face validity and effectiveness of the survey as a data collection instrument prior to its use in the formal study. Each school principal was given a survey and demographic data sheet for five teachers. Based on this pilot study the researchers concluded that the survey instrument was appropriate for this study.

The initial distribution of the surveys provided the researchers with 115 completed forms. From the surveys returned a convenient sample of ten teachers was chosen representing grades one through five. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes in length and asked the interviewees to respond to the following four questions (Complete list of questions and sub questions are found in Appendix B).

1. What social studies concepts do you teach in your classroom?
2. How do you teach social studies concepts in your elementary classroom?
3. What is the role of integrative teaching with social studies and other disciplines in your classroom?
4. May I see some samples of social studies lessons you've taught and make a photo copy of any of your social studies lessons for further review?

Transcribed interview data were coded and themed in order to determine consistencies and differences regarding the teaching of social studies. From this process of coding and recoding the data three categories emerged: Concepts taught in social studies, planning in teaching social studies, and the role of integration in teaching.

Results of the Study

Concepts taught in Social Studies

There were 46 concepts that were mentioned during the teacher interviews with the following four being the most prevalent: Citizenship, communities, map skills/geography, and responsibility. Many of the concepts listed also took into account the Great Expectations program (Great Expectations, 2008), which is a school-wide program that aims to teach students basic life principles or core essentials. The key concepts presented as part of this program were: respect, responsibility, perseverance, courage, loyalty, citizenship, patience, cooperation, and integrity. In addition, some of the other concepts that were cited on multiple surveys were: war, government, culture, economics, the environment, inventors/biographies, natural resources, and the five themes of geography. In relation to the quantitative reporting, these concepts were listed under the “Sometimes Taught” category with a Likert scale recording of 2.0 to 2.9 (Appendix C).

Of the 47 concepts, nine appear to be universal in that there was almost an emphatic response to repeated re-teaching of these concepts. They include: attitudes, citizenship, community, cooperation, honesty, respect, responsibility, rules and values. There were also nine concepts that were consistently ranked as less important to teachers because they were marked more often as a 1 (never taught) by the participants. They were: Colonization, economy, nationalism, persuasion, population, power, religion, revolution and trade. However, it is important to note that no concept mean was totaled at 1.0 (never taught), meaning that all 47 concepts were being taught to some degree or extent in the school district (See appendix C).

Many concepts received more importance and exposure due to grade level appropriateness. For instance, the majority of third grade teachers often taught communities, while the majority of fifth grade teachers taught exploration and patriotism. That difference could be attributed to the curriculum guidelines in the

Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) or the grade level scope and sequence of adopted textbooks.

It is significant to note that those concepts not rating a mean score of 2.0 or higher on the Likert Scale for first and second grades include: colonization, economy, exploration, frontier, nationalism, persuasion, population, power, region, religion, revolution, and trade. These concepts are least taught because they are not designated PASS objectives for those grade levels. It is also important to note that concepts not rating a mean score of 2.0 or higher on the Likert Scale for third and fourth grades include: colonization, economy, nationalism, persuasion, power, religion, and revolution. There was only one concept ranking a 3.0 as often taught in third and fourth grades. This concept was responsibility. A notable change from concepts often taught in first and second grades to third and fourth grades is that less emphasis placed on the concepts of citizenship, cooperation, respect and rules. This change might be attributed to students' increased level of experience with the school socialization process, learning the rules and norms of the institution, and practice participating in community settings.

It is also important to note that only two concepts scored a mean of less than 2.0 on the Likert Scale for the fifth grade: Religion with a mean score of 1.6, and revolution with a mean score of 1.9. All other concepts ranked as sometimes or often taught. Furthermore, the concept of community which was taught in first and second grade then dropped in third and fourth grade appears again in the fifth grade. Far more concepts were taught in fifth grade than any other grade level. This may be due in part to the state PASS document which is much more specific at the fifth grade level.

Planning in Teaching Social Studies

The second theme that emerged out of this research involves planning for social studies lessons and the emphasis that is placed on particular concepts. Two of the ten teachers who were

interviewed organize their concepts into year-long themes. Three teachers used an alignment guide provided by the school district as a scope and sequence of which grade level PASS objectives were to be incorporated into their teaching. Two other teachers indicated shared that there was no pacing calendar available to plan for their lower primary grade level instruction in regards to a year-long social studies program. Four of the teachers interviewed polled their classrooms for student interests and tried to incorporate those interests into their lessons and concepts taught when planning for the year. Several other teachers argued that there was no time to teach to student interests when testing loomed each spring. However, they were willing to allow student choice in selecting learning activities from their predetermined concepts and planned themes. Two of the teachers also used a graphic organizer technique when planning. They wrote the concepts that students needed to learn into webs in order to cluster concepts around themes and plan for their scope and sequence for the school year. All the teachers work collaboratively with their grade level teams during shared planning sessions to incorporate all concepts into a long range vision for the year. From their webs, they began teaching concept clusters in order to build knowledge into larger themes in an effort to produce a more holistic learning experience. This was evident in the review of their lesson plans that took place during and after the interviews were completed.

Three of the teachers interviewed stated that they taught to the state mandated criterion referenced tests in the spring when teaching social studies. When teaching to the test the teachers simply took those concepts/objectives that were to be tested in fifth grade and spent a great amount of time presenting the information in a multiple-choice assessment during instruction in order to prepare the students for the school Academic Year Performance Test (AYP). Seven of the ten teachers interviewed stated that they determined how much emphasis to place on specific concepts only

after consulting the Oklahoma State Department of Education website.

All ten of the participants interviewed stated that they taught social studies in their classrooms during a pre-determined time block. For (remove –the) eight of the ten this included a week-long study on a particular concept that would last for five days, for approximately 45 minutes per day. Social studies instruction was placed on a weeklong alternating cycle with science. This allowed the teachers to teach both science and social studies and document at least 2-3 required student grades for those subjects in a nine week grade reporting cycle.

Teaching Social Studies and the Role of Integration

The teachers interviewed maintained that they taught social studies in interactive formats in order to include hands-on learning experiences for bodily-kinesthetic learners. A review of the lesson plan indicated a variety of activities such as: constructing globes; creating topographic maps; using cooking ingredients; playing games; singing and dancing or incorporating other movement; role play; painting; engaging in classroom debates; researching information in the library; drawing and labeling diagrams; dioramas; participating in service projects within the community; participating in student council events; as well as other activities. These classroom learning projects were incorporated into classroom thematic units, which were then taught throughout the year. Single thematic units included a variety of lesson plans addressing several social studies concepts that were taught over a one to three week time period. Thematic instruction was also based on grade-level PASS themes, such as communities in the third grade, and family and community information in earlier grade levels.

The teachers in this study argued the value of integration in saving time for more in-depth study of specific social studies concepts. They argued that instead of allotting only 30 minutes to

that topic during social studies, it can be integrated into the time slot of the day allotted for mathematics or other subjects and be given more emphasis. They reported that students have more time to explore the concept, ask questions, and spend time in further independent study. By integrating social studies with other content areas the teachers' explained that they were able to expand the teaching of social studies beyond the designated time block.

Of the teachers that were interviewed, four integrated social studies with art. This included: visual interpretations of historic accounts; map making; paper mache models of various landforms and geographic features; painting or drawing in relation to cultural studies; illustrating writing as part of the book making process prior to publishing; photography in terms of photographic essays and displays; and the making of small crafts projects. Several teachers integrated music with social studies and played samples of music and taught traditional dances from other cultures as part of their multicultural units. Another form of integration used by the teachers was incorporating the Great Expectations program for teaching character traits and core essential values with their social studies instruction. Social studies concepts that were a part of this program and integrated in other units were: respect; responsibility; perseverance; loyalty; citizenship; values; courage; and cooperation.

Mathematics provided another vehicle for integrating social studies concepts. Creating graphic organizers to display data such as bar graphs, timelines of biographical data, calculating distance using scale on a map, and computing economic data regarding the production and distribution of goods and services were all integrated into mathematics instruction. Primary grade teachers incorporated number recognition with the three branches of government, the first ten amendments to the constitution, learning the number of senators and representatives in congress, or the number of stars and stripes on the American flag in relation to the significance of those specific numbers.

Conclusion

This study questioned the belief that little or no social studies is being taught in regular elementary education classrooms. That belief seems to be based on time studies and a body of research that looked at curriculum and teacher interviews and concluded that the social studies teaching is being reduced or eliminated in elementary classrooms. The survey and interview data results from this study questioned this belief by showing that teachers not only teach social studies concepts within their curriculum, but that they continue to do so in varied time blocks as well as using integrated curriculum units. In this study it was found that social studies was taught in elementary classrooms on an alternative weekly schedule for approximately 45 minutes per day during that week. Of those social studies concepts that were taught, most were integrated within other disciplines, with reading being the main area of integration. As indicated, it was the standards or key concepts in the social studies curriculum that were being taught through curriculum integration with social studies and reading, language arts, mathematics, and the fine arts.

Previous research by Van Fossen (2005) indicated that time blocks allocated to teaching social studies were more evident in grades 4-5, while content integration was used more often in grades K-3. In a study by Rock, et al. (2006) in North Carolina, 74.1% of the teachers surveyed taught a combination of integration and stand-alone subject matter (p. 474). In our study both time allocated to teaching social studies and content integration were used at all levels (grades 1-5). In addition, studies have indicated that the higher the grade level, the more time is spent on social studies instruction per day (Rock, et al., 2006; Van Fossen, 2005; Vogler, et al., 2007). Once again, we found little variation in the time allocated to teaching social studies based on grade levels.

Is social studies taught different than it was 20 years ago? It is still marginalized in comparison to the curriculum giants: reading and mathematics? Social studies as a curriculum has been

de-emphasized as a direct result of No Child Left Behind's emphasis on the reading and mathematics curriculum, and from administrative insistence on teaching those areas that are reported to the public as the school's Academic Performance Index score. However, what is important to note, is that in our study teachers are still finding ways to teach social studies concepts even though the time allocated to social studies instruction has been decreased. In this study, the traditional time blocks spent teaching social studies remained intact although the amount of time may have been reduced in the past ten years. Along with this, integration has become a key to including social studies concepts within the core curriculum framework.

Through our discussions with the teachers in our study we were able to discern that they were committed to teaching social studies, even though their time was somewhat limited and there was pressure from administrators to focus on the areas of reading and mathematics. We are not sure why these teachers were so committed to teaching social studies in their classrooms, but we think this is an important topic to research in the future. Was it their educational training, or did they have some notion of the value of social studies in the elementary curriculum? Van Fossen (2005) explored this issue to some degree, in trying to assess elementary teachers' rationales for teaching social studies in the state of Indiana. In that study a wide variety of beliefs were held by teachers regarding their rationale for teaching social studies. As social studies educators we need to insure that these beliefs are based on a solid foundation related to learning theory, curriculum design, the core concepts of the subject areas, and the standards developed by NCSS. This is critical to insure that social studies is given its rightful place in the elementary curriculum.

As researchers we also realize that there were limitations in this study that should be considered while reviewing the conclusions. One factor to consider is that the location and district chosen for participation in this study was a rural Southwest school

district serving approximately 16,000 students. We realize that this district may not be representative of urban, suburban, and rural school systems across the United States. Another limitation was that only 115 surveys were returned to the researchers. Of the surveys returned, 10 of those teachers were interviewed for the second phase of data collection. With such a small sample it is difficult to generalize our results beyond this one school district. We also realize an additional limitation of the study is the teachers' understanding of the individual concepts on the survey portion of the research. One teacher might have perceived the concept of revolution differently than another, and therefore marked it in another category on the Likert Scale due to that difference in understanding or perception. It would not be possible to expect each participant to view the concepts universally when their experiences are so different.

Yet, in the end, we feel that we have gained a greater understanding of what is going on related to teaching social studies in the elementary schools. We are not disputing that teachers need time to teach the social studies curriculum. Furthermore, we believe that the teaching of social studies is as important as or more important than teaching reading and mathematics. What we have found is that teachers in our study are not abandoning social studies but are finding ways to still teach the curriculum. Whether it is trying to hold on to some designated time blocks during the week for teaching social studies or integrating it with other areas of instruction or a combination of thereof, it seemed that these teachers sense it is important to expose children to the concepts, content, and skills related to the social studies curriculum. For that we are grateful for our colleagues who participated in this study and teach in the elementary schools.

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APPENDIX A

Survey of Concept Teaching

Directions: Please read the list of teaching concepts in the left column. Circle the number corresponding with how often you teach or have taught that concept in your classroom during a full academic school year. Also answer the eight demographic data items. Please return this completed survey and your consent form to Jennifer Holloway in the self-addressed envelope provided by your building administrator.

Demographic Data

1. Gender: **MALE / FEMALE** (Circle one)
2. School where you currently teach: _____
3. Grade level taught: _____
4. Years of teaching experience: _____ years
5. Specialty areas/background area of interest: (Circle all that apply)
Music Art Physical Education Science Math
Lang. Arts/Writing Reading Social Studies
General Other: _____
6. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher? **YES / NO** (Circle one)
7. Telephone number and email address where you can be contacted to arrange an interview:
Name: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

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Concept	Never Taught	Sometimes Taught	Often Taught
Attitudes	1	2	3
Change	1	2	3
Citizenship	1	2	3
Climate	1	2	3
Colonization	1	2	3
Community	1	2	3
Conflict	1	2	3
Constitution	1	2	3
Cooperation	1	2	3
Culture	1	2	3
Custom	1	2	3
Decision making	1	2	3
Democracy	1	2	3
Difference	1	2	3
Economy	1	2	3
Exploration	1	2	3
Family	1	2	3
Freedom	1	2	3
Frontier	1	2	3
Hero	1	2	3
Honesty	1	2	3
Independence	1	2	3
Justice	1	2	3
Laws	1	2	3
Leadership	1	2	3
Nationalism	1	2	3
Natural Environment	1	2	3
Needs	1	2	3
Patriotism	1	2	3
Persuasion	1	2	3
Population	1	2	3
Power	1	2	3
Race	1	2	3
Region	1	2	3
Religion	1	2	3
Resources	1	2	3
Respect	1	2	3
Responsibility	1	2	3
Revolution	1	2	3
Rights	1	2	3
Rules	1	2	3
Service	1	2	3
Socialization	1	2	3
State	1	2	3
Technology	1	2	3
Trade	1	2	3
Values	1	2	3

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

- What social studies concepts do you teach in your classroom?
Sub-Questions: What source do you primarily use for social studies concept content? What role does Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills have in your lesson planning? How do you determine which concepts receive more emphasis than others? What portion of your content comes from a survey of students' interests?
- How do you teach social studies concepts in your elementary classroom?
Sub-Questions: Do you use differentiated instruction with diverse learners and learning styles? What percentage of your lessons would you say come from projects/thematic units? What portion of your day do you devote to social studies?
- What is the role of integrative teaching with social studies and other disciplines in your classroom?
Sub-Questions: Are there subjects that lend themselves to integration with social studies? Do you do any team teaching with your peers in regards to thematic planning and instruction? What skills are you able to teach with social studies content?
- May I see some samples of social studies lessons you've taught and make a photo copy of any of your social studies lessons for further review?
Sub-Questions: How often do you plan for social studies content to be included in your lesson plans? Does your school administration expect to see social studies documented in your plans? What source do you rely on most for social studies lesson ideas/components/and activities?

APPENDIX C

Concepts Most Often Taught

Concepts Most Often Taught	ONE THROUGH FIVE Likert Scale Rating
Respect	2.93
Responsibility	2.95
Attitudes	2.6
Change	2.3
Citizenship	2.7
Climate	2.2
Community	2.6
Conflict	2.5
Constitution	2.3
Cooperation	2.8
Culture	2.4
Customs	2.4
Decision Making	2.5
Democracy	2.4
Difference	2.5
Exploration	2.1
Family	2.5
Freedom	2.5
Frontier	2.0
Hero	2.0
Honesty	2.8
Independence	2.5
Justice	2.3
Laws	2.3
Leadership	2.5
Natural Environment	2.4
Needs	2.3
Patriotism	2.6
Race	2.2
Region	2.2
Socialization	2.1
Rules	2.8
Service	2.3

Concepts Least Often Taught

Concepts Least Often Taught	ONE THROUGH FIVE Likert Scale Rating
Colonization	1.9
Economy	1.9
Nationalism	1.9
Persuasion	1.9
Population	1.9
Power	1.7
Religion	1.6
Revolution	1.7
Trade	1.9

About the Authors

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The subjects studied in elementary school are: a native language, mathematics, nature study, shop lessons, music and physical training. The entire complex of tasks is resolved in the full range of the curriculum according to the age-determined abilities of the pupils. The course of language study includes grammar, reading, spelling, speech development, penmanship and the fundamentals of composition. Reading classes teach the child to read aloud, both expressively and quickly, and instill a love for books. The grammar lessons provide the fundamentals of grammatical structure. Much emphasis is placed on the prospect of not teaching social studies in elementary school would be foolish for two reasons. First of all it has worked for a very long time in America. And secondly eliminating social studies would put American students behind their international counterparts. As a nation we would be weaker if our elementary school students were not taught social studies. Taking social studies out of elementary school could eventually result in the eventual collapse of our current government and the establishment of a tyrannical government in its place. There is an old saying: Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it which essentially means if we don't study our past mistakes we will repeat them in the future. Social studies teachers, who are responsible for training students who are conscious/sentient about and sensitive to daily events, with broad point of view, have to bring current events into classroom by utilizing different resources for varying periods and by applying various methods and techniques. It is crucial to determine the contexts in which social studies teachers bring current events into the classroom, the resources and techniques they use, and the problems they encounter, also their recommendations on account of highlighting the implications in social studies courses. Teaching social studies in the elementary school the basics for citizenship. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Michaelis, J. U., & Garcia, J. (1996).