
Preface



Social Studies for the Preschool/Primary Child was designed as a text for early childhood pre-service teachers and a resource for in-service teachers, and it has been a standard text in the field through many editions. We are pleased to continue the authorship of the text with the ninth edition and continue to make Carol Seefeldt's fine work available and up-to-date. This edition retains the continuity while addressing contemporary changes in early childhood education and the social studies.

CHILD GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

The ninth edition continues to be based on knowledge of children. Although the world has changed, children have not. Today's children grow, develop, and learn in much the same ways as they always have. This edition of *Social Studies for the Preschool/Primary Child* is based on a solid theoretical and research foundation of child growth, development, and learning. Each chapter incorporates current research and theory on child growth, development, and learning into all areas of the social studies.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Newly revised National Council for Social Studies (2010) themes
- New Focus Questions at the beginning of each chapter

- New Children’s Literature Boxes, many of which list NCSS Notable Books
- New ideas for using current technologies in today’s classrooms, including examples from real classrooms
- New questions for group discussion (online or in person) at the end of each chapter
- Additional developmental theories that explain how children are socialized
- Updated research and references
- Expanded planning and assessment chapter with rubrics and other examples
- More suggestions for expanding and extending teacher candidate knowledge, skills, and attitudes

LEARNING THROUGH ACTIVITY

Play is children’s work. This text assumes that all young children will be educated in enriching, stimulating educational environments that foster and promote play as well as mental, physical, and social activities that are known to lead to learning. Research clearly documents that humans learn best when they are active—when they can play with things, objects, others, and ideas. Because play is so critical to learning, it serves as the integrator of the social studies curriculum and is viewed as the basic mode for children’s learning. Play and activity are featured in each chapter; however, a separate chapter on resources for children’s learning gives teachers ideas for arranging the environment to enable children to learn through their activities.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

The wholeness of the child is honored in this text through the advocacy of an integrated social studies curriculum. The wholeness of learning—the intimate relationship between children’s cognitive growth and their social, physical, and emotional growth—is recognized and respected.

Social studies are approached as an integrated experience, one that involves the school, parents, and community. The social studies are also presented as a continual experience, one that builds as children move from a child-care setting or a preschool to kindergarten and the primary grades.

Even though the text presents separate chapters for teaching social studies content, it is based on the theory that learning is a continuous, integrated activity. Thus, teaching social studies involves all curriculum content areas. Integrated throughout this edition of *Social Studies for the Preschool/Primary Child* are suggestions for incorporating content and activities from the visual arts, music, movement, science, health, mathematics, and language arts.

CULTURE, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

This edition features culture, diversity, and inclusion. A separate chapter on culture and diversity offers pre-service and in-service teachers a solid foundation of curriculum methods and practices based on the latest theory on and research into teaching young children to value themselves, each other, and the world we share. The chapters also include ideas and practices designed to celebrate culture and diversity and provide full inclusion into the social studies curriculum for all children, regardless of special needs or individual differences.

CHANGES IN THE FIELD

While children and children's development have not changed since the first edition of *Social Studies for the Preschool/Primary Child* in 1977, the world has changed—dramatically so. The world has become smaller and our communities more diverse. The world sometimes feels less safe and the economy less secure. The expansion of technology has affected worldwide changes.

Technology brings us closer to information and knowledge as well as each other. Children today have more knowledge of and experience with technology than ever before and at younger ages. Thus, this edition offers teachers ideas for using current technologies in today's classrooms, from using digital cameras to obtaining resources from the Internet.

Changes in the field of early childhood education itself form another underpinning for this text. As the field of early childhood education enters the future, it does so with a sense of professionalism and established standards. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has set standards for quality in programs serving children from birth through age 8, standards for appropriate curricula, and standards for the professional preparation of early childhood teachers. The assumption that all children will be taught by professional, highly intelligent, and qualified early childhood teachers continues in this edition. Teachers are needed who take their cues from children, who understand children and their development, and who know how to follow their lead. This text offers a multitude of practical ideas, suggestions, and guides for teaching social studies; but the most important component of any social studies program is a reflective, thoughtful, highly educated teacher who will plan, implement, and assess the social studies concepts, skills, attitudes, and learning experiences found herein.

STANDARDS

Recognizing the need to prepare children to become effective, fully functioning citizens in a rapidly changing world, authorities have called for reforms in social studies education. National standards and position papers in history, geography,

economics, and civics education suggest the directions for the social studies curriculum. This ninth edition addresses all 10 of the newly revised National Council for Social Studies (2010) themes.

These standards lead to the conclusion that social studies has been a long-neglected topic in schools for young children. *Social Studies for the Preschool/Primary Child* can remedy this neglect. Structured around the concepts considered key to the social science disciplines—the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values believed essential for citizens of a democratic society—this text presents a multitude of ideas for introducing children to social studies content and experiences. These suggestions will give young children an opportunity to build a foundation of knowledge in history, geography, economics, civics, and other social science disciplines as well as skills and attitudes that will enable them to become fully functioning members of a democratic society in the future.

SPECIAL FEATURES

In this teacher-friendly and student-friendly text, each chapter does the following:

- Begins with focus questions that serve as advanced organizers and objectives
- Concludes with a summary that organizes the information presented
- Includes questions for group discussion at the end of each chapter
- Offers suggestions for expanding and extending teacher candidate knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- Provides resources for teachers
- Integrates children’s literature into each chapter; some chapters include a Children’s Literature Box as well
- Provides examples and ideas for inclusion and valuing culture and diversity
- Is replete with examples and ideas of how to translate social studies theory and research into practice
- Integrates ideas for using technology

STRUCTURE OF THE NINTH EDITION

Social Studies for the Preschool/Primary Child is organized into three parts. The first part introduces the social studies with chapters on defining the social studies, planning and assessment, and resources for learning (Chapters 1 through 3).

The second part focuses on child development by providing information about thinking and concept formation; social skills; and culture, diversity, and values. Chapters 4 through 6 discuss development of these processes and how teachers foster them through experiences with the social studies.

The third part is devoted to content from the social studies disciplines of history, geography, economics, and civics (Chapters 7 through 10), plus a chapter on global connections (Chapter 11). Current standards and position papers from these fields are reflected throughout these chapters.

INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCES

The following online supplements are available to instructors and can be downloaded at www.pearsonhighered.com:

- Online Instructor's Manual. This manual provides a variety of resources that support the text.
- Online Test Bank. The Test Bank features evaluation items, such as multiple choice, true–false, and short answer questions.
- Online PowerPoint® Slides. PowerPoint® presentations accompany each chapter of the text. These slides can be customized by adding comments.

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CHAPTER 1



These Are the Social Studies

Focus Questions

After you read this chapter, you should be prepared to respond to the following questions:

- What is the definition of the social studies? Why is it important to teach social studies?
- How were the social studies taught in the past?
- What theories and models have most influenced social studies today?
- What characterizes social studies today?

THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

After the Fourth of July fireworks and parades, Carol Seefeldt's grandfather would take a key from his pocket and open a metal box containing his important papers. From the box he would take a small package wrapped in a soft chamois cloth. Carefully he would unwrap the package. They knew what was inside—a small leather folder holding his citizenship paper. Opening the folder, he would unfold the paper declaring him a citizen of the United States. Then he would tell the story of how he

came to America, his trip across the ocean, and the sorrow he experienced when he said goodbye to parents, brother, and sisters, knowing he would never see them again. He would finish the story by saying, “You do not have to leave your home to be a citizen of the United States. All you need to do is go to school, and there you will learn how to be a citizen of this wonderful country.”

Her grandfather was right. By participating in the small democracies of their classrooms, young children gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to become good citizens. Although all of children’s early educational experiences are designed to prepare children for the role of citizen in a democratic society, the integrated study of the social sciences—the social studies—is uniquely suited to do so. Through the social studies, children have the opportunity to learn that they are deeply respected as individuals and at the same time learn to give up some of their individuality for the good of the group.

As defined by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), social studies are

the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. . . . social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, law, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics and natural sciences. (NCSS, 2010, p. 3)

The two main purposes of the social studies—to prepare children to assume “the office of citizen” and to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes within and across disciplines—distinguish the social studies from other subjects.

It seems overwhelming. The field of social studies is enormous, and children are so young. Preschool and primary children are too new to this earth to be expected to learn all about economics, history, and geography, much less the attitudes and skills necessary to participate in a democratic society. Yet it is because children are so young that the subject of social studies is critical during early childhood. In these early years, the foundation for later and increasingly mature understanding is constructed (National Research Council [NRC], 2000, 2001).

Realizing that children have a long time in which to grow and learn makes teaching social studies in the preschool–primary classroom less overwhelming. During their early years, children need to develop anticipatory, intuitive ideas and interests and gain basic knowledge that will serve as a foundation for the elaboration of more complex understandings, attitudes, and skills (NCSS, 1994; NRC, 2001).

Then, too, social studies learning takes place naturally as children participate in preschool or primary classrooms, which are themselves small democratic societies. Within these classrooms, the rights of the individual are constantly balanced with those of the group; children naturally learn and use the knowledge, skills, processes, dispositions, and attitudes that will serve as a foundation for later social studies learning (Mitchell, 2000; Pohan, 2003).

Looking to the past helps today’s educators understand how social studies and young children can be brought together in meaningful, appropriate ways. Over the years, many approaches to social studies education for young children have been developed and implemented and have brought us to where we are today.

Social studies takes place naturally in good schools for young children.



As you read about historic approaches to the social studies curriculum, think about how each of these approaches continues to influence today's social studies. You might recall your own experiences with social studies education or observe how social studies is being taught in today's schools.

PAST APPROACHES TO THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Progressive Education and the Here-and-Now Curriculum

Before the 1930s, the social studies were concerned with an unchanging body of facts—facts to be memorized. Appalled by this dry memorization of things children knew nothing about and had no experience with, Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1934) developed a practical and detailed account of the ways in which teachers could enlarge and enrich children's understanding of the world around them and their place in it. Mitchell was encouraged and influenced by the child development theory and progressive education movement of John Dewey (1900a, 1902, 1944), who described the importance of an education that is child centered, active and hands-on, choice based, resource rich, and directed toward “doing” social studies rather than memorizing social studies facts. Based on Dewey's philosophy, Mitchell created a curriculum that was a direct attack on the elementary school's concentration on facts totally unrelated to children's lives.

Mitchell's basic educational concept was that children need to experience things for themselves. She believed that the social studies curriculum should be based on children's experiences and their discovery of the things and culture of the world around them—on the “here and now.”

Mitchell believed it was dangerous to teach anything to children before they had an opportunity to experience it. The teacher should not pour in information

Children's world expands to the study of the community.



but should provide experiences that would enable the child to absorb information through firsthand manipulation and encounter.

In some ways, the dominant organizational pattern for sequencing social studies topics has been based on Mitchell's work (Wade, 2003). For example, the typical social studies curriculum began with the child in the neighborhood and then expanded as the child was introduced to societies farther away in time and space. This is known as the spiral curriculum or the expanding horizons/expanding communities curriculum.

Grade	Emphasis
K	Home and neighborhood
1	Community and community helpers
2	United States
3	People in other lands

Unfortunately, many misinterpreted Mitchell's theories and ideas. Although convinced that social studies for young children should be solidly based on the here and now of children's lives, teachers ignored the complexities of children's here-and-now world. Instead of focusing on the relationships of things in the environment or the web of interdependency within it, social studies instruction revolved around the trite. Kindergarten children learned that they live in a family, first-graders that firefighters help them, and third-graders that they live in a neighborhood. In the end, Mitchell's strong concern for relationship thinking and intellectual development was ignored (Wade, 2003).

Mitchell (1934), however, saw the children's world—"whatever and where ever it may be"—as complex and full of opportunities to enhance their knowledge and foster thinking (p. 16). At first glance, her suggestion that geography learning begins with children's explorations of their immediate environment seems preposterous because the environment is too complex. "Modern children are born into an appallingly complicated world. The complications of their surrounding culture, however, instead of making this attack impossible, make it imperative" (p. 8). By enlarging and enriching children's understanding of their immediate environment,

their world, and their place in it, Mitchell aimed to develop children's intellectual capabilities in terms of "relationship thinking, generalization from experience and the re-creation of concrete experience through symbolic, dramatic play" (p. 11).

Mitchell's insights into the intellectual processes of young children—in terms of relationship thinking, generalizing from experience, and re-creating concrete experience through symbolic or dramatic play—are consistent with the theories of Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) and Vygotsky (1986). Further, the philosophy articulated in *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) is congruent with Mitchell's ideas. Subsequent research and theory (NRC, 2000, 2001; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky, 1986) support the principles she first advocated:

- The younger the child, the greater the need for firsthand sensory experiences.
- One experience, fact, or idea needs to be connected in some way to another; two facts and a relation joining them are and should be an invitation to generalize, extrapolate, and make a tentative intuitive leap—even to build a theory.
- What children learn must be useful to them in some way and related to daily life.
- Play and active learning are necessary.

Certainly, nothing can be more potent for fostering intellectual development than real experiences, and the here and now of children's lives can provide a foundation for social studies experiences—that is, if the total of children's here-and-now lives is considered.

Today, children's here-and-now world has expanded; it is increasingly diverse, multicultural and global. "Will my school get bombed?" asked 5-year-old Kala after the bombing of Baghdad. This does not mean that 5-year-olds should study maps to locate Iraq, but it does mean that the spiral/expanding horizons curriculum may be overly simplistic in our global, technological society. Today's teachers should recognize the complexities and totality of children's here-and-now environment. Building on children's interests and fostering their understandings of both their immediate world and what is far away in space and time are part of teaching social studies to young children.

Social-Living Curriculum

As Mitchell (1934) was formulating her theories, Patty Smith Hill (1923), in an attempt to apply the principles of democracy to school organization, initiated a curriculum with the goal of habit and social skill development: Training children in the skills and habits necessary to function in a democratic society would prepare them to participate in a democracy. Her book, *A Conduct Curriculum for the Kindergarten and First Grade*, specified all the social skills and habits that children should learn, stated in measurable form. It focused primarily on the realm of moral and social conduct.

Hill's social-living curriculum grew from child development and psychoanalytic theories coupled with the growing concern in the 1930s about education for citizenship. The social-living approach maintained that young children are developmentally ready to learn skills required for them to live with a group. Having learned in infancy and early childhood who they are and how they fit into their family unit,

children were then ready to develop the social skills necessary for nursery school and kindergarten.

Psychoanalytic theory, with its strong emphasis on the psychosocial segment of life, lent support to the social-living curriculum. The concepts that children should learn to express feelings and to find emotional and social support in the school situation were readily translated into the social-living curriculum.

Curricula in many nursery schools established in the 1930s and 1940s were based on the social-living curriculum. Some of these schools were established by faculty wives at universities to provide socializing experiences for their young children; others were established for children of immigrants or poverty-stricken families. They shared the goal of supporting and fostering the social and emotional growth of young children by leading children to do the following:

- Learn to share materials and ideas
- Develop healthy relationships with others
- Become self-reliant
- Feel responsibility for their own behavior
- Develop interest and attention span
- Cooperate with others in a friendly, willing spirit
- Appreciate the worth and contribution of others
- Develop self-concept and self-respect

Implementation of these goals led to social studies programs that included large blocks of time for free play, interaction with others, discussions of feelings, emphasis on sharing, and cooperating behaviors and rule learning. Rather than becoming a strong, interdisciplinary, interrelated curriculum based on an individual's relationship with others and the environment or focusing on complex social studies concepts such as interaction, cooperation, and interdependency, the social studies curriculum called social living became a curriculum of benign neglect. Children were given a rich environment of toys and materials and left alone to learn to live with themselves and others. Even worse, in some programs elaborate plans and procedures were developed and implemented to teach children how to share, hang up their coats, take care of materials, blow their noses, tie shoes, and cooperate, with little concern for their intellectual development.

Through the 1930s, the social studies curriculum continued to revolve around the promotion of social skills (Freeman & Hatch, 1989). Only recently has the social skills curriculum been pushed to the background. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 and increasing pressure for academic accountability, the social-living approach to the curriculum has all but disappeared. Increasingly, the focus is on literacy and mathematics skills to the exclusion of social skills.

Perhaps the real failure of the social-living approach in social studies was proponents' inability to view the child holistically. Many teachers failed to understand that learning to relate to others, see another's point of view, and understand the complex social rule system are cognitive as well as social tasks. Relating to others requires communication—a facility with language. The abilities to express ideas, share thoughts with others, listen, and speak are cognitive skills. Nevertheless, fostering children's

To express ideas and to work with others are both social and cognitive skills.



language development, enhancing their cognitive growth, and even developing concepts of rules, moral values, and understandings—which should have been an integral part of the curriculum designed to foster social living—were neglected or ignored.

Holiday Curriculum

Another common approach to social studies in early childhood education—a total embarrassment to those teachers who guide children through valuable learning episodes—is the holiday curriculum. Celebrating holidays is an enjoyable diversion from the regular school routine. Unfortunately, in too many cases these celebrations have become the basis for teaching social studies. Year after year, the same celebrations are repeated without much concern for the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values gained from them (Myers & Myers, 2002).

Commercial companies have fostered the holiday approach with unit plans, posters, and entire curriculum packages, all centering on the celebration of holidays. Children follow a pattern to make Pilgrim hats, cut out a pumpkin at Halloween, sing songs, and listen to contrived stories that are more myth and legend than fact. Given this curriculum, children's social studies learning is superficial—an unrealistic perpetuation of myths that are untrue at best, and stereotyping groups of people at its worst.

This does not mean, however, that there is no place for the recognition of holidays in the social studies curriculum. Celebration of holidays can promote identification with family, community, and nation (Vygotsky, 1986). Further, acquaintance with the holiday customs of many lands, when appropriately introduced, fosters an appreciation of other cultures and global connections. The use of stories, videos, role-playing, music, bulletin boards, and discussions to clarify the meaning of virtues such as honesty, bravery, and kindness can help children develop historical understandings (National Center for History in the Schools, 1994; NCSS, 1998).

Figure 1.1 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of historical approaches to the social studies.

Date	Approach	Concept	Weakness	Strength
1920s–1930s	Social skills	Social skills are necessary for living in a democracy.	Translated into habit training and formation. Ignored the complexities of social learning.	Social skills are required to function in a democracy. The ability to cooperate, share, negotiate, and give up some of oneself to consider the rights of others is necessary.
1934	Here-and-now	Children’s learning is firsthand, based on experiences in their immediate environment.	Misunderstood and translated into meaningless simplistic units of “my family,” “community helpers,” etc.	When complexities of the immediate here-and-now world are considered and used to support thinking, this approach is current and supported by both theory and research.
1930s+	Holiday curriculum	None	Stereotypic and sterile in content, ideas; limits thinking, problem solving.	None

Figure 1.1 Historical foundations of social studies in early childhood education.

Social Forces and Theories Affecting the Curriculum

In the middle of the twentieth century, two major social forces influenced the social studies curriculum: the Soviet Union’s launching of *Sputnik* and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Theories, especially those of Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) and Vygotsky (1978), also influenced the curriculum.

Sputnik’s Challenge

After the launch of *Sputnik*, the first satellite to circle the earth, educators in the United States began reevaluating their theories and practices. In 1959, the famous Woods Hole Conference was held, where scientists and educators met to determine the content of various disciplines and how to present that content to children. After this conference Jerome Bruner (1960) stated that the “curriculum of a subject should be determined by the most fundamental understanding that can be achieved of the underlying principles that give structure to that subject” (p. 31).

This idea—that curriculum content should emphasize the structure of a discipline—caught the imagination of curriculum planners and educators and has guided

curriculum development since that time. Concepts and theories key to a discipline became the core of the curriculum, and inductive thinking became the method of teaching. Many mathematics, science, and social studies curricula were developed based on this notion.

In 1965, Robison and Spodek published *New Directions in the Kindergarten*, a description of a program for 5-year-old kindergarten children that focused on the structure of subject matter and included curriculum content from science, mathematics, language, and social studies. Robison and Spodek concluded that young children could successfully learn concepts that once were believed to be beyond their grasp.

The ideas of the past are reinforced with current knowledge of how children learn (NRC, 2001):

- Children develop ideas and concepts about their world when they are very young.
- The embryonic concepts or pre-concepts children bring to school are the foundation for new and more conventional knowledge of their social world.
- Children's learning is continual. They deal with ideas over long periods of time.
- Children think. They pose questions and gather information in many ways.
- Children use the tools of the social scientist.
- Children transfer their understandings when approaching new situations.

Civil Rights

As this reexamination of curriculum and educational practices was taking place, Americans were becoming aware of the inequality of opportunities for many people in our society. The recognition that large groups of people had been systematically discriminated against for many years led to organized efforts to gain full civil rights and educational opportunity for all citizens, regardless of ethnic background or race. This drive for civil rights was manifest in the Johnson administration's War on Poverty.

The War on Poverty included the Elementary-Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Head Start program. Using the theories of J. McVicker Hunt (1961) and Benjamin Bloom (1963), who believed that intelligence was malleable and could be influenced by early, enriching educational experiences, the government looked to early childhood education as a means of increasing children's intelligence and as an instrument to break the poverty cycle. Preschool programs that were enriching and stimulating and involved the child's total family were thought to increase young children's intelligence as well as change their attitudes and the attitudes of their families toward school. Thus, early childhood education was designed to increase children's motivation to learn and achieve while improving basic cognitive skills; all of this would, in turn, lead to success in later school experiences and in a chosen career.

Of all the programs within the War on Poverty, the Head Start program has had and continues to have the most influence. The program is not only popular with families, educators, and members of the community but has demonstrated long-lasting positive effects (NRC, 2001). Twenty years after participating in a model early-intervention program, children had repeated fewer grades, were less likely to be placed in special education programs or to be involved in delinquency,

and had been more productive when compared with those of comparable backgrounds who had not participated in such a program (Washington & Bailey, 1995).

Because the social studies emphasize the development of self-concept, skills in relating with others, and multicultural understanding as well as knowledge, the discipline proved to be an excellent vehicle for fostering the goals of Head Start. Many social studies experiences—taking field trips, exploring the environment, observing adults at work, talking to classroom visitors—help Head Start children better understand themselves and their place in the world.

Piaget

Linked with renewed concern for providing equality of educational opportunity for all children was an emerging acceptance of the work of Jean Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), a Swiss psychologist who had been exploring children's thought processes since the early 1900s. During the 1960s, his research and theories began receiving attention from psychologists and educators in the United States. Piaget's work may have become well known at this time because his writings were then being translated into English. On the other hand, the interest may have arisen because his theories offered psychologists a different way of looking at children's learning.

According to Piaget, children, like humans of any age, construct their own knowledge through maturation and interaction with the total environment. He

Piaget helped us realize that children construct knowledge through social, physical, and mental activity.



suggested that, as children mature, they pass through four stages of cognitive development: (1) the sensorimotor period, from birth through age 2; (2) the preoperational period, ages 2 through 7 or 8; (3) the concrete operational period, ages 8 to adolescence; and (4) formal thought, after adolescence. To progress through these stages requires mental activity and interaction with the physical environment.

The social studies curriculum was heavily influenced by knowledge of Piaget's stages of intellectual growth. His descriptions of young children's abilities and their conceptions of the world, time, and space offered insights for social studies curriculum planners and teachers. Further, the Piagetian interview—the probing technique used to uncover children's concepts—could be used as a model for evaluating the outcomes of lessons, units, and other teaching sequences.

Vygotsky

The current focus on the social and cultural influences of all aspects of children's development has promoted the ideas of another theorist, Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (Glassman, 2001). A student of literature, philosophy, and aesthetics, Vygotsky was born in the late 1800s into a middle-class Jewish family in Belorussia. He graduated from the University of Moscow in 1917 and entered the field of psychology in the 1920s. During the 1920s and 1930s, his written research was banned by the Soviet Union. Vygotsky died in 1934 before the ban was lifted. His works were translated into English in the 1960s and 1970s and gradually became popular. They are now used to support curriculum development (Glassman, 2001), especially social studies curricula and group work, particularly cooperative learning.

Vygotsky believed the following:

- A person's social and psychological worlds are connected.
- Child–adult interaction is important for cognitive development.
- The capacity to use language to regulate thought and action is distinctly human and the source of conscious mental life.
- Social experience is extremely important for cognitive growth.
- Education leads development.
- Teaching must be geared to the zone of proximal development; that is, it must match what is to be taught to what the child already knows and will be able to accomplish with adult help until it can be accomplished independently.

Vygotsky's ideas are similar in a number of ways to Piaget's: Both believed that learning is the result of firsthand experiences that stem from the child's environment; both regarded play and exploration as a major educative activity; and both believed that social interaction with others, whether peers or adults, is critical for learning to take place.

NCLB

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) passed the U.S. Congress in 2001 in response to concerns over public education. NCLB instituted standards-based reform based on the premise that high standards and measurable goals would

improve student outcomes. Among other provisions, it requires states to develop assessments and test students at specified grade levels. While this may sound logical on the surface, it has resulted in unintended consequences that do not fit the guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice, such as the following:

- Curriculum now centers more on test content and less on thinking (Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Serriere, & Stewart, 2008).
- Teaching involves more “teaching to the test” than teaching to students’ needs or the zone of proximal development.
- The arts and subjects not tested, including social studies in many states, have been marginalized.
- Standardized testing has grown as a method of evaluating not only students, but teachers and schools as well.

Although students do not take the state standardized tests until third grade, these impacts are felt in the primary grades and even, to some extent, in preschools. In this climate, it is up to teachers of young children to use developmentally appropriate practice guidelines to balance the following:

- Content knowledge with the thinking processes and attitudes necessary for civic participation (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Slekar, 2009)
- Covering required test material with student’s background knowledge and zone of proximal development
- Reading and mathematics with social studies, science, and the arts through integration
- Standardized testing with authentic assessment that informs students, teachers, and parents about what students really know and understand

SOCIAL STUDIES TODAY

Today’s social studies are based firmly on the past. The philosophy of John Dewey, the theories of both Piaget and Vygotsky, and the work of Mitchell continue to influence the field.

Social studies in today’s schools, however, are based on more than just the past. Current learning theory and research as well as social and political forces such as NCLB are reflected in today’s social studies curriculum. The implications of theory and research for teaching are many. The National Council for the Social Studies (2010) formulated a position statement that distills the theory and research into a vision for powerful social studies, which includes five principles. Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are:

- Active
- Meaningful
- Integrative
- Challenging
- Value-based

As the purpose of social studies states, learning for civic participation is of utmost importance. Plus, we are teaching and learning in a standards-based climate. Therefore, teaching social studies to young children today needs to incorporate the following:

- Active learning
- Integrated subject areas
- Meaning and relevance
- High interest, engagement, and challenge
- Social and participatory skills
- Attitudes and values
- Standards for knowledge, skills, and attitudes

We will discuss these throughout the text.

Active Learning

“Active lessons require students to process and think about what they are learning (NCSS, 2010, p. 169). It is “hands-on” and “minds-on.”

In order to learn, children from birth through the primary grades and even beyond must be physically, mentally, and socially active. Every type of play and active learning, whether alone or with others—sociodramatic play, play with materials, or physical play—provides children with physical, mental, and social opportunities to learn about themselves and their environment (Colker, 2002). Children learn by doing (see Figure 1.2).

The theories of both Vygotsky (1986) and Piaget and Inhelder (1969) support the premise that children’s play and active learning with concrete objects and materials are necessary for concept formation. Play, according to the theorists, permits children to do the following:

- *Develop more hierarchical and long-term goals.* Play and active learning may be the first contexts in which children are able to delay gratification, to keep on working at something until they achieve their goal.

Today’s social studies is integrated, meaningful, and of high interest. Whatever is introduced to children is

- ❑ *integrated* into and with children’s cultural background, personal knowledge, family, and community and embedded into the total curriculum;
- ❑ filled with *meaning* because it is appropriate for their development, matching their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical maturity; and
- ❑ *of high interest* to children when based on their firsthand experiences, self-choice, and social interaction.

Figure 1.2 Social studies today.

- *Take the perspective of others, which is necessary to learning.* When children play and interact with others, they are forced to consider the ideas of others. If children did not consider each other's ideas, they could not play as if they were mothers, fathers, doctors, beauticians, and so on. This initial ability to coordinate, to think about multiple ideas, will develop into reflective thinking and metacognition (Bodrova & Leong, 2003).
- *Use mental representations.* Children often use objects as substitutions for other objects. For example, a child may use a block to represent scissors as he or she plays barbershop. To be able to use symbolic substitutes for real objects is essential to the development of language and abstract thought.

Because play and active learning are so critical to children's cognitive development, large blocks of time in child care, preschool, and kindergarten settings will be arranged for children's play. Throughout the primary grades, children need opportunities to continue to play with others, to explore and use materials in active ways, to process ideas in concrete, hands-on ways, and to play with board and other games to solidify their learning.

Slekar (2009) cautions that, although social studies should not be boring, it should be more than fun and stories. Well-planned, active social studies learning activities and experiences are most effective when rooted in meaningful content and the significance of ideas (such as democracy).

Integrated

Integrative social studies addresses "the totality of human experience over time and space, connecting with past, linked to the present, and looking ahead to the future (NCSS, 2010, p. 170).

Social studies are not isolated bits of information or knowledge that children memorize but, as Vygotsky (1986) indicated, are deeply rooted in children's cultural background and personal experience. The more situated in context and the more rooted in cultural background and personal knowledge an event is, the more readily it is understood, learned, and remembered (Popkewitz, 1999). Thus, today's social studies are embedded within the context of children's families, schools, neighborhoods, and world (Garcia, 2003).

No one social science discipline can be separated or segregated from another or from the development of skills, attitudes, and values. Just as the social studies are integrated, so is the entire early childhood curriculum. The social studies cannot be separated from any other subject matter of the school. Try to find a key concept or a suggested activity in any of the chapters of this text that does not involve children when they are studying other subjects in school. Most social studies concepts and activities involve children in using language through listening, speaking, reading, or writing; in applying mathematics or science concepts; or in expressing their ideas through art, music, or movement. Many social science concepts overlap those of science and mathematics (Jantz & Seefeldt, 1999a). Helping children to see these connections is an important aspect of social studies teaching.

Meaningful

Meaningful social studies builds networks of “knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that are structured around enduring understandings, essential questions, important ideas, and goals (NCSS, 2010, p. 170)

To be meaningful, social studies content must match children’s intellectual growth, be connected to their experience, and help them to make sense of their world. Meaningful teaching requires matching the richness of the learning environment to the intellectual growth of the child. The richness of an environment for intellectual growth is a function of the appropriateness of this match between inner organizations (prior knowledge and experience) and external circumstances in a child’s succession of encounters with his or her environment. Developmentally appropriate social studies is meaningful because children can connect it to their knowledge and experience and process it in order to make sense of it. Vygotsky (1978) explained the importance of matching what is to be learned with the nature of children’s cognitive maturity: “It is a well known and empirically established fact that learning should be matched in some manner with the child’s developmental level” (p. 85). Sue Bredekamp (1998) calls matching what one wants to teach children to their existing knowledge “teaching on the edge of children’s knowledge.”

Today, early childhood educators have increased their understanding of the problem of this match. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has published *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) as well as *Reaching Potentials* in two volumes: *Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment for Young Children* (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992) and *Transforming Early Childhood and Assessment* (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1995). These are important guides for teachers.

Recognizing that curriculum must match children’s maturation as well as the context in which they live, the National Council for the Social Studies (2010) specifies ten general themes and includes purposes, questions for exploration, knowledge, processes, and products for each theme. It does specify content, scope, or sequence in its standards. These decisions, the council believes, are in the hands of those who teach social studies, the people who know the children, state standards, and the world in which they live.

The search for matching content to a child’s intellectual development continues. By organizing the social science disciplines—knowledge, skills, and attitudes—around key concepts or principles and then describing what we do know about how children grow in understanding these principles, teachers have an opportunity to plan ways of presenting social studies material and content that will have meaning because it will match children’s developmental levels, connect to their experiences, and enable them to make sense of new information.

Of High Interest

Social studies should reflect a “balance between retrieval and recitation of content and a thoughtful examination of concepts in order to provide intellectual challenges” (NCSS, 2010, p. 171).

Children learn when they are interested. Interest leads to “meaningful learning, promotes long-term storage of knowledge and provides motivation for further learning” (Hidi, 1990, p. 549). Whether studying history, geography, economics, civics, current events, or cultures, children must find the material of high interest. It is their interest that motivates them to satisfy their curiosity about themselves and the world in which they live, promoting a sense of competence (Wigfield, 2002). At least four factors stimulate children’s interest in social studies: firsthand learning and connection to experience, choice, social interaction, and appropriate challenge (not too easy or too hard). All social studies teaching is grounded in children’s firsthand experiences, play, and activity. Choice is encouraged. Children can select their own learning experiences, activities, topics, and materials. Children who are given choices are more likely to succeed because the problem of match and challenge is at least partially solved (Seefeldt & Galper, 2000). Learning centers are one way to provide choice since children can initiate their own learning experiences and activities, choose the centers in which they will work, and make choices within the centers.

As social beings, children want to be with others and learn to relate ever more effectively with them. Relating with others, children are exposed to different ways of thinking, knowing, and valuing—all of which lead to expanding cognitive powers (Pattnaik, 2003). Feeling competent socially and cognitively, children are fully motivated to continue to learn more about themselves, others, and the world in which they live (Stone, 2003).

Standards for Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

Today, standards guide the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that children must acquire. Using the recommendations of the NCSS (2010) and national history, geography, economics, and civics standards, today’s social studies revolves around introducing children to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of citizens of a democracy in an interdependent world. Some states have developed their own social studies standards (social studies is not identified as a required subject by NCLB) that fit within the general themes, but focus on more specific content.

Focus on Standards and Knowledge

More than ever, children need knowledge and a basic understanding of the world in which they live. Without knowledge of history, geography, economics, current events, and global interrelationships, children will be ill prepared to assume responsible citizenship.

In the past, much of social studies content was limited in scope, trivial, and lacking in connection to major social education goals (Brophy & Alleman, 2002; 2006). Today, however, there is an awareness of the richness of concepts key to the social studies and how these concepts can be meaningfully introduced to very young children (Levstik, 2002).

National associations and state curriculum committees have identified social studies content that children are to learn during the primary grades. Geographers,

historians, economists, civic educators, and social studies authorities have all identified what children should know and be able to do beginning in kindergarten. Prekindergarten standards developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill (2002) and reviewed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York articulate what children 3 to 5 years of age should know and be able to do in the field of the social studies. Additionally, NCSS (2010) identifies ten themes around which social studies teaching can be organized. All ten of those themes are reflected throughout this text.

- *Culture.* The study of culture—the art, language, history, and geography of different cultures—takes place across the total curriculum. To become a global citizen, children must recognize the universals of human cultures everywhere. Chapter 6, “Culture, Diversity, and Values,” guides teachers on ways to develop children’s ideas about the things that unite all humans everywhere, including themselves.
- *Time, continuity, and change.* In the context of their lives, children come to understand themselves in terms of the passage of time and develop the skills of the historian. This theme is reflected in Chapter 7, “Children’s Study of Time, Continuity, and Change: History.”
- *People, places, and environments.* Children learn to locate themselves in space, become familiar with landforms in their environment, and develop beginning understanding of the human–environment interaction. Chapter 8, “People, Places, and Environments: Geography,” presents these themes.
- *Individual development and identity.* Personal identity is shaped by one’s culture, by groups, and by institutional influences. How people learn, what they believe, and how people meet their basic needs in the context of culture are themes within this topic. Chapter 5, “Self, Others, and the Community: Social Skills,” begins with a focus on developing children’s sense of self.
- *Individuals, groups, and institutions.* Institutions such as schools, families, government agencies, and the courts play a role in people’s lives. Children can develop beginning concepts of the role of institutions in their lives. Chapter 5, “Self, Others, and the Community: Social Skills,” introduces children to the fact that within a democracy, individual rights are balanced with those of the group.
- *Power, authority, and governance.* Understanding how individual rights can be protected within the context of majority rule can be introduced to young children in the context of their classroom. The idea of power and rights is developed in Chapter 10, “Developing Citizenship: Civics and Government.”
- *Production, distribution, and consumption.* Because people have wants and needs that often exceed the resources available to them, a variety of ways have evolved to answer questions such as “What is to be produced?” and “How is production to be organized?” Chapter 9, “Production, Consumption, and Decision Making: Economics,” is designed to enable young children to develop beginning ideas of these concepts.
- *Science, technology, and society.* This theme deals with questions such as “How can we cope with change?” and “How can we manage technology so that all benefit from it?” The theme draws on the natural and physical sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. It is introduced in Chapter 7 and has implications

for chapters 7 through 11. Technological resources for the classroom are discussed in Chapter 3.

- *Global connections.* Global interdependence requires understanding and responsive action. Young children explore basic global connections issues and suggest or implement caring actions as described in Chapter 11, “Global Connections.”
- *Civic ideals and practices.* This theme deals with what it means to be a citizen. Chapter 10, “Developing Citizenship: Civics and Government,” deals with rights and responsibilities within a group.

Focus on Skills

Within the small democracy of the preschool or primary classroom, children begin to develop the social and participatory skills required of citizens in a democracy. They will gain the skills necessary to cooperate and share and begin to assume responsibility for themselves as part of the total group. The NCSS (2010) standards outline essential social studies skills for personal and collaborative interactions and civic engagement (see page 141). The *National Standards for Civics and Government* (Center for Civic Education, 1994) state that students in school should learn to do the following:

- Respect the rights of others
- Respect the privacy of others
- Promote the common good, clean up the environment, and care for the school
- Participate in voting and in developing class rules and constitutions

Civics and government standards suggest that these skills are best developed by “providing students [with] opportunities to practice these skills and to observe and interact with those in their community who are adept in exercising them” (Center for Civic Education, 1994, p. xiii). Good citizenship is not just a matter of the observance of outward forms but also a matter of reasoned conviction, the end result of people’s thinking for themselves (Center for Civic Education, 1994).

Citizens of a democracy need to have the skills of thinking and inquiry. Those skills are promoted throughout the social studies curriculum. “Intellectual skills and civics are inseparable” (Center for Civic Education, 1994, p. xii), and being a citizen of a democracy means being “able to think critically” (p. xii). Wade (2003) suggested a civics curriculum focused on civic projects and aimed at developing concepts of a common good. In this way, young children are most likely to develop the concepts key to citizenship in a democracy.

Social studies involves learning many other skills in addition to social skills. Involving children in study of their world, whether the focus be history, economics, geography, or civics, gives them the platform for posing questions and finding answers. As children study their world, they collect data, observe, survey, weigh, measure, map, compare, and contrast things in their here-and-now world. After considering the information collected, children reach conclusions. Through inquiry, they use an array of tools appropriate for study of their world. Through historical inquiry, they study the past. Children learn the skill of map reading in geography, and counting money in economics.

Teachers scaffold children's use of tools and provide time and opportunity for children to practice new skills and reflect on the results of their activity. Only as children make sense of their own world, whatever or wherever that world is, will they develop the thinking skills and knowledge of content necessary for productive citizenship.

Focus on Attitudes and Values

"The values embodied in our democratic form of government with its commitment to justice, quality, and freedom of thought and speech, are reflected in social studies classroom practice" (NCSS, 2010, p. 170).

Children need to develop attitudes and values congruent with the democratic way of life if democracy is to continue, and congruent with the global village if the planet is to survive. The attitudes and values of respect for each individual—freedom of speech, setting and following rules, learning to make choices, participating in the democracy of the classroom, and caring for people and the planet—are fostered through the social studies.

The NCSS (2010) maintains that the focus of education is on how values are formed and how they influence human behavior rather than on building commitment to specific values. They outline basic individual rights, individual freedoms, individual responsibilities, and beliefs concerning social conditions and governmental responsibilities (see page 167). The values and attitudes of the fundamental rights to life, liberty, dignity, equality, and speech are first taught by helping students to weigh priorities in situations in which conflicts arise before more formal study of these concepts begins. Attitudes regarding the importance of participation in and responsibility to the group are taught first within the classroom, the school, and the community.

Misco and Shiveley (2010) propose a taxonomy of dispositions (attitudes and values) for social studies centered around the themes of open-mindedness, whole-mindedness, and responsibility. They suggest that these dispositions can be taught in developmentally appropriate ways through strategies such as community-based problem-solving, service learning, issues-centered curriculum, questioning and investigations, cooperative learning, and global education with accompanying projects. The projects can be assessed for knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Scope and Sequence

Scope refers to what and how much will be taught, and sequence refers to the order in which it will be taught. While Mitchell's expanding horizons curriculum has been the dominant organizer for social studies scope and sequence in some ways, it has come under discussion for two reasons (Wade, 2003). First, research has shown that pre-school and primary children are more adept at applying their here-and-now knowledge to other times and places than previously thought (Brophy & Alleman, 2006). Second, our global, media-based society exposes children to places beyond their local community earlier in their lives. The global village has become a greater part of children's here-and-now experience, at least virtually, through technology and the media. Many states have revised their social studies curriculum away from the spiral/expanding

horizons framework in order to expose children to other times, places, and cultures earlier. For example, in highly diverse communities, it is not unusual to see a world map in a kindergarten classroom with stickpins indicating each child's home country; children are gaining firsthand experience of people from other countries at an early age.

Brophy and Alleman (2002, 2005a, 2006, 2007) have proposed an alternative framework called *cultural universals*. They define cultural universals as the human needs and experiences that are basic elements of all cultures, past and present. The universals include food, clothing, shelter, transportation, families, work, communication, government, and recreation. These are a part of students' everyday lives. Children have considerable prior knowledge and experience of these cultural universals in their here-and-now world. Such topics are, therefore, interesting and meaningful. They are also integrated in that each cultural universal has historical, economic, civic, geographic, multicultural, and global connections as well as science and mathematics connections.

Alleman and Brophy (2001, 2002, 2003) have developed instructional units on many of the cultural universals for K–3. Each focuses on major understandings with embedded content, skills, and attitudes. For example, one major understanding from the food unit is that food functions the same across time and cultures, but people eat different things or eat the same things differently. Food groups, nutrition, farming and plant growth, geographical influences, historical changes, production and distribution (Brophy, Alleman, & O'Mahony, 2003), needs and wants, choices, and holidays can all be integrated into a cultural universals framework.

Curriculum Models for Early Childhood Education

Three of the curriculum models currently in use in early childhood education provide the “what” and “how” for social studies (see Figure 1.3). “What” includes the knowledge put forward in the NCSS standards. The “how” addresses the way in which the learning environment is structured and focuses on the desired skills, attitudes, and values developed in the model. Each of the three curriculum models described is based on constructivist theories of active learning, integrated content, and meaningful experiences that are of high interest to children.

Reggio Emilia

The prevalent philosophy of the Reggio Emilia curriculum model is constructivist, and the “how” and “what” of that curriculum reflect the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Dewey (Gandini, 1997). It is based on the premises that social interaction promotes learning and that children learn best through experiences on which they build to create new learning. The characteristics of Reggio Emilia schools are as follows (Hendrick, 2004):

- The emergent curriculum predominates.
- The children's ideas and feelings are encouraged and promoted.
- Inquiry projects are the framework for the curriculum, and the children and teachers actively collaborate to develop these.
- Creativity, expressed particularly through art, is predominant.

Connections with the Social Studies			
Curriculum Model	Skills	Attitudes and Values	Standards and Knowledge
Reggio Emilia	Focus on collaboration promotes ability to share ideas, problem solve, explore.	Collaboration between all parties develops responsibility, autonomy, and respect.	Curriculum content is emergent; meaningful activity directed by teachers and based on children's interests.
High/Scope	Plan-do-review process promotes inquiry, problem solving, and reaching conclusions.	Plan-do-review process develops responsibility, autonomy, and respect for others. Six steps to conflict resolution taught and practiced.	Curriculum content is emergent; involves meaningful activity directed by teachers and children and is based on children's interests.
Montessori	Materials and activities help them learn to care for themselves and the environment.	Materials and activities encourage responsibility, autonomy, and sense of self.	History and geography: Preschoolers work with appropriately designed maps; learn names of countries and continents. Elementary age explore cultures: their own and those of others.

Figure 1.3 Curriculum models and the social studies.

- Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's learning.
- The classroom includes the whole community.
- Teachers stay with one group of children for 3 years.
- The teachers co-teach in all aspects of the learning environment.

Implications for the Social Studies. Collaboration between children, teachers, and families is a key feature of this curriculum, reflecting the NCSS goals of promoting democracy, respect for every individual, and problem/conflict solving.

High/Scope

In response to the War on Poverty, David Weikart developed the High/Scope approach to early childhood education in 1970 (Weikart, 1998). It was based on the constructivist philosophy of Piaget. The central beliefs of the approach are as follows:

- Children are active learners.
- At the core of the curriculum are the children's interests.
- Teachers provide hands-on experiences and promote investigation and problem solving through open-ended questioning in their role as facilitators of learning.

The High/Scope program has curricula that extend through elementary school. At the elementary level more emphasis is placed on cooperative projects that develop social skills. Throughout the program, there are both child-directed and teacher-directed activities. During the child-directed activities, a process called “plan-do-review” is used. During planning time, the children decide what they will do and share their ideas with the teacher, who assists the children in getting started. The teachers move among the children as they “do” their work. During review time, the children meet in small groups with a teacher to discuss what they did.

High/Scope preschool programs place a special emphasis on five major social learning areas:

- Taking care of one’s own needs
- Expressing feelings in words
- Building relationships with children and adults
- Creating and experiencing collaborative play
- Dealing with social conflict.

The High/Scope curriculum stipulates a six-step conflict-resolution process as a group of teaching strategies that teachers find especially useful in helping children settle conflicts and disagreements. By the end of the program, the children are usually able to use these on their own. These steps can be found on the Web at www.highscope.org (accessed August 2008).

The High/Scope program’s effectiveness has been highly researched, with program completers being investigated until they reached the age of 40 (Schweinhart et al., 2005). The study inquires into the lives of 123 African Americans born into poverty who had been considered high-risk students. At age 40, those who had received a high-quality preschool experience based on the High/Scope philosophy and curriculum in comparison to the group who had received no preschool:

- Had higher earnings
- Were more likely to hold a job
- Had committed fewer crimes
- Were more likely to have graduated from high school.

Implications for the Social Studies. Through High/Scope, children are supported in developing independence along with collaboration and responsibility. The NCSS goals focusing on skills, attitudes, and values are promoted through the learning environment.

Montessori

The theory and beliefs of Maria Montessori are the foundation for contemporary American Montessori schools, some of which span the ages of 3 through 12. Montessori believed that children universally have four characteristics: the ability to concentrate, an interest and pleasure in meaningful work, self-discipline, and the

desire to be a contributing member of a community (Montessori, 1949/1995). These beliefs lead to the following key educational theories:

- Active engagement in natural/spontaneous activity is essential for children.
- Mental stimulation and engagement through the senses promotes intellectual development.
- Learning experiences must be based on the child's needs.

The role of the educator in a Montessori school is to observe children carefully and establish what the children need to optimize academic and social development. Then the educator prepares a learning environment designed to capture the children's interests, stimulate their senses, and engage them in meaningful and active experiences through specially designed materials. The children progress through the graduated activities independently and at their own pace. While the children work, the teachers observe their progress and then prepare for the next set of needs.

Implications for the Social Studies. Children are encouraged to care for the learning environment, and cleaning and tidying up are an essential part of the school day. They work independently and are discouraged from interfering with the other children's work, although cooperation is encouraged. The materials are designed to promote problem solving and inquiry. Respect for others and their surroundings is promoted, as are autonomy and responsibility.

Geography and history are essential parts of the Montessori curriculum from the age of 3. Children play with specially designed maps, learning the names of countries and continents. At the elementary level, children study various aspects of their own culture and those of their peers in depth.

SUMMARY

Knowledge of the content, skills, and attitudes that make up the social studies is necessary if children are to be prepared to take their place as fully productive members of a democratic society. Only when social studies are active, integrated, meaningful, and of interest to children, however, will the discipline fulfill its purpose.

Today's social studies are also grounded in current thinking about social studies education. Using current theories of learning; developmentally appropriate practices; NCSS, discipline, and state standards; and current curriculum models, teachers have a basis for fulfilling the primary goals of the social studies: to prepare children to fulfill their role as citizens of a global world, and to integrate the total curriculum.

Discussion Questions

1. Think back to your early memories of social studies. What was your first experience with the subject? What were your positive experiences? What were your

negative experiences? Which memories are based on your feelings, which on knowledge? What are the implications for powerful social studies teaching?

2. Mitchell discussed the importance of “real-world experiences.” Generate ideas of real-world experiences for children and discuss what and how they might learn from them.
3. What common themes do you see across the various theories and curriculum models? How do these align with developmentally appropriate practice? With the principles of powerful social studies teaching?
4. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the standards-based reform movement? What are some ways that you as a teacher can balance the sometimes competing priorities of developmentally appropriate practice and a standards-based environment?
5. When young children are asked questions about what they learned in social studies, they do not understand the term “social studies.” Why do you think this might be the case?

Extend Your Knowledge

1. Observe a group of young children at play. As you observe, make a list of all the topics the children mention or discuss. Then write a description of the nature of the child’s here-and-now world. What were the most frequently mentioned topics? Where did children become acquainted with these topics? Which topics have an element of social studies?
2. View online or obtain copies of social studies standards such as *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (NCSS); *National Standards for Civics and Government* (Center for Civic Education); *National Standards for United States History: Exploring the American Experience, K–4* (National Center for History in the Schools); or *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* (National Geographic Society). Read and discuss them with other students. How will your ideas about the standards affect how you teach social studies to young children?
3. Interview a teacher of young children. Ask him or her to define the social studies. What is included in this definition? How does the teacher decide what to include in the social studies curriculum? You may be able to interview a number of teachers, asking the same or similar questions. The goal is to determine how teachers define the social studies and make decisions about what to teach.

Resources

Successful teachers identify and use available resources. Your local school system, state department of education, and local affiliates of national associations have excellent resources to use in teaching social studies. Other organizations are also concerned with social studies education and the education of young children. These

associations offer publications, educational materials, services, and other resources for teachers. Check out their websites:

Association for Childhood Education International

www.acei.org

U.S. Government Printing Office

www.gpo.gov

National Association for the Education of Young Children

www.naeyc.org

National Council for the Social Studies

www.ncss.org

Center for Civic Education

www.civiced.org

National Center for History in Schools

www.nchs.ucla.edu

National Geographic Society

www.nationalgeographic.com

Council for Economic Education

www.councilforeconed.org



Planning and Assessment

Focus Questions

After you read this chapter, you should be prepared to respond to the following questions:

- Why is knowledge of children’s growth, development, and learning necessary for planning social studies?
- How does the nature of the community in which children live affect planning?
- How does social studies content affect planning?
- What is the nature and purpose of long-term planning? Of short-term planning? What are the benefits of teaching through themes, units, and projects?
- How will you know if children have learned what you planned to teach them?

“But what do I teach?” asked one teacher candidate after a discussion of the scope of the social studies. “I know social studies is a large, complex field, and I’ve read some of the standards, but isn’t there a workbook or something we can use that tells what to teach?”

If social studies is to be meaningful and totally integrated into children's culture, background of experiences, and social interactions, the teacher must, based on his or her knowledge of the children, knowledge of the community in which they live, and knowledge of the social studies, "make [his/her] own curriculum for small children" (Mitchell, 1934, p. 12).

Throughout the years, reflective teachers have understood this need. They understand that, to bring children and the social studies together, curriculum must hold meaning and interest for each child and be based on children's firsthand interactions with their immediate environment.

Today, as in the past, the teacher is the decision maker. The decisions that teachers will make include the following:

- What short- and long-term goals and objectives will guide the curriculum?
- How will these goals and objectives be achieved?
- How can children's interactions with their environment and community be used to achieve these goals?
- What place will standards of learning and mandated curriculum plans hold in the curriculum? How can the goals and objectives of mandated curriculum be achieved in meaningful ways?
- How will the curriculum be assessed?

As in the past, these decisions cannot be made without (a) knowledge of children, (b) knowledge of the community in which the children live, and (c) knowledge of social studies content.

KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN

"I am advising you to retain Judy in kindergarten for another year," the teacher said to 6-year-old Judy's parents. "She doesn't know which day comes before or after another, nor can she tell you the name of the month or the months that came before or after. She just won't make it in first grade until she can do so."

This is the problem of the match that Vygotsky (1986) discussed and Bredekamp and Copple described in *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (2009). If Judy's teacher had based her social studies instruction on knowledge of child growth and development, she would have known that isolated facts, such as the names of the days of the week or the months, have little meaning to children. Further, she would have known that children will learn these names automatically as they progress through the primary grades.

Without knowledge of children, teachers are unable to match the curriculum or its goals and expectations for children's learning to the developmental capabilities of children. Without this match, social studies is meaningless and uninteresting to children. As a result, children will dislike social studies. Once they have developed a negative attitude toward social studies, it is very difficult to overcome it.

Basing curriculum on the universal characteristics of children (i.e., those characteristics that make all children alike) and on the unique characteristics of each child

(i.e., those things that make each an individual) is one way to ensure that children will live fully each day and be prepared to take their places in a democratic society.

Children Are Alike

Regardless of where children live, their ethnic background, or the structure of their family, they all have the same needs and share similar characteristics.

Children Have Similar Needs

Young children share certain characteristics. For instance, all young children need the following:

- Love, security, and the attention of a friendly, interested, sympathetic adult they can trust (NRC, 2001)
- Shelter, food, warmth, and clothing
- To feel good about themselves and learn to relate to others, make friends, and be a friend

Children Are Active Learners

If children's basic needs for security and love have been met, they are curious, interested in their environment, and filled with the desire to learn more about themselves and their world. Their active minds and bodies demand that they move about physically and interact with one another. Children need to talk, question, and take things apart in their attempts to find out about and make sense of their world (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Children Pass Through the Same Stages of Thought

Between the ages of 2 and 7 or 8, children's thinking is preoperational. They are beginning to think abstractly and use symbols, to represent their actions mentally, to anticipate consequences before an action actually occurs, and to develop some idea of causes; but they still need concrete referents to understand abstract ideas, and they need concrete referents to perform operations on abstract ideas.

For example, a child in the stage of preoperational thought relies heavily on the way things look. Perception dominates thought; the way things look is the way they are. Thus, a child under age 7 or 8 says there is more juice in a tall, skinny glass than in a short, squat one or that there are more candies in a long, spread-out row than there are in a bunched group.

At around age 7 or 8, children's thinking changes; they begin to think operationally. They can tell you that the amount of juice poured into two containers of different shapes stays the same because no juice has been added or taken away; they can perform the mental operation of translating the amount of juice between the two containers when they see it. But even though children after age 7 or 8 can reason this way, their thinking is still tied to the concrete. They do not think about the hypothetical or possible easily or naturally. Their thought is bound to the real, concrete world—hence the term *concrete operations*. Not until age 11 or 12 do children enter

the last stage of thought, in which they can think formally about abstractions and have the ability to manipulate abstract ideas without concrete referents.

Because children cannot think in truly abstract ways until nearly age 11 or 12, most of the goals and objectives planned for early social studies learning are based on the concrete, hands-on experience. For example, when asked about the abstract concept of democracy, elementary-age children might be able to say that in a democracy people vote (a concrete act that they may have witnessed or heard about during an election), but they are not yet able to give a definition of democracy as a political structure. During the preschool and primary grades, children need to develop an interest in learning, a base of firsthand experiences, and basic content knowledge on which to build later, more abstract concepts and understandings.

So Alike, So Different

As individuals, however, young children are very different. Each child is unique. Understanding the general characteristics of all children, teachers recognize that each one brings to school a different background of experiences, interests, and motivations. Successful social studies are based on teachers' understanding of the experiences children have had before coming to school, the interests of each child, individual abilities, special needs, and the culture in which children live (Derman-Sparks, 2003; McCormick, Wong, & Yogi, 2003).

Experiences

For the most part, children entering school have a full, rich background of experience. Many have had opportunities to explore their immediate neighborhoods, become familiar with traffic systems and community helpers, discuss their experiences with adults, and recognize the relationships among their experiences. Teachers can determine children's background of experience in the following ways:

- Visiting their homes and talking with their parents about the things the children have done
- Walking around the children's neighborhoods to see what the community offers experientially

Children—so alike, yet so different.



- Interviewing the children, asking them to tell about the things they do, places they have been, and things they would like to do
- Studying the home countries or cultures of new or recent immigrant families

Whatever the children's backgrounds, they are important indicators of objectives and goals for the social studies program. Teachers plan curriculum to support past experiences of children, introduce new experiences that can be incorporated into the children's previous experiences, and extend, clarify, and expand all experiences.

Interests

As anyone who has contact with young children knows, they are interested in learning about everything. They enter preschool interested in learning about ants, worms, cars, boats, water, air, space, foreign countries, letters, machines, trees, colors, families, seeds, rocks, love, hate, birth, death, friendship, war, peace, cosmic forces, good, and evil. To plan a social studies curriculum, some understanding of what the group and each individual child within the group is interested in will be necessary. To begin, you could do these things:

- Talk with children informally; ask them what they would like to know more about, what they would like to do, or what they know a lot about.
- Observe children at play; note the things they play with, how they use materials, what they play, what they talk about, and which books they select.
- Discuss children's interests with their parents, and ask what the children like to do at home.

Abilities

Children not only bring a wide range of experiences and interests to the classroom, but they also bring great differences in social, emotional, physical, and intellectual developmental levels and abilities. These differences also help form the basis of goals and objectives of social studies for the group and for individual children.

To determine the developmental levels and abilities of children, you might take these steps:

- Review past records
- Observe children at play
- Structure tasks for children to complete
- Conduct a simple developmental assessment
- Review results of standardized measures

Special Needs

All children are special, and each has individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses. Some, however, have needs and characteristics that require special planning and care. Public laws have been passed to ensure that the special needs of these children

Teachers find ways to include all children.



will be met. P.L. 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, protects children with special needs by requiring that every child, regardless of the handicapping condition, have access to free and appropriate educational experiences in the least restrictive environment.

P.L. 99-457, the Federal Preschool Program and Early Intervention Program Act of 1986, extends rights and services to handicapped infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Until 1986, children between ages 3 and 5 received services only at each state's discretion. P.L. 99-457 requires appropriate public education for those children. From birth through age 2, the law requires that services be available for children who show signs of developmental delay, have identifiable physical or mental conditions, or are at risk because of medical or environmental problems (Diamond & Stacey, 2003).

Even without laws, teachers wishing to foster the principles of democracy in their classrooms would find ways to include all children and their families (see Figure 2.1).

When talking with families of children with special needs, try to do the following:

- *Reduce education or professional terms.* Instead of talking about methodologies or strategies, say, "This is what we will do," and "Here is how we will do it."
- *Use words instead of initials.* Rather than saying, "P.L. 94-142," say, "the law providing for equality of educational opportunity." Say, "individual education plan" instead of "IEP."
- *Accept parents' feelings.* Say, "Understandably, you are very worried," to parents who are expressing anxiety about their child. To angry parents, say, "Understandably, you are angry."
- *Use active listening.* To clarify what parents have said, you might say, "I heard you say. . . . Did I understand you correctly?"

Figure 2.1 Talking with families.

Democracy reflects the belief that young children, whatever their abilities or disabilities, can grow in self-confidence and increase their skills and abilities to interact socially with others when included in programs. As Diamond and Stacey (2003) asserted, all children have the right to a life that is as normal as possible.

Teaching children with special needs is not a new aspect of early childhood education. The needs of exceptional children in the regular preschool or primary classroom have been recognized for decades, long before implementation of these laws. So what was new about P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 99-457? They protect children with special needs by requiring educational experiences in the *least restrictive environment*. The preschool or primary classroom is often determined to be the least restrictive environment, for it gives children with special needs the opportunity to enter the mainstream of living and learning with other children their age (McDermott, 2003).

As a teacher of special children you need to (a) familiarize yourself with the complete text of P.L. 94-142; (b) ask your director, principal, or supervisor for your child-care center's or school system's guidelines for implementation of the law; (c) obtain resources and special assistance when mainstreaming children with special needs; and (d) perhaps request a classroom aide—a teacher of a specific skill, such as sign language—for assistance in acquiring specialized skills.

Children with special needs who benefit from being in the mainstream preschool or primary classroom are those who have visual or hearing impairments, physical disabilities, mental retardation, emotional problems, or speech or language impairments, as well as those who are not proficient in English and those who are gifted. While labeling of individual children is discouraged, it does help to know something about the specific conditions children bring to the classroom.

Visual Impairments

Children with visual impairments frequently can work and learn effectively in the regular classroom, and they can participate in many activities without special assistance. Teachers working with children who have visual impairments just have to remember the obvious: These children cannot see well, if at all. This means remembering that children with visual impairments do not learn by looking or by imitating others. They will need systematic and deliberate introduction to the physical environment of the room, school, and playground as well as the activities of the school. You will need to maintain consistency in the physical environment, provide tactile guides in the room, and communicate by touching as well as speaking. You will need to ensure that the child is comfortable, asking questions when he or she does not understand or needs assistance.

Hearing Impairments

Children with hearing impairments also find the mainstream preschool and primary classroom suited to their needs. You will want to learn how to communicate with the child who has a hearing impairment using the method the child uses and learn the care of hearing aids and how to assist the child with the aid.

Children with hearing impairments can participate in nearly all school activities. You need to communicate with these children in special ways. They learn by seeing, and they respond to touch. Marschark, Lang, and Albertin (2001) describe how a child with a hearing impairment was successfully included in a first-grade classroom through collaboration with children, the family, and others in the school.

One teacher and his student agreed on a sign—placing her finger beside her nose—to indicate to the teacher that she did not understand. This sign enabled the teacher to be helpful without disrupting the entire class.

Physical Disabilities

You may need to adapt the physical environment for children with physical disabilities and for those who use orthopedic aids. Ask specialists for assistance in adapting the physical plant to the needs of the child, both indoors and outdoors. Special chairs, tables, and play equipment can be purchased or made for children with physical disabilities, enabling them to participate in school activities.

You will want to learn all you can about the condition of a child with physical disabilities. You will need to know the child's limitations and potentials as well as how to care for orthopedic equipment and assist the child with the equipment.

Mental Disabilities

Children who differ from average or normal intelligence or who have learning disabilities are also frequently mainstreamed in the preschool and primary classroom. The open schedule, free activity times, and emphasis on concrete learning as well as social, emotional, and language development are well suited for children who have mental impairments (Molenarr-Klumper, 2002).

You will need to analyze each task so that you can present it to the child in small steps. Specific experiences and instruction in listening and speaking, social skills, and self-help skills will enable children who have mental impairments to be more successful.

Emotional Problems

Nearly everyone has lost control, felt afraid, or had difficulty interacting with others. At one time or another, all children experience difficulty handling strong emotions. Children who have more difficulty than most in handling their emotions find a preschool experience very beneficial. Here they can learn techniques for channeling emotions appropriately and strengthening their ability to control behavior.

Probably all preschool activities will benefit children who need to learn to handle emotions, and the primary classroom environment can be modified to permit more activities designed for this purpose. It will be important to have an agreed-upon behavior plan and a plan for how to handle a child who is totally out of control—hitting, kicking, hurting self and others—such as a timeout place or an aide or a volunteer to stay with the child for a while, offering the child support and guidance in learning to gain control over strong emotions (Greene, 2001.)

Speech and Language Impairments

For children who have language impairments, you can arrange assessment for specific diagnoses and plan appropriate activities in listening and speaking. Speech and hearing specialists can assist you as you plan for these children, and volunteers or aides may help you implement specific lessons.

Remember that all of the language activities of the preschool–primary classroom will benefit children with speech and language impairments. The stories, poems, creative dramatics, and dramatic play will be of great benefit.

Limited English Proficiency

Children whose first language is one other than English can benefit greatly from a classroom rich in language and multisensory experiences. Using simple sentence structures and known vocabulary; using pictures, songs, gestures, and kinesthetic experiences; and providing opportunities for play and social interaction will enable English language development.

Gifted Children

Children who demonstrate intelligence higher than the norm or who have specific gifts and talents deserve to have their special needs met (Walker, Hafenstein, & Crow-Enslow, 1999). Typically, the needs of children who are gifted have been met by acceleration, enrichment, placement in special schools, or advancement to a higher grade. The social studies offer these children many opportunities to explore interests, solve problems, and develop talents.

A Program of Inclusion

While public laws protect all children's rights to appropriate education, teaching children who have special needs requires much more than just being together in a classroom. Children with special needs require acceptance for who they are and an environment that fosters their autonomy and the development of alternative modes of interaction with the world (Diamond & Stacey, 2003).

Research suggests that early childhood programs should strive for the following goals:

- Develop an inclusive educational environment in which all children can succeed
- Enable children with disabilities to develop autonomy, independence, competency, confidence, and pride
- Provide all children with accurate, developmentally appropriate information about their own and others' disabilities, and foster understanding that a person with a disability differs from others in one respect but is similar in many others
- Enable all children to develop the ability to interact knowledgeably, comfortably, and fairly with people who have various disabilities
- Teach children with disabilities how to handle and challenge name calling, stereotypical attitudes, and physical barriers

- Teach nondisabled children how to resist and challenge stereotyping, name calling, and physical barriers directed against people with disabilities
- Encourage children to ask about their own and others' physical characteristics
- Enable children to feel pride, but not superiority, about their racial identity
- Enable children to develop ease with and respect for physical differences
- Help children become aware of our shared physical characteristics—what makes us all human beings

Regardless of the disability, these children will require some modifications or accommodations in order to be successful. Modifications can be made to content, learning activities, assessments, and/or the environment according to each child's needs. Children with an official special education designation will have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) that helps guide the teacher's planning.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMMUNITY

"I found four signs with words and seven without," exclaimed an excited first-grader returning from a walk around the block.

As Mitchell (2000) suggested, teachers must become aware of the nature of the here-and-now world in which children live. Then they must develop knowledge of the culture and values of the community. Just as teachers cannot plan a social studies curriculum without knowledge of child growth and development, they cannot successfully implement it without knowledge of the community.

The Child's Physical World

"The practical tasks for each school are to study the relations in the environment into which their children are born and to watch the children's behavior in their environment, to note when they first discover relations and what they are" (Mitchell, 1934, p. 12). To do this, you might drive or walk through children's neighborhoods. You can encourage children to notice particular things as they walk or ride to school. One teacher asked a parent to guide her through the school's neighborhood. As they walked and talked together, they noted the following:

- The physical nature of the area
- Places children enjoyed going
- The history of the neighborhood
- Neighbors who had special skills or resources
- Places of business
- Other resources for learning

Another day the teacher walked through the neighborhood again. This time she noted where children played, the pathways they took on their way home from school, and the way they interacted with peers, adults, and their parents. She also noted how people functioned in the neighborhood. In communities that are spread



Teachers locate community resources for children's learning.

out and in which children ride the bus, teachers can follow bus routes to determine what children see as they ride to school. Insights into the children's community and here-and-now world can influence the teacher's decisions about the overall goals and objectives for the social studies curriculum.

Cultural Knowledge and Values

Less concrete than knowledge of the physical environment, but perhaps even more important, is knowledge of the culture and values of the community. Early in the school year, teachers try to become acquainted with each child's ethnic and subcultural backgrounds as well as the culture and values of the community as a whole (Garcia, 2003). This can be done in various ways:

- *Informal conversations.* Early in the school year, teachers can talk informally with parents and children. Teachers can ask them what the family does on weekends, in the evenings, before school starts, or on vacations. Teachers can note the traditions, customs, language, special foods, items of dress, and types of celebrations mentioned by the children or their parents during these conversations.
- *Talks with or visits from resource persons.* A resource person is someone with particular knowledge to share. The resource person might be within the school or from the community. Resource persons might be able to inform teachers about the traditions, history, and meaning of a group's practices.
- *Formal inservice activities.* Teachers and administrators can initiate a variety of activities and programs designed to acquaint them with different cultures and values. One school enrolled a large number of children from Cambodia. A resource person knowledgeable about Cambodian culture and its demands on children and their families was invited to talk with the teachers. In a short period of time, she was able to help the teachers build a base of knowledge useful for understanding and teaching these children (Newman, 1995).

Other meetings might be sponsored by community organizations or local businesses and involve parents and other community residents. Slides, videos, and photographs of the community are helpful in illustrating the culture of a community.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES

“I have to take two more courses from the social sciences if I want to teach young children. What in the world does my taking geography, history, and economics have to do with young children?” complained an undergraduate student to her advisor. Well, just about everything. Without complete, in-depth knowledge of the social sciences and the skills and values considered to be a part of social studies, teachers cannot be effective.

To make this vast, even overwhelming, amount of information accessible to children, teachers must have a basic grasp of the key concepts in each social science discipline. Selected concepts must be complete and accurate as well as match what children already know and are capable of understanding (Brophy & Alleman, 2002, 2003, 2005b). Thus, knowledge of both child development and content is required. If a concept key in politics is setting and keeping rules, then 4-year-olds might decide on rules for using the woodworking bench, 5-year-olds could dictate a list of rules they will follow in their group for the coming year, and 6- and 7-year-olds might draw up rules for their class. Children in middle school/junior high school and high school could study the lawmaking bodies of the community, state, and nation.

Standards of developmentally appropriate practice as well as content-oriented national and state standards also guide teachers in planning and selecting social studies content. National professional organizations in the fields that form the social studies have identified key concepts in history, geography, economics, civic education, and other fields. These standards typically begin with kindergarten and may be grouped for kindergarten through Grade 3 or 4. In addition, most states have content standards organized by grade level. States and/or school districts often have curriculum frameworks, which serve as guides for scope and sequence. The standards, therefore, are a useful framework to guide teachers' planning. But teachers will still need to adjust the standards to accomplish the following:

- Provide for the needs of individual children and the unique group of children with whom they are working
- Match the standards with the resources in the community so children can learn from their here-and-now world
- Offer developmentally appropriate learning experiences

Teachers also need to be knowledgeable about social studies skills, attitudes, and values. Some of these are outlined in national and state standards. Teaching skills is part of both social studies and other areas of the curriculum. Some skills, however, are best fostered within the context of social studies, such as map reading. Other skills, such as thinking, finding and using information, and social skills, are present in social studies but are developed throughout the curriculum. Skill development

begins at birth and continues throughout life. In gaining proficiency, children will have the opportunity to practice thinking and social skills throughout their pre-school and primary experiences.

Attitudes and values constitute the third major area of social studies. Those included in social studies are necessary for the perpetuation and continuation of our society. Teachers select goals and objectives for children's learning of content and skills congruent with the values of a democracy and an interdependent world. The entire early childhood program is arranged around goals and objectives that will foster the following:

- Each child's own worth and dignity
- Respect for self and others
- Participation in and responsibility for the group
- The disposition of learning to learn

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PLANNING

With an understanding of the children, their culture, and the social studies, you have a base from which to answer this question: "What am I trying to help the children learn, understand, and experience?" Before you begin to answer the question, consider some other factors:

- How can I involve the children in planning?
- How can I plan for spontaneous learning?
- How can I plan short-term lessons?
- How can I plan units, projects, and thematic learning?

Involving the Children

Everyone benefits when children and teachers plan together. Teachers benefit because children who have been involved in planning their own learning are more highly motivated to learn and less likely to disrupt the group. Children benefit because they know they belong. They feel in control.

Teacher-child planning implies cooperation between teacher and child. It does not mean that children take over. Young children would feel insecure if that were the case; they want and need an adult to make decisions and to protect and guide them. On the other hand, teacher-child planning does not mean that a teacher decides ahead of time and then fishes for answers until the children give the responses she had in mind. Here's an example of such fishing:

"What should we make today?" asked a teacher.
"I'm going to build a garage," answered one child and another said, "I'll make a painting."
The teacher continued questioning until a child asked, "Are we going to make valentines?"
"Yes, that's it. Today we're making valentines," said the teacher. Later, when asked why she proceeded this way, the teacher explained, "It's very important to involve the children in making plans."

Much teacher–child planning is informal and takes place when 3- and 4-year-olds are asked to plan what they will do next or during the morning. Five-year-olds may be able to make plans for a party next week or at the end of the month, and primary-age children can develop even more extended plans.

All children should be asked to take part in making plans. Those who may be too shy to speak in front of a group or are not quick enough to take their turn may need other opportunities besides group discussions to contribute their ideas. Some planning can be done by talking with individuals or small groups of children as they play and work.

Children can plan many things:

- What they will work and play with
- With whom they will work and play
- The materials they need to complete a project
- What things they would like to learn more about
- How they will celebrate a birthday or holiday
- Places they would like to visit to learn more about a specific topic

More formal ways of planning with children have been developed. Many teachers ask children to tell them what they *know* about a specific topic, what they *want* to learn, and (after the lesson) what they have *learned* (K-W-L) (Ogle, 1986) as a means of involving children in planning (see Figure 2.2).

K	<p><i>What do we Know about fire fighters?</i></p> <p>They put out fires. Only men can be fire fighters, girls can't. Firemen are big.</p>
W	<p><i>What do we Want to learn about fire fighters?</i></p> <p>Where do they sleep? How do they slide down the pole? What do they eat? Do they like to ride on the truck?</p>
L	<p><i>What have we Learned about fire fighters?</i></p> <p>Men and women can be fire fighters. They sleep and eat at the fire station, but they have a home too. A computer tells them where there is a fire. Fire fighters put on boots, fireproof clothing, and helmets. They carry air with them. The truck has another computer, hoses, and equipment. Fire fighters go to school and learn everything. They know how to stop, drop, and roll. Fire fighters are daddies and mommies too. They have children. Fire fighter Bob's little boy is named Daniel, and his girl is Catlain. They're nice.</p>

Figure 2.2 A K-W-L chart.

A teacher from the University of Maryland's Center for Young Children sent a letter to each kindergarten child before school started. She asked each to return the enclosed self-addressed postcard to her, listing the things the child wanted to learn in the coming year.

After the children had settled into the kindergarten routine, the teacher organized their postcards into a graph. The children discussed the graph, counting the cards in a given area. Most of the children responded that they wanted to learn to read and do math, but they also included many other topics that the teacher incorporated into her plans.

Planning for the Spontaneous

Teaching young children is never predictable. Their curiosity, interests, and creativity can jump from one exciting event to an equally thrilling moment, none of which may have been planned by a teacher or a curriculum guide. Being able to respond to children's spontaneous interests and to incidental events—whether it be a bird that flies against the window, a dead fish in the aquarium, snow, or the need for a repair person—is part of being an effective teacher. When teachers ignore the changing interests, immediate needs, or incidental experiences of children, they miss too many opportunities for teaching; and children miss opportunities to follow their curiosity and have their needs for knowledge met.

Although you cannot ignore the opportunities for social studies teaching and learning that arise spontaneously, planning is still critical. You can keep in mind the broad goals and objectives of social studies, the locally required standards (if any), as well as specific objectives for individual children and then use the spontaneous and incidental as a means of fostering the achievement of these objectives. With goals in mind, any number of spontaneous happenings becomes a lesson. For example, a visit from the school janitor to fix a leaky faucet might lead to a unit on school helpers and then perhaps community helpers; or a lesson on toys might lead to a study of kites from children's home countries (DeGaetano, Williams, & Volk 1998).

Being able to respond spontaneously to incidental events is part of the planning process.



You can also keep complete lesson plans or even unit plans handy. A lot of things seem to happen spontaneously or incidentally, yet they are really very predictable. For instance, the apple tree outside the window will bloom one day, it will rain or be windy on another day, and children will fight and argue over a toy on another day. Aware of the many things that happen throughout the year, some teachers keep concept boxes on hand. These boxes contain props and equipment—perhaps a complete lesson plan with poems and books—on a variety of topics. They may focus on the weather, seasons, historical figures related to holidays (e.g., George Washington and President’s Day), interpersonal disputes, recognition and safe release of feelings, the functions of school personnel, or mainstreaming children with special needs.

One day when an unpredicted wind came up, a teacher went to the storeroom and picked out a box labeled “wind.” Using the small parachutes, kites, scarves, and poems about wind in the box, she led the children through a series of lessons that, although they seemed spontaneous, were in reality very carefully and thoughtfully planned to meet children’s interests as well as specific goals and objectives of the curriculum.

Lesson Plans

Teachers make plans for day-to-day experiences and activities as well as long-range plans. *Lesson plans* are created for short-term, day-to-day learning experiences, while *units* or *projects* are planned for learning experiences that extend over time.

Daily lesson plans are one useful tool for short-term planning. They enable a teacher to plan meaningful activities for the present—for today, tomorrow, or next week. Once you get into the habit of making lesson plans, planning becomes second nature, like driving a car does. Once teachers internalize the process of planning lessons, they can focus on the broader aspects of teaching, meet individual differences, and take advantage of the spontaneous.

Lesson plans can revolve around an individual child, a small group, or the total group. They include elements such as the following:

- Arranging the room to provide different opportunities for children’s play
- Presenting new materials or demonstrating possibilities with materials familiar to the children
- Providing opportunities for open-ended outcomes and creativity
- Giving teacher guidance in the form of feedback, listening to children, talking with them, and asking questions
- Planning for inclusion of children with special needs

Teachers use many types of lesson plans and formats. Regardless of the format, every lesson plan includes the following:

- Preparation
- A statement of goals and objectives
- Procedures to obtain the stated goals and objectives
- Ways to assess the stated goals and objectives

Preparation

“Is Jefferson City north or south of where we live?” a teacher asked a group of 6-year-olds. When no one answered, the teacher said, “I told you yesterday. Now listen: Jefferson City is north of us; north is always up,” pointing to a globe she was holding.

If this teacher had been prepared, she would have known that the concepts of north and south are meaningless to young children. She also would not have given children inaccurate information—that north is always up.

Before planning, you must be fully certain that you understand the concept, attitude, or skill you want to present. You can obtain references from the library or Internet or discuss the topic with an authority on the subject. If you are planning experiences in geography, you might attend a lecture at the local library, community center, or university. Teachers need to understand content for two important reasons: (1) translating subject matter into experiences for children demands knowledge of the scope and structure of the discipline; and (2) facts (e.g., the names of countries or the number of chemical elements) change so rapidly in today’s world that continually updating knowledge is required to ensure accuracy.

It is also important to assess children’s prior knowledge so you can use it as a foundation on which to build and make connections. It can be useful to observe children as they work and play and to interview them to find out what they already know and would like to know about a topic. Some teachers simply ask children to “tell me everything you know about _____.” The answers to this type of question provide valuable insights into children’s ideas on any given topic. K-W-L charts are also useful. Other teachers ask children to make books about a topic. For example, they may have children make a booklet about dogs to discover their level of knowledge about the subject (Bredenkamp & Rosegrant, 1995).

Your final preparation for planning involves locating resources for children’s use, obtaining materials, arranging the room, or contacting experts who might visit the class. Outstanding resources in the community may lead you to select a goal you had not thought about; limited resources may cause you to eliminate an experience you were considering.

Objectives

The song “Happy Talk” from the musical *South Pacific* expresses the idea that you must first have a dream before you can make it come true. This same idea can be applied to teaching. How do you know when you have achieved your goals if you have never established any? Thus, the first and perhaps the most essential part of planning is determining your objectives.

State the lesson’s major purpose. One or two carefully thought-out objectives stated in specific behavioral terms are more effective and realistic for a lesson plan than less specific goals are. Teachers decide on objectives based on goals/standards, knowledge of the children, the content of social studies, and knowledge of the environment.

Today, nearly every educator is familiar with behavioral objectives. Although writing objectives behaviorally may seem somewhat tedious, stating them behaviorally is not at all mysterious or difficult. A behavioral objective, unlike the more

general objective just mentioned, is a precise statement of behavior that will be accepted as evidence of the child's having achieved what was set out to be accomplished. A behavioral objective answers the following questions:

1. What will we teach?
2. How will we know when we've taught it?
3. What materials and procedures will work best to teach what we wish to teach?

In writing behavioral objectives, you will want to pay particular attention to your use of language. Since behavioral objectives are specific, your language must also be specific, using verbs that are observable and measurable. Verbs must be observable or measurable in order for them to be assessed. Look at the following words and decide just how well each one communicates what will be taught and learned:

Too General	Measurable
Know	Name
Understand	Identify
Appreciate	Construct
Enjoy	Compare
Believe	Solve

For example, an objective that states, "The student will know about money" does not have a measurable component and it does not help you in planning what to do on a given day. An objective such as, "The student will be able to name 3 coins" is measurable and tells you something specific about what to teach and how you will know what the student learns about money. You might write objectives in one of the following ways:

1. Identify the terminal behavior you desire by name. ("Name four ways to travel on land.")
2. Try to define the desired behavior further by describing the conditions under which you expect the behavior to occur. ("When given a set of pictures of vehicles, the child will be able to identify and name those that travel on land.")
3. Specify the criteria of acceptable performance by describing how well the learner must perform. ("The child will select three of the five vehicles that travel on land.") (Figure 2.3)

Goals stated in these terms—specific student behaviors related to lesson content—facilitate the teaching–learning process as well as its assessment. Once you determine the lesson's behavioral objectives, you need only to teach those behaviors identified in the objective and, after the teaching, assess each child's performance in regard to the specified behavior.

Behavioral objectives have been in use for a number of years. But while they enable teachers to plan more precisely, they are not without problems. Because they always specify the outcome, they can limit children's learning by leading teachers to ignore children's behaviors or outcomes not prespecified by an objective. Assuming only one correct response may leave little room for divergent thinking, choice, or selection of materials. In addition, behavioral objectives are very specific,

Guide to Writing Objectives

Students will be able to MEASURABLE VERB + CONTENT NOUN + (optional) ACTIVITY

Each objective requires a verb and a noun. The verb describes the cognitive process or performance that is measurable and/or observable, and the noun describes the content/skill to be learned. The noun is the content/skill to be assessed; the verb is the process by which the content/skill is assessed. Note that the activity is optional, but helpful. The activity can usually be used as the assessment.

For example:

Students will be able to define (VERB) economic terms (CONTENT NOUN).

Students will be able to represent (VERB) economic terms (CONTENT NOUN) by drawing (ACTIVITY).

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of economic terms by answering Jeopardy questions.

Students will be able to classify living and nonliving things by sorting pictures.

Students will be able to diagram the water cycle by drawing.

Students will be able to identify three coins by pointing and naming.

Students will be able to recall George Washington as the first President of the United States by drawing, writing, or answering when questioned.

Students will be able to construct a simple map of the classroom with at least three details.

Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to use latitude and longitude by using coordinates to locate cities on a map.

Students will be able to distinguish between 3 kinds of Native American shelters by labeling.

Students will be able to explain how geography impacted 3 kinds of Native American shelters by drawing and/or writing.

Measurable Verbs for Learning Objectives

organized by Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Processes (Arends, 2012)

(Use only the bulleted verbs.)

1. Remember

- Retrieve
- Recognize
- Recall
- Identify
- List

2. Understand

- Interpret
- Give examples of
- Classify
- Summarize
- Infer
- Compare
- Explain
- Restate
- Paraphrase
- Define
- Contrast
- Describe
- Illustrate
- Represent (e.g., numbers, symbols)

Figure 2.3 Guide to writing objectives.

Source: Based on S. Castle and R. Falconer (2006/11), *Guide to Instructional Objectives*, Elementary Education Program, George Mason University.

<p>3. Apply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute • Demonstrate • Implement • Determine • Locate • Match • Sequence • Show how to • Document (e.g., observations) <p>5. Evaluate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check • Critique • Verify • Judge • Prioritize • Justify • Rate 	<p>4. Analyze</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate • Distinguish • Organize • Attribute • Diagram <p>6. Create</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate • Plan • Hypothesize • Speculate • Produce • Build • Design • Dramatize • Compose • Construct • Invent
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Figure 2.3 (Continued)

breaking learning into isolated steps without considering the entire experience. A child can learn the 22 steps in shoe tying, yet never be able to put them together to actually tie a shoelace. It is up to the teacher to decide which learning experiences require behavioral objectives and corresponding assessments and which do not. For example, free play in the grocery store center is primarily experiential and may not require a behavioral objective. If play in the grocery store center is focused on counting money, a behavioral objective that states, “The student will be able to count money correctly,” may be appropriate. This objective can then be assessed through observation and a checklist of who counts correctly and who does not.

Procedures

It is not necessary to excite or stimulate young children; however, every lesson begins with an introduction to involve children and hook their interest. An interesting picture, a photograph, a book, an object, a big question, or a finger play can engage children’s interest and prepare them for the lesson.

Learning activities are then specified. The learning activities describe what the teacher and children will do to achieve the stated goals and objectives. There may be one or several learning activities. Some lesson plans will indicate the teaching strategy being used such as learning centers, cooperative learning, concept attainment, discussion, or problem-based learning. The activity that serves as the assessment is included.

Each lesson ends with a summary or closure in which the teacher or the students briefly review what they have learned in the lesson. It can be as simple as repeating the objective (“Today we learned to identify quarters”) or asking the children what they learned (“What did we learn today?”); or it can be a little more complex, such as completing the L portion of a K-W-L chart. This helps to solidify the new knowledge in the children’s minds (Arends, 2012).

Assessment

The beauty of stating objectives behaviorally is that, once stated, assessment is nearly complete. The teacher has only to check the children’s work or behavior against the statement, and the lesson is assessed.

Most teachers now use authentic forms of assessment. Teachers familiar with authentic assessment techniques know how to evaluate the success of a lesson by (a) observing the children’s behavior, (b) interviewing children informally to see if misconceptions have been corrected and concepts gained, and (c) structuring tasks for children to complete—for example, asking each child to follow a map of the room to find a hidden treasure, to describe the things happening in a picture, to tell the story of something, to draw and/or write about the objective, or to select the pictures showing what the objective taught.

Units, Projects, and Thematic Learning

Units, projects, and thematic learning share a number of similarities. Each is grounded solidly on theories of constructionism. In the mid-1900s, Dewey’s (1944) assertion that meaningful curriculum is not just the memorization of isolated facts but a unified whole led to the development of unit planning. Over the years, Piagetian and Vygotskian ideas of children’s construction of knowledge through social, physical, and mental activity supported project and thematic learning (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky, 1986).

All three approaches revolve around a theme that unites activities and learning into a congruent, consistent whole. The learning experiences in a unit of study allow children the opportunity to learn concepts as parts of an integrated whole rather than isolated bits and pieces of information under a particular content area (see Figure 2.4).

Units are organized around a social studies or integrated theme and may include project work. They differ subtly from project and thematic learning in that they are more teacher directed. A unit is developed and planned in advance by the teacher to last for a specific amount of time—perhaps several days, a week, or even a month (Helm & Katz, 2001a). Although a unit plan allows room for children to initiate and teachers follow children’s interests and cues as the unit is implemented, the teacher is the primary initiator. The integrated units on food, clothing, shelter, and transportation designed by Alleman and Brophy (2001, 2002, 2003; Brophy & Alleman, 2005b; Brophy, Alleman, & O’Mahony, 2003) are examples of such units.

As opposed to a preplanned unit, project work stems from children’s interests and follows children’s questions and needs. Children actively investigate, bring in

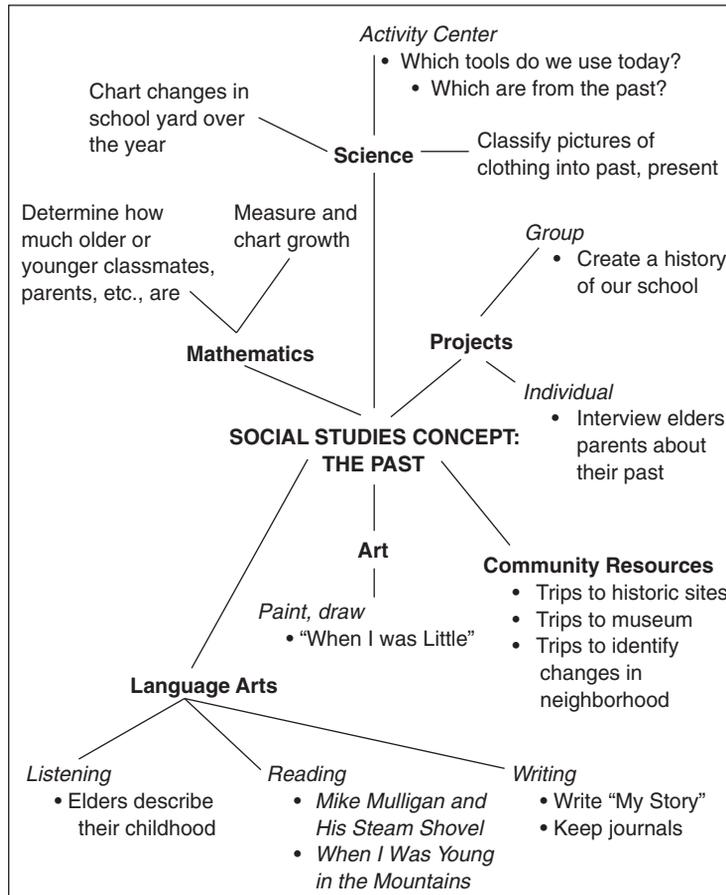


Figure 2.4 Social studies: An integrated web.

resources, and represent their ideas. Projects may last for several days, weeks, months, or even the entire year. An example of a year-long project is the Web-based learning site Journey North (www.journeynorth.org). Journey North is a free online educational service supported by Annenberg/CPB. The project uses media and communications to improve math, science, and social studies education for the nation's school children. Journey North tracks migratory species each spring. Children share their own field observations with classrooms across the hemisphere. In addition, students are linked with scientists who provide expertise directly to the classroom. You can choose the species you want to follow, and migration is tracked by satellite telemetry, providing live coverage of individual animals as they migrate. As spring sweeps across the hemisphere, students note changes in daylight, temperatures, and all living things as the food chain comes back to life.

Thematic learning is somewhere between units and projects. Thematic learning usually is more teacher directed than project learning is, but the word *theme* implies

- They equip students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes they will find useful both in and outside of school.
- They are based on goals selected to develop students' expertise, conceptual knowledge, and self-regulated application of skills.
- They balance breadth with depth by addressing limited content but develop this content sufficiently to foster conceptual understanding.
- They allow children to actively make sense and construct meaning.
- They build on children's prior knowledge.
- They foster children's higher-order thinking skills by relating what they are learning to their lives outside of school, thinking critically and creatively about it, or using it to solve problems and make decisions.
- They take place within a classroom designed as a learning community.

Figure 2.5 Why we use projects, units, or themes.

Source: Based on J. Brophy and J. Alleman (2002), *Learning and Teaching About Cultural Universals in Primary Grade Social Studies*.

a more planned or crafted progression than the word *project* does. Thematic units are often interdisciplinary.

Units, projects, and thematic learning accomplish a number of goals (see Figure 2.5):

1. They offer opportunities for a group of children to *build a sense of community* by working together around a common interest, theme, or project. Working together on a project facilitates fruitful conflicts and investigations, permitting children to clarify and rethink their initial ideas (Helm & Beneke, 2003; New, 1999a, 1999b).
2. When children work together on a common theme or project, they have the chance to relate to one another. They check one another, spontaneously offering criticism and information as they exchange ideas and prior knowledge in a cooperative effort. Vygotsky (1986) saw this type of *social activity as the generator of thought*. He believed that individual consciousness is built from outside through relations with others.
3. They *give relevance to the curriculum*. When content is a part of an organized whole, children see it as useful and relevant to their daily lives. Conceptual organizers such as themes, units, and projects give children something meaningful and substantive on which to engage their minds. They foster memory, understanding, and real-world connections. It is difficult for children to make sense of or remember abstract concepts such as colors, mathematical symbols, letter sounds, or the importance of facts—such as George Washington was the first president—when they are presented at random or devoid of any meaningful context.
4. They *provide flexibility* for teaching and learning, following children's interests and building on their experiences. Because units, projects, and thematic learning are flexible, they are planned for varying lengths of time. Some seem to end as quickly as they begin if children satisfy their interests immediately. Others

- extend for several weeks or even a semester as children expand their interests and seek other information (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997).
5. Units, projects, and thematic learning can *meet individual children's needs* through the variety of learning experiences and opportunities offered over time. They provide ample time to engage all of the multiple intelligences. Children can pace themselves, staying with a specific activity for a long period of time to satisfy their interests or needs or selecting tasks that permit them to practice skills or gain mastery over new skills.
 6. Units, projects, and themes *provide opportunities for integration* and cross-disciplinary connections. One of the hallmarks of social studies is its connections to other subject areas: science, math, literature, and the arts. Therefore, social studies units, projects, and themes lend themselves easily to integration across social studies disciplines and the other content disciplines. Integration across subject areas helps children relate to their world, which is not divided into subjects. It also helps children see connections. In addition, with increasingly limited time in the school day for social studies, integration of social studies with science, math, literature, and the arts helps ensure that social studies is covered in the curriculum.

Planning Units, Projects, or Thematic Learning

Planning involves selecting a topic, specifying goals/standards and objectives, and identifying content for the entire group (see Figure 2.6). The plans also include specific ideas and experiences for individual children (Helm & Beneke, 2003).

Teachers need to make additional plans for children with disabilities so they can participate freely and fully. For example, a teacher who wanted his class to experience a field trip to a fast-food restaurant made special arrangements so that a child in a wheelchair could take part.

Plans are also made for children who are uninterested in the topic. In one second-grade class, a unit on fruits and where they come from bored two of the children. Observing them, the teacher noted their curiosity about an apple that was beginning to rot. She directed their attention to the molds growing on the apple. The two children completed an entire unit on that subject, concluding by presenting their findings to the class, while the others studied fruit.

Selecting Themes or Topics. The theme for a unit, project, or thematic learning can stem from a number of sources. Some themes or topics grow out of the children's interests or the immediate environment. The school system, state department of education, or local, state, or national standards may suggest other topics.

In the child-care programs in Reggio Emilia, the selection of a project topic is a complicated, child-centered process. The genesis may take a number of forms:

1. The teacher may observe something of interest and importance to the children and introduce it as a topic or theme.
2. A topic may stem from the teacher's interest or professional curiosity.
3. The topic or theme might stem from some serendipity that redirects the attention of the children and teacher to another focus. The topic may be concrete or

Geography standards

Children will understand the world in spatial terms.

Children will understand the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools.

Goal

Children will create maps and use them to locate places.

Key Concepts

Maps represent places.

Maps help us locate places.

Objectives

Children will be able to:

- Name pieces of play equipment and their uses
- Locate play spaces and equipment when asked to do so
- Construct a map of their playground
- Locate a hidden object by following a map

Introduction

- Before they go out to play, ask children to sing: “What will we do when we all go out, all go out, all go out. What will we do when we all go out, we all go out to play.” List responses on a chart.
- As children play, take candid photos of them in different areas using different equipment. Make sure each child is included in a photo, and you have a photo of each area of the playground and piece of equipment.

Continuing

Activity 1: After you print the photos, place them on a table for children to look at and discuss. Ask them to find the following:

- Themselves at play
- Their favorite piece of equipment
- Their favorite spot on the playground

Then ask children to group the pictures by their function, grouping equipment in terms of climbing, sand play, riding, swinging, and so on.

Assessment: Checklist and note taking on naming and functions.

Sing “What DID we do on the playground.” List children’s responses and compare them to the first list of what they thought they would do.

Activity 2: Provide each child with a large piece of paper on which you have drawn an outline of the playground. Project this outline on an overhead or computer screen and draw one landmark on the paper, perhaps the building with the entrance to the playground. Have children draw the same landmark in the same place (check to be sure each has it correctly placed). Have children draw the playground equipment or build it with unit cubes, then draw it. They can use the photos as guides. (An alternative is to have the class make one mural-sized map together on a large sheet of brown paper.)

Figure 2.6 Unit plan: Mapping the playground.

Assessment: Checklist and note taking on naming, locating, and creating a map.

Activity 3: Take the maps outside and ask children to check them for accuracy. Are there any changes they need to make? If so, make them. Collect the maps.

Assessment: Checklist and note taking to assess maps on locating, constructing a map, and key concepts.

Culminating Activity and Assessment

Draw an accurate map and duplicate one for each group of three. Hide objects on the playground, one for each group. Mark one object with an X on each map. Organize the children into groups of three and give each group a map. They are to use the map to find the object that is marked with an X on their map. Directions are to find the hidden object. Back in the classroom, discuss using maps to find their objects.

Assessment: Checklist and note-taking on locating and key concepts.

Summary/Conclusion:

Discussion: What did you like about our mapping the playground unit? What did we learn about maps this week? What are maps? Why do we use maps? How can they help us? Repeat the key concepts.

Assessment: Note-taking on understandings and misconceptions.

Mapping Unit Assessment Checklist

	Names Names equipment	Names function of equipment	Locates spaces and equipment	Constructs a map	Uses map to locate object	Shows understanding of key concepts	Notes
Child A							
Child B							
Child C							

Figure 2.6 (Continued)

abstract in nature, local or distant, present-day or historical, small or large scale; but whatever the topic, it should allow children to draw on their own prior understandings and should involve them in firsthand, relevant, and interactive experiences (Helm & Beneke, 2003).

Here is an example of how one unit, based on children’s interests, progressed. In a kindergarten, a visiting police officer permitted children to sit in a police car. Following the visit, the children began building a police car in the classroom out of large blocks. A posted sign let others know what the block structure represented and that it was not to be disturbed. The teacher added a steering wheel, a piece that looked like an instrument panel, and some boards. The block structure expanded and became a more permanent car with seats, a dashboard, a horn, and a gearshift. The children did research as they strove to make the car more and more realistic.

NCSS (2010) Standard II: Time, Continuity, and Change

The learners will understand key people, events, and places associated with the history of the community, nation, and world.

Virginia Standards of Learning (2012): History

- K.1 The student will recognize that history describes events and people of other times and places by
- a) identifying examples of past events in legends, stories, and historical accounts of Powhatan, Pocahontas, George Washington, Betsy Ross, and Abraham Lincoln;
 - b) identifying the people and events honored by the holidays of Thanksgiving Day; Martin Luther King, Jr., Day; Presidents' Day; and Independence Day (Fourth of July).

Theme, topic, or unit focus: George Washington

Possible Objectives: Students will be able to identify George Washington as the first President of the United States. Students will be able to describe the jobs of George Washington as farmer, leader of soldiers, and President of the United States. Students will be able to demonstrate George Washington's modes of transportation (horse, boat) and compare them to transportation today. Students will be able to identify George Washington as one of the Presidents honored on President's Day. Students will be able to dramatize facts about George Washington's life. Students will be able to distinguish between George Washington as a past president and the current president.

Figure 2.7 Standards and objectives.

Finally, the teacher added wires, bulbs, and batteries. With the help of a volunteer who guided and directed them in their discovery, the children made the right connections and were able to turn the lights in their car on and off. They consulted books, compared different types of cars and trucks, and held discussions. Videos of police cars in action were shared when the police officer visited the class again. The entire unit lasted for more than 6 weeks.

Particularly in the primary grades, standards of learning are becoming increasingly important as frameworks for curriculum. They are useful guides when selecting topics or themes.

Standards tend to be broad and serve to focus the scope and sequence of learning. They are different from objectives, which are specific and serve to focus instruction and assessment in lesson and unit plans (see Figure 2.6). Standards must be broken down into smaller parts for daily learning, then tied back together for the big picture. Because objectives are small parts of a larger standard, many objectives may be required to "cover" one standard (Figure 2.7).

When using standards, a unit might focus on the following:

- One social studies standard such as history: Native Americans
- Two social standards from different disciplines such as history and geography: Native Americans and Where They Lived
- One or more social studies standards and one or more standards from other disciplines such as history, geography, and science: Native Americans and the Habitats in Which They Lived

- A transdisciplinary theme, which might include standards from all disciplines, such as *Why People Live Where They Do* or *Harvest Festivals Around the World* (including Thanksgiving), either of which would include history, economics, geography, science, math, and literature

It is the teacher's job to look across standards for connections and relationships that might help children better understand their world.

Each unit, project, or theme should have, in addition to goals and standards, one or more big ideas or essential understandings (see Figure 2.6). These are often found in the key concepts of the discipline (as described in the content chapters, Chapters 7–11) and in the disciplinary standards (NCSS for social studies as well as those for science, math, and literacy). Using these themes, key concepts for the unit might include the following:

- History is about people in the past.
- People in the past lived differently than we do now.
- Habitats are different and have different characteristics.
- Geography affects where and how people live.

Content. Once the theme, goals, standards, and key concepts have been identified, the content to be covered can be identified. The content lists the major points to be included. Again, local, state, or national standards or descriptions of developmentally appropriate practice provide a guide. You will want to organize and specify the facts, concepts, skills, and attitudes that will be included. You should also include a list of available materials, resources, people, and field trips. Flexibility is the key. Guided by the overall goals and objectives of the program, teachers select content that meets children's developmental and learning needs.

Objectives. Objectives derive from the overall goals or standards of the unit, project, or theme. They direct the teaching and learning. They tell what the unit, project, or thematic learning is to accomplish; describe how the children will change following the experience; and lead to appropriate assessments. Here again, your careful selection of a few well-thought-out measurable objectives related to the content and key concepts will be more effective than listing numerous general objectives. Focusing objectives on each area of the social studies—knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values—helps balance children's learning experiences (see Figure 2.6).

But objectives can be flexible as long as they address the relevant standards. At all times, teachers remain alert to children's progress and interests, continually looking for ways to extend rather than dampen children's learning and enthusiasm for the theme or topic.

Procedures. The procedures section includes three parts: the introduction, the learning experiences, and a culminating activity.

Introduction. Almost anything that motivates and stimulates the children's interest can be used to introduce a unit, project, or theme. The purpose of the introduction

is to arouse children's curiosity, to get them "hooked," by stimulating their interest and prior knowledge on the topic. This could be done in any of the following ways:

- *A teacher-initiated question.* You might ask the children some questions to stimulate their thinking, such as, "I wonder where firefighters live." Or you could say directly, "We all have to ride the school bus, so what do we know about the safety rules for riding the bus?" Their answers could be listed on a K-W-L chart. Either of these questions could begin a unit on safety.
- *An incidental experience.* Sometimes a unit arises from an unplanned experience. A child's illness in school could begin a unit on health. Some event in the local community—fire prevention week, elections, construction—might initiate a unit. The discovery of a bird's nest could stimulate interest in a unit on birds.
- *A book.* Children love stories. A story, poem, or picture book stimulates interest in the topic. The story of Johnny Appleseed might serve to introduce a unit on plants and how they grow.
- *Enactments.* A play, reader's theater, or historical reenactment can create interest and motivation to learn more. You might ask children, "What do you think it would be like to sail on a ship to a new country?"
- *An audiovisual resource.* A television show, a song, a video, or a website could stimulate interest. You can make use of other media as well, such as newspapers or magazines.
- *Ongoing activities.* Units, projects, and themes can lead to other units and projects. The study of the grocery store might lead to the study of food, purchasers, consumers, or transportation. A unit or project on seashells can lead directly to a study of life in the sea and then to life on land.
- *An arranged environment.* You might display objects from some other country, place, or time; exhibit a poster or an open book; or prepare a bulletin board. Any of these steps would call children's attention to a topic and stimulate questions and interest. One teacher from a western state left a branding iron on the library table with a few books opened to pictures of cowhands at branding time. In this way he introduced a theme built around the history of the region.

Learning Experiences. Learning experiences are the heart of the unit or project. These experiences are not isolated activities but are planned to foster the goals and objectives of the unit.

Since the purpose is to build a strong relationship between learning experiences and content, you will want to design the learning experiences to work together as a whole. You can plan a sequential presentation of learning experiences around the objectives of the unit. Analysis of each objective will suggest activities that will foster children's attainment of the objective. You might ask yourself, "What experience will foster this goal?" "Which experiences should come first and provide a basis for further experiences?" "What will extend and clarify children's understanding?" (See Figures 2.4 and 2.6.)

You can plan some activities for individual children, others for small groups, and still others for the total group.

Creating learning centers is an ideal way to provide various experiences while giving children choices about their learning. Teachers make several decisions when planning learning centers (Castle, 2002 in Arends, 2012):

- Organization: by topic (such as fall); by content areas (such as math, science, language arts, fine arts); around a story (such as Johnny Appleseed); by multiple intelligences (visual-spatial, logical mathematical, interpersonal, musical, bodily-kinesthetic)
- Amount of student choice: free choice; choices within guidelines and conditions (such as finish 4 out of 5 centers this week); limited choice (small groups work together and choose together)
- Documentation: student work completed at centers; student checklist of centers completed; student folder of work; student portfolio of work plus reflections

Learning experiences may come from any of the following:

- *Language experiences.* Oral discussion, listening to records, recording ideas in writing, dictating to a teacher or a tape recorder, reporting to a group, and dictating or writing letters, booklets, or stories are all examples of language experiences you could plan to foster children's attainment of unit goals.
- *Community resources.* Field trips in the school neighborhood or the community can be part of any unit or project plan. You could ask individuals from the community to visit and share information with the class.
- *Audiovisual and technology-based experiences.* Videos, pictures, CDs, models, graphs, murals, websites, virtual field trips, simulations, and digital photos integrate seeing and hearing for engaging learning. Children could make their own graphs or murals or illustrate a topic by taking their own photographs.
- *Arts and crafts.* Painting, constructing, drawing, modeling with clay, paper weaving, and many other art activities can be coordinated with other learning experiences.
- *Music, drama, and physical activities.* Songs, games, plays, puppet shows, making and playing musical instruments, creative rhythms, and dance foster children's active involvement with the stated objectives.
- *Mathematics and science activities.* Opportunities to use mathematics include counting, ordering, and sorting; classifying; adding and subtracting; graphing; and judging groups of more or fewer objects. For science, one class, stimulated by the discovery of parsley caterpillars in their garden, recorded how many days the caterpillars spent eating, the caterpillars' length, how many days it took for each chrysalis to form, and the number of days it took for the butterflies to emerge. Because they were engaged in meaningful activities, the children gained not only counting, calendar, and information-gathering skills, but science knowledge as well.
- *Social skills.* Social skills are an integral part of the unit as children participate together in planning or work together on activities. Children's interests might dictate that they work together to investigate some subtopic; later, they could report to the group. Young children can also improve their social skills by working together on a mural, a painting, a skit, a scrapbook, or a construction project (Figure 2.8).

Theme: Harvest Festivals Around the World (including Thanksgiving in the United States)

Field Trip (real or virtual): Garden, farm or orchard.

History Center: Draw farming then and now (horses and tractors); or draw Thanksgiving then and now

Geography Center: Draw a picture that shows what living things need to grow; or locate the harvest festival countries on the globe; or use premade climate cards to find the climate of each harvest festival country and tell how each climate will or will not help things grow.

Civics Center: List (drawing or writing) “Things I Am Thankful For.”

Economics Center: Where do foods come from? Match pictures of foods to their source.

Culture Center: Photos from 3 harvest festivals. Find similarities and differences.

Math Center: Sort and count beans, seeds, and Indian corn kernels; graph number of each.

Science Center: Draw life cycle of a plant (including harvesting); match stages to seasons

Language Arts Center: Look at/read picture books of harvest festivals; draw/write a story about a harvest festival; or sequence pictures for a harvest story (planting, growing, harvesting, celebrating) and tell the story.

Music/Dance Center: Make/play instruments or dance to recorded music from harvest festival countries.

Dramatic Play Center: Farmers (artifacts for planting, growing, harvesting)

Art Center: What did they eat? On a paper plate, using beans, cotton, construction paper, etc., create a dinner from the first Thanksgiving; What do we eat? Create what your family eats on Thanksgiving.

Technology Center: Do a Webquest on harvest festivals.

Figure 2.8 Examples of learning center activities.

Regardless of the number and type of learning experiences selected, continuity between experiences is planned. One experience builds on another. A thread of meaning runs through several experiences. Experiences and activities are juxtaposed to enable children to see the connections between past and present, among and between people, and between objects in their world.

Culminating Activity. The culminating activity is time spent for reviewing, summing up, and assessing the unit; it provides closure for teacher and children. A concluding activity gives the teacher a chance to observe the children and assess what concepts they have formed about the topic or theme. It gives the children an opportunity to tie the pieces together. It also gives the teacher a chance to assess learning on the overall unit. Culminating activities may be short and simple or more complex. Units and projects could end simply with the children acting out stories or poems they have created or presenting their projects. Dictating experience charts or thank-you letters, compiling a booklet, or sharing experiences are other summary activities. Activities such as creating murals or designing brochures enable children to show what they have learned about the topic (see Figure 2.6).

Anne Daniels, a teacher of 5-year-olds at the Center for Young Children at the University of Maryland, concluded a unit on Winnie the Pooh with a trip to the university apiary to collect honey for a snack. This activity, in turn, led to a new

theme—studying and identifying different types of insects, where and how they live, and what they contribute to our lives.

Assessing Units, Projects, or Thematic Learning

You will want to be able to describe what children have learned and the skills and attitudes they have gained. The behavioral objectives and culminating activity offer built-in assessment. In addition, it might be useful to ask the children to assess the unit themselves: “What did you learn? What did you like best? What can you do now that you could not do before? What would you like to do again? What could you do differently next time?” Children could dictate or write booklets reporting the “Things I’ve Learned.” You can assess the success of the unit informally as you observe children and take notes on their play or work. Or you can structure the assessments by asking each child to tell about a topic, demonstrate a task, or respond to some questions (see Figure 2.4). Checklists, rubrics, or portfolios developed around the goals of the unit and the specified content and skills might be used.

In addition to assessing the children, teachers will want to evaluate their planning and teaching. A well-planned project or unit should include the following:

- Clear, realistic, obtainable goals and objectives
- Material of high interest to the children
- Activities that take into consideration children’s different abilities, interests, and backgrounds
- Involvement of the children in planning the goals and activities of the unit
- Active experiences that fully involve the children
- Opportunities for children to work and play together
- Opportunities to assess children’s learning

Following a unit, teachers should reflect on the unit and ask themselves the following:

- Whether it included all of the elements
- How it could be improved
- What parts were highly successful
- How could it be done differently next time

ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

Assessment is necessary and important. We all want and need good information about how and what children are learning. Teachers and parents want to know how their children are doing, school administrators want to know how effective their program is, and policy makers want to judge the worth of policies (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). When assessment is authentic, it benefits children, teachers, and parents. Authentic assessment takes place as a part of the curriculum.

The tasks used to assess children's learning in the social studies are real and they connect to children's daily experiences rather than detract from them (Helm & Beneke, 2003).

Authentic assessment can be used to do the following:

- *Assess developmental levels and/or prior knowledge*, enabling the teacher to plan goals and objectives that are appropriate to the children's learning, growth, and development
- *Give feedback to students*, enabling them to feel good about and become more involved in their own learning, and enabling the teacher to correct misconceptions
- *Assess attainment of learning objective(s)*, providing evidence for teachers of the extent to which children are attaining the desired goals and objectives
- *Guide instruction*, enabling teachers to adjust instruction based on children's learning
- *Improve instruction*, functioning as a quality-control system that permits teachers to determine which parts of the teaching-learning process have been effective and which have not and stimulate ideas for alternative procedures that may be more effective

A broad and complex process, assessment is not to be confused with evaluation or standardized testing. Authentic assessment is ongoing, comprehensive, and an integral part of classroom social studies instruction. Assessment procedures can focus on behavior (what they do), verbalizations (what they say), or products (what they make).

Creating assessments is not difficult when they are connected to learning goals and objectives; are based on children's behavior, verbalizations, or products; and follow principles of good assessments. Effective assessments:

- Are developmentally appropriate
- Match the goal or objective(s)
- Align with instructional strategy
- Are visibly documented
- Facilitate students showing what they know
- Are done often
- Use multiple measures
- Have clear scoring procedures, as appropriate
- Are made explicit to students
- Address all cognitive domains (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis)
- Access multiple intelligences
- Are motivating and interesting
- Can be accomplished with reasonable effort
- Are unbiased
- Drive subsequent instruction
- Are used to improve teaching and learning

There are many types of assessments, and you will want to choose ones that suit your children and your objective while keeping the principles of effective assessment in mind. Types of assessments include the following:

- Observation using anecdotal notes, checklists, rating scales
- Traditional (closed-ended):
 - Selected response (multiple choice, true/false, matching)
 - Constructed response (short answer, fill-in-the-blank, essay)
- Alternative (more open-ended) using rubrics, checklists, rating scales
 - Authentic (products, projects, problem-solving tasks)
 - Performance (demonstrations, performances, presentations)
- Portfolios (content, student choice and reflection, organization)

Observation

Children's learning can be observed in their behavior and talk and documented by observational notes. When they observe children's behavior systematically, teachers see indications of their achievement of social studies goals. Teachers look for and record behaviors that demonstrate children's skills, attitudes, values, or knowledge. Behavioral observation is a valid way to evaluate social studies goals relating to social skills, problem solving, decision making, and acceptance of the values of others.

Observing means noting only the behavior that is occurring without making inferences. Teachers can observe and record children's behavior at any time during the school day, including free play, center time, activity time, group time, on the playground, or during the routines of dressing, eating, cleaning up, and resting.

When you record repeated behaviors of children, you compile a record of their progress. You could structure your observations around the specific and general goals of the social studies program. You could observe and record children's behavior in applying knowledge, solving a problem, taking responsibility, or working with others; or you might structure your observations around more specific goals. Children's use of maps during block building and their drawing of maps for use with wheel toys give real indications of their mapping concepts. Shopping at the play store, children reveal economic concepts through their behavior. As children play, you might note when they (a) use new vocabulary correctly, (b) demonstrate their understanding of making change, purchasing, or producing, and (c) follow social rules and procedures.

Recording observations through anecdotal notes is essential in compiling a documented record. Each note should include the child's name and the date. These can then be ordered chronologically to see patterns and changes.

Digital and other photographs can help you observe and assess children's behaviors, knowledge, and progress. The photos let you reflect on what was happening and what children were doing when they were observed (Hoisington, 2002). The photos can also be e-mailed to families or included in a child's portfolio for parents to see. Discussing what the child in the photo was doing, why, and when can be a fruitful form of assessment. Videotapes can be useful in the same way.

Table 2.1 Example of a Social Skills Checklist

NAME:	DATE:		
Behavior	Always	Sometimes	Never
Completes a task Works with others Takes responsibility Cooperates in group work Listens to others			

Checklists

Some learning experiences and objectives lend themselves to checklists of behaviors or skills, and are a convenient way to document children's progress. You can construct a checklist for yourself designed around the specific concepts, goals, and objectives of the social studies unit or lesson plan. Other checklists are often provided by the school or by the county or state department of education and might be based on the general goals of social studies. Publishers of textbooks and instructional kits sometimes prepare checklists. Table 2.1 shows a checklist developed by a teacher to assess and document social skills with a group of 5-year-old children.

Rating scales are similar to checklists, except they enable the teacher to give a numeric score (Always = 2, Sometimes = 1, Never = 0), which may be helpful when letter grades need to be calculated.

Informal Interviews

Another, more specific form of assessment of children's progress in social studies is the informal interview method. You could conduct interviews during free play or anytime you and individual children are together. You should look for the following as you interview children:

1. *Consistency.* Does the child have a stable set of responses? Does the child reply in the same way to the same type of question?
2. *Accuracy.* Are the answers correct? The child may not include all of the possibilities, but is the response somewhat accurate?
3. *Clarity.* Is the response clear and acceptable?
4. *Fullness.* How complete was the response? How many aspects of the concept were covered by the response?
5. *Extensiveness.* How many illustrations of the concept were given?

As they conduct interviews to discover children's thinking about a social studies topic, teachers sometimes use pictures or objects for the children to manipulate in order to demonstrate or illustrate the concepts. Not all concepts can be expressed by children verbally; you could ask them to act out a concept, show it, draw all the

Informal interviews with children yield information on children's thinking.



things they know about it, find an example of the concept in the pictures, or sort pictures into examples and nonexamples. In any case, the responses must be documented through teacher note-taking.

The work of Piaget (1969) provides other guidelines for interviewing young children. The questions Piaget asked and the way in which he built his questions on the child's responses to the first question exemplify the type of interview technique that reveals children's thinking. For example, one teacher wanted to find out what children knew about seeds and plants. He asked them to tell him what grows from a seed, where one looks for seeds, and how one gets seeds to grow.

In administering Piagetian interviews, you must establish an atmosphere of security and trust by communicating to the child that she is in a safe, nonthreatening position. When a child responds to your question, accept the answer without judgment. You might use a small tape recorder to record the answer or take notes. Children's responses are often short, so they are not difficult to record by hand.

When the child responds, continue questioning by asking for justification. Do not assume that if a child gives a correct answer, he has done the proper thinking. Several questions may be necessary to understand his perceptions and thinking processes. You might ask the child, "Could you show me?" "Would you tell me more?" or, "What if . . .?" You could ask the child to act out the answer, or you could challenge his answer by saying, "Well, another person said . . ." In this way, you will be able to uncover more of the child's thinking and ideas.

You will need to give the child plenty of time to answer. In many testing situations, time is limited. When conducting an individual interview, you will want to allow the child all the time necessary to think and answer.

Performance Tasks

Structuring tasks for children to do something that demonstrates skills or concepts is another kind of assessment. You might ask children to draw a map of the room, show on a graph which bus has the most riders, complete a puzzle, use latitude and longitude coordinates to find a location, or sort pictures into categories (e.g., needs

and wants; past and present). One teacher used a set of pictures to assess children's awareness of selected concepts in physical geography by asking them to select the four pictures that represented the concept and the four that did not. Performances might also include plays, movement or dancing, signing, demonstrations, or presentations of the results of a problem-solving task. Performance tasks must be documented through note taking, checklists, rating scales, or rubrics.

Products

Structuring tasks for children to make something that demonstrates concepts or skills is another kind of assessment. Many lessons ask children to make something related to the objective: a drawing or diagram, a drawing with a written sentence, written work, a glued picture sort, a map, a poster, a brochure, and so on. In the geography sort example given earlier, the teacher could watch the children and note the number of correct pictures; or the teacher could ask the children to sort and glue the pictures into two labeled columns, creating a product for the teacher to assess after school. Units, projects, and thematic units often conclude with a complex product, such as a mural, newspaper, travel brochure, or some other product that ties the unit together and demonstrates the children's learning. These products might be assessed by a checklist or rating scale, but their complexity may require a more complex assessment tool such as a scoring rubric.

Rubrics enable the teacher to rate a child's work on multiple elements and the quality or level of each. A holistic rubric includes descriptions of expected performance that are numbered. For example the product or performance:

- 3 = Demonstrates complete understanding
- 2 = Demonstrates partial understanding
- 1 = Demonstrates little or no understanding
- 0 = No attempt was made.

An analytic rubric has concepts, skills, attitudes, or other criteria on one axis, scores or levels of performance on the other axis, and descriptions of performance in each cell. For example, teacher candidates in George Mason University's Elementary Education Program were required, as part of their social studies and fine arts course, to visit a historical museum and write a persuasive argument to their principal for why they should take their students there. They had to include the work the children would do and how it would be assessed as well as integrate fine arts. Figure 2.9 shows the rubric for this assignment.

Rubrics may take some time to create and refine, particularly revising the wording of the performances so they are clear to the children. Rubrics can also be made with Smiley, Neutral, and Frowny faces for nonreaders. Rubrics are now easy to find on the Internet, but not all of them are well done, and you will have to adapt them to your children and curriculum. When creating, using, or adapting rubrics, be sure that the criteria match your learning objectives, the content and skills children are expected to demonstrate. They should not focus on criteria that are not in the objectives such as neatness.

Rubric for Museum and the Arts Persuasive Argument				
Criteria	Clear and Consistent Evidence; Meets All Requirements 3 points	Some Evidence; Meets Partial Requirements 2 points	Limited Evidence; Needs Improvement 1 point	No Evidence 0 points
Correct, complete information Is the required information present?	Includes the name of the site, type of site, link to objectives, types of programs provided (including websites), contact information	One or two of the required items are missing.	Three or four of the required items are missing.	Required items not included.
Persuasive argument based on social studies knowledge Does the presentation make a case for a social studies field trip? Does it reflect knowledge gained from texts and class discussions?	The presentation is well-written, clear, and complete so the intended target audience (principal or team) can understand the reasoning. References to texts and class discussions are well documented.	The presentation is well written, but some information is not clear or complete, so the intended audience may or may not understand the reasoning. References to text and class discussions are limited.	Presentation is not well written. Information is unclear and/or incomplete so the intended audience cannot understand the reasoning. There are few references to texts and class discussions.	Presentation is not a persuasive argument. No reasoning is included. No references to text or class discussion.
Integration of social studies and the arts Does it include examples of student work or project that integrates social studies and the arts?	Student work sample would allow creativity and integrate at least two of the fine arts.	Student work sample is somewhat creative and integrates one of the fine arts.	Student work sample is not creative and does not integrate the fine arts.	Student work not included.
Assessment Is an assessment included?	An appropriate assessment task and scoring tool/rubric are included.	An appropriate assessment task or scoring tool/ rubric is included.	An assessment task is included but it is not appropriate.	Assessment not included.
Attach an "artifact" from the site = 3 points				
Total points _____ /15				

Figure 2.9 Example of an analytic rubric in teacher education

Source: Adapted with permission from S. Castle and S. Shoob (2009), George Mason University Elementary Education Program.

The following items might be included in the portfolio:

- Samples of children's drawings, maps, or other work
- Logs of books read to or by the children
- Photos of children working on a unit project or a special product
- Notes and comments from interviews with the child
- Copies of pages of journals with invented spelling preserved
- Tape recordings of children telling or reading a story, reciting a poem, or recording some special event
- Videos of children on a field trip or during some other special event
- Dictated or written stories about social studies

Figure 2.10 The portfolio.

Portfolios

Collecting samples of children's work in portfolios illustrates children's progress over time. Each child has an individual portfolio; whatever work or records are placed in the portfolio are dated, and often something about when, how, and under what conditions the work was completed is included. Growth charts, photos of children completing skills, and recordings of their speech can also be collected (see Figure 2.10).

Several times a year, teachers go over the portfolios and note the changing form of children's concepts, new vocabulary, expansion of ideas, and children's increasing ability to express their ideas. This analysis offers a base on which to assess both children's learning in the social studies as well as your teaching.

The child, as well as teachers and parents, should have the opportunity to select work samples to place in the portfolio. Teachers can guide children when asking them to contribute work samples. Teachers might ask children to select something that was difficult to do, that illustrates a special accomplishment, or that has special meaning and merit (Gronlund, 1998). Children may write or dictate reflections on their included work.

When the work in the portfolio is an accurate representation of a child's growth and achievement, teachers can use it to assess progress. The work can be analyzed and assessed for progress toward a standard of performance consistent with the individual child's growth and development; or the work can be assessed using a scoring rubric common across the classroom. Presenting the portfolio to the teacher and even to the parents helps children to become self-directed learners and to feel good about their accomplishments.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests are based on goals and objectives decided by someone other than the classroom teacher and are intended to serve as large-scale evaluations. They may

appear to have little to do with what goes on in preschool and primary classrooms. Although they may guide the scope of the curriculum, preschool and primary classrooms prepare children well beyond the scope of the tests (social skills, for example). Standardized tests are based primarily on verbal or mathematical intelligence and do not reflect the multiple forms of intelligence (Anderson, 1998; Seefeldt, 1998), so they do not access the strengths of all children. However, if you are responsible for teaching standards-based content on which your students will be tested, you will need to be sure that the content is embedded and assessed within your lessons, units, themes, and projects.

Recognizing that all children are special and unique, most early childhood teachers want to consider a combination of assessment techniques. In this way, they are better able to pinpoint children's strengths and needs. Using a variety of assessment techniques is useful for other reasons. Keeping records of the children's work, systematically observing their behavior, or using informal interviews might be helpful in reporting progress to parents, in giving insights on how to improve your teaching methods, or in indicating which experiences, activities, goals, and objectives are appropriate to introduce at a given time. This type of assessment, conducted by teachers for the purpose of assessing the teaching and the attainment of specific goals, is often called *formative*. It is the type of assessment that enables you to formulate your program, set goals, and know when the goals have been reached, what new goals should be set, and what goal modifications should be made (Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz, 1998).

SUMMARY

Planning is essential for successful teaching and learning. Having a clear idea of what children are like, the goals of society and education, and content knowledge of the social studies, you are prepared to plan. In planning, you must consider the reality of your situation, provide balance throughout the program, involve the children, and allow for spontaneity.

Long-term planning of social studies units and short-term planning of the daily lessons involves designing appropriate learning objectives. In setting specific goals for your teaching and children's learning, assessment follows naturally as you assess the degree to which the goals have been reached.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the difference between preoperational and concrete operational thinking. What are the implications for teaching?
2. What does the term "least restrictive environment" mean? Give examples. Discuss the implications.
3. What are some possible modifications or accommodations that teachers might make for children in each of the special needs groups?

4. Why is social studies content knowledge essential for teachers of young children?
5. Discuss the similarities and differences between units, projects, and themes. What would be important considerations when deciding which to use? Is it possible to combine them or not? If so, how?
6. What is the relationship between standards, objectives, and key concepts?
7. What is integration? Why is it important? Generate some themes that integrate social studies with other disciplines.
8. Discuss the principles of effective assessment. Why is each important? What are the implications for making assessment decisions? What are the variety of ways you might assess a kindergarten standard such as “The student will describe everyday life in the present and in the past and begin to recognize that things change over time” (Virginia Standards of Learning, 2012).

Extend Your Knowledge

1. When you are shopping, walking in a park, or attending a community gathering, observe children under the age of 8. List the ways in which these children are alike, regardless of their age and individual characteristics. Then observe again and make another list of the ways in which the children differ from one another as individuals.
2. Take a fresh look at the community your school is part of. What physical properties do you note that affect children’s learning? For example, what kinds of stores are present? Are there gardens? Talk with some of the community members. Ask what they expect children to learn in school, how they think children should be taught, and what they would do to change education. From these responses, can you determine some of the cultural values of the community? List these values and compare and discuss them in class.
3. Curriculum libraries at colleges, universities, or school systems contain guides from school systems throughout your state and nation. Most states have their standards of learning and curriculum frameworks online. With a partner or in a small group, compare the goals and objectives of unit and project plans suggested in two or more of these guides.
4. Design both a lesson and a unit, project, or thematic learning plan. When you have completed the plans, ask the class to critique them.

Resources

Often, curriculum guides (sometimes called curriculum frameworks) are developed by local school systems or state departments of education. Inquire in your school system or at the state department of education about curriculum guides or search for them online. The guides offer suggestions for objectives in many subject areas, including the social studies. They also contain abundant information and ideas for lesson planning and things to do with children.

Resource Books

- Katz, L. G., & Chard, S. C. (2000). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach* (2nd ed.). Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing.
- Singleton, L. R. (1997). *C is for citizenship: Children's literature and civic understanding*. Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium.
- Chick, K. A. (2008). *Teaching women's history through literature: Standards-based lesson plans for grades K–12*. Silver Spring, MD: National Council for Social Studies.

Websites for Unit Plans, Lesson Plans, and Materials

Population Connection

www.populationconnection.org

National Council for the Social Studies

www.socialstudies.org

National Archives

www.archives.gov

National Gallery of Art's Education Page

www.nga.gov/education

National Association for the Education of Young Children

www.naeyc.org

PBS

www.pbs.org

Social Science Education Consortium

Search for "Social Science Education Consortium" to find their publications on various websites.