Making Sense and Making Citizens: Revising Social Studies

School social studies stands indicted. Elementary school children claim that it is boring; high school students make the same judgment, only more vehemently. Reformers declare the content of the curriculum vacuous and complain that high school graduates do not know anywhere near enough about history or geography. And research on political participation indicates that the youngest voters—recent graduates of current social studies classes—participate less in the political process than any other group of citizens. While it would clearly be foolish to blame social studies departments for young people’s alienation, it would be fair to say that few students have had the experiences that might turn them into committed and effective citizens.

But although hardly anyone is happy with existing social studies curricula, different critics recommend widely different sorts of changes in it. Eight years ago Kieran Egan of Simon Fraser University declared social studies a failed experiment and urged fellow educators to let it die quietly. Since then, two major reports, the Bradley Commission’s *Building a History Curriculum* (1988) and California’s *History-Social Science Framework* (1988), have exhorted schools and publishers to design curricula which teach more history in all grades.

Many reformers wonder, however, whether a heavier diet of history will improve either the social studies curriculum or the children consuming it. In a thoughtful history of social studies written for the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, David Jenness reports that although the debate over history versus social studies has persisted for 75 years, social studies has always been mostly history. “The information that students do not know is, alas, what is taught,” Jenness concludes. He doubts that teaching more of it will help. (Fifty years ago, as experts lamented the ignorance of another generation, Edgar Wesley succinctly explained the paradox: “Much may be taught, less will be learned, and a great deal will subsequently be forgotten.”) Many others, including Walter Parker of the University of Washington, argue that social studies ought to help students to think critically about the past and that teaching “loads of geography and narrative history for 12 years” cannot possibly achieve this.

Nor do the reformers agree on what history—or whose history—students ought to study. Molefi Asante of Temple University believes that current curricula empower children of European descent by connecting them to the roots of their culture. He argues that African-American children can gain similar confidence from an “Afrocentric” curriculum built around the culture and history of their ancestors. While agreeing that history books ought to show how all groups have contributed to American history, other reformers worry that teaching an Afrocentric curriculum to some children will frag-

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ment the common culture. Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch speaks for many when she warns that public schools have a responsibility "for teaching children an awareness of their American identity."

These debates remind us that the history books lining the walls of classrooms and libraries offer us narratives constructed by individuals, groups, and cultures rather than objective facts. The past is a formless sea of lives and events connected to one another in inextricable ways. Human beings give it shape when they tell stories or write other sorts of history. Those who craft historical narratives make many decisions about what really matters. Some of these decisions flow so naturally from the cultural air we breathe that hardly anyone questions them—we expect more details on the life of Alexander the Great than on that of his groom. Other choices are more jarring: We may wonder why the school books that identify Queen Isabella as Columbus's benefactor never mention her role in expelling the Jews from Spain.

The teachers described in this issue of Changing Minds have listened to reformers and made decisions about the teaching of social studies that reflect their students' needs, their values, and what they know about teaching and children. In their classrooms and in conversation they address the issues that trouble critics of prevailing practice. They help us to see what is wrong with the fact-focused social studies of the market-share textbooks.

The issues that emerge in their classrooms and thread through their conversations deserve the attention of everyone who is worried about social studies.

Given that history continues to form the core of most social studies curricula, it is not surprising that the first questions focus on history.

What is History?

All written histories are interpretations, and different scholars often interpret the same record differently. Unless students learn something about the way in which historians weigh evidence, they see themselves as sponges rather than as critics and thinkers working to figure out what really happened in the past and what relevance it has to the present. Social studies becomes very different when teachers encourage youngsters to question the authorities. Consider Elaine Hoekwater's fifth graders, who often comment, after they have read one account of an event, "I wonder what another book would say" (see "Maybe the White Men Made That Up").

Who is telling this story?

The history books that most of today's teachers lugged home from school as children told this nation's story from the point of view of European settlers. The opening chapters described Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas; they mentioned Native Americans only as they impinged on the lives of Caucasians—either as enemies or as friends. The teachers in this Changing Minds struggle to represent more fairly the perspectives, experiences, and contributions of people who were not white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (see Violence in the Passive Voice, "Maybe the White Men Made That Up," and Fighting Eurocentrism).

These efforts are important not only to children from minority groups but to children of the majority culture who grow toward adulthood in a culturally-diverse country on a small, interdependent planet. As James Banks of the University of Washington points out, minority youngsters get a chance to "see" their home culture freshly—as fish can never "see" water—when school immerses them in another one, creating contrasts and raising questions. White children from English-speaking families, on the other hand, can leave high school without ever looking at their culture from the outside, or even realizing that they make culturally-based assumptions.2

Who gets left out?

Most history textbooks, because they concentrate on power and political history, say little about women of the past, just as they underplay the experiences of people of color. Profiles of Abigail Adams and Sojourner Truth on the "grey pages" (see "Maybe the White Men Made That Up") do not solve this problem. In order to put together a balanced curriculum, we need to ask, as Peggy McIntosh of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women advocated almost a decade ago, "How have women of the past told their stories?"

Less is more.

Current social studies curricula pressure teachers to "cover" vast amounts of material. In consequence, too few students discover the pleasures of digging deeply into one issue or of working together to reconcile conflicting accounts. When teachers begin to revise social studies, many decide to eliminate a great deal of content in order to give their students time to think hard about

White children from English-speaking families can leave high school without ever looking at their culture from the outside.

The fifth grader who pushes little kids off the slide makes social studies curriculum; so does the principal who “solves” the problem by banishing all big kids to the baseball diamond for future recesses.

What remains (see, for example, History for What?). They do this partly because they believe that a curriculum that asks students to look at a problem from multiple perspectives provides a more substantial intellectual diet for growing minds, and partly because they know that they cannot foster a disposition to think critically about public issues without allowing plenty of time for reading, writing, and discussion.

By recruiting the imagination, literature can help young people to transcend the familiar and see the world from someone else’s point of view. Because it takes a lot of time and multiple approaches to develop deep understandings of distant people and unfamiliar issues, some teachers make powerful arguments for courses integrating social studies and language arts—see, for example, Making Connections, and Fighting Eurocentrism.

Good social studies generates controversy.

If we are teaching young people to think critically about public issues, to debate questions that matter, to take responsibility for the well-being of others and of the body politic, we probably won’t be able to keep sensitive issues out of the classroom or to pretend to honor all opinions equally. If teachers engage with big ideas and important issues, students will say things that are upsetting—to us and to others—and teachers may face some criticism (see Social Studies in the Teachable Moment and Why Teach History?).

Good social studies takes students’ minds seriously and engages them with complex questions.

Many of the young people who judge social studies boring care passionately about the workings of the social universe and devote considerable attention to making sense of it. Why don’t they like social studies? One culprit is the parade of “facts” and vocabulary that masquerades as history. Another may be of the principle of “expanding horizons” that dictates the focus of virtually all elementary textbooks and much of what goes on in classrooms as well. Beginning with the notion that young children cannot understand anything that is distant from them in time or space, publishers and educators have created a curriculum in which kindergartners study themselves and then move, year by year, through family, neighborhood, city, and state, until, in fifth grade, they are ready to tackle the history of the United States (see Why Is Lansing the Capital of Michigan?). Local studies could be vital (Lucy Sprague Mitchell’s Young Geographers (1934) is a classic in the best sense) but too often they degenerate into lifeless pieties about community helpers.

You gotta have heart.

People learn best when the curriculum touches their emotions as well as their minds. Social studies needs to help students care about matters that are far from their everyday experience as well as to acquire disciplinary knowledge and skills. It should help them to imagine a better society and perhaps even to take a few steps towards creating one. This can happen: Consider a world in which middle school students bring old people affordable food and good conversation and adults vote for school millages even after their children and grandchildren were grown (see How Can I Help?). Schools can give young people a chance to learn about real social problems, to take effective—if small scale—action, and to reflect collectively on their experiences.

Young people learn about the social world by participating in three communities: the classroom, the school, and the family.

Much of a school’s social studies curriculum is enacted rather than taught. On the playground, in the hall, in the lunchroom, and in homeroom students learn about citizenship, about rights and responsibilities, about the uses and abuses of power, about the social meanings of race and class, about the relationship between rhetoric and reality in relationships involving power. Schools shape this curriculum as surely as they choose textbooks. The fifth grader who pushes little kids off the slide makes social studies curriculum; so does the principal who “solves” the problem by banishing all big kids to the baseball diamond for future recesses. Similarly, when a teacher insists that students invent the classroom rules and evaluate them periodically, she creates opportunities for children to examine the democratic process, warts and all. Most teachers care passionately about the quality of human relationships in their classrooms. As they struggle to make these small communities work, they create social studies curriculum.
Elaine Hoekwater of Elliott Elementary School in Holt, and Corinna Hasbach, a graduate student at Michigan State University (MSU), began teaching history together in the fall of 1990. As they introduce the Elliott fifth graders to American history, they explore the possibilities for making visible to their 10-year-old students aspects of our past that remain invisible to many American adults. Says Hoekwater:

I feel so strongly that those of us who teach American history need to be re-educating ourselves. I was a history major in college. Everything was the White Man's Way. We used one resource: the textbook. We were taught not to question.

As I work to get kids to wonder and question, we really do create a learning community: their perspective gets me to question and vice versa. The kids have so much questioning and so much wonderment now. If they find an answer in a book, they say, "I wonder what another book would say."

Taking a Critical Stance Towards the Textbook

Professors in colleges of education often warn their students not to rely on commercial social studies textbooks. These texts, they charge, are boring and bland. Furthermore, in an effort to produce a volume that parents and teachers of all political persuasions will accept, text writers leave out much of the social conflict that figures prominently in the actual history of any nation.

Although many teachers agree that the textbooks on their shelves bleed the life out of history, most feel frustrated and overwhelmed by the prospect of composing a curriculum that excludes them. How, they wonder, can anyone who is actively teaching for more than five hours a day, and who, in addition, assumes responsibility for all aspects of her students' academic curriculum create a social studies program from whole cloth?

Hasbach and Hoekwater take a different approach: Instead of throwing out the textbook which presents only a part of our nation's complex history, they teach their fifth-grade students to read it skeptically.

"Elaine and I," Hasbach explains, "are trying to get kids to take a critical stance. We want them to see that history is a puzzle, an interpretation. To understand it fully, you need different perspectives." Textbooks rarely provide more than one perspective, she notes, recalling Carol Gilligan's apt characterization of textbook prose: "No-voice voice."

White men play the lead roles in most history texts and most of the big parts as well. Women and people of color complain that they look in vain in these books for the stories of people who look like them. Absent explicit encouragement, few children comment on these omissions, but after Hoekwater and Hasbach had talked for a few months about the need for "multiple perspectives," their students followed suit.

"Why are there two pages in the book on the Boston Tea Party," a 10-year-old in last year's class asked, "when there's only a paragraph about the Trail of Tears? Four thousand people died on the Trail of Tears and no one died in the Boston Tea Party."

"Why do you think?" asked Hasbach.

"I think it is because the people involved in the Boston Tea Party were white men," the girl replied. "The 4000 who died on the Trail of Tears were all Native Americans."

"They were becoming critical of the text," Hoekwater exults, telling the story later.

Examining Bureaucratic Language

Hasbach is as troubled by the language of the text as by its omissions. Over and over again, the authors choose words that strip historical events of conflict and obscure culpability (see Violence in the Passive Voice). The text that the Elliott fifth graders were reading referred, for example, to a time in which black people began "arriving" in America in large numbers. Such language evades the savage realities of the slave trade.

After they read this sentence in the text, Hoekwater and Hasbach asked their students to conjure up associations with the word "arrived." One little girl recalled how happy she felt when her grandmother "arrived" by plane for a visit. Another talked about the excitement with
which she waited for Christmas to "arrive."

The class then read sections of Julius Lester's *To Be a Slave* (1968) in which African Americans describe being captured in Africa, sold into slavery, and brought forcibly to the Americas. "And then," Hoekwater continues, "they said, 'Wow. That's not arriving. That's kidnapping.'"

**Getting Started**

Most American youngsters study history for the first time in fifth grade. Perhaps because of the ponderous language and physical weight of their textbooks, they often regard the contents of these volumes as objective and incontrovertible fact rather than a human interpretation of an imperfect record.

In order to help the Elliott fifth graders see that people write history, and that different people may interpret the same historical record differently, Hoekwater and Hasbach launched the 1990-91 year by having each class write a history of the school. As resources they invited two past principals of the school, a retired custodian, some teachers, some former students, and a noon supervisor to visit both classes, to tell stories and answer questions.

After collecting their historical data, each fifth grade produced a volume entitled *Our History of Elliott School*. Although classes drew on the same primary sources, the two books—now housed in the school's library—look quite different. For example, the chapter on "Special Events" in one volume describes the day the lights fell down in Mrs. Darling's classroom, the now-defunct practice of paddling, the initiation of Drug Abuse Resistance Education in 1987, the purchase of safety vests for crossing guards, and a fire scare. The other class's book mentions only one of these events; its authors chronicle instead a break-in, a "walk-run" held in 1990, and

"People in Holt decided they needed a new school" by Nicole Whitford and Charlie Alana. From *Our History of Elliot School.*
"Break-In"

The "Break-in" happened one morning in Nov 1987 around 6:00 a.m. Nothing was taking only broken. It cost Elliott Elementary a lot of money to repair the VCR, glass, TV's, and other things. The burglar was never caught. W.V.I.C. said there was any school that day, but there was. Broken glass was all over, and there was blood in the hallway.

The man was in room 133. There were papers all over the office and room 139. The custodian ran to call the police when he found the mess.

Kristen Colley
Partner Mccabe Goodine

"Break-In," by Kristen Colley and McCabe Goodine, from Our History of Elliott School.

the impact of the Challenger explosion on Elliott students and faculty. Taken together, the two volumes show quite vividly that every history is a work of interpretation which reflects the ideas and preoccupations of its authors.

Facing Social Conflict

Unlike standard fifth-grade texts, which paper over many intractable conflicts, Hoekwater and Hasbach focused the year-long study of American history on enduring social issues like sexism and racism. They began by asking students to write individually about the following terms: Perspective, democracy, freedom, liberty, equality, justice, rights/duties, racism, prejudice, discrimination, sexism, exploitation, and power. After students had had a chance to put their ideas down on paper, they brainstormed in groups and then as a class hammered out the definitions which laid the groundwork for the work ahead.

Hoping to dispel the image of history as a parade of white men wearing wigs and velvet knickers and to convince their students that their own lives were history, Hasbach and Hoekwater then showed "A Class Divided." This film chronicles the work of Jane Elliott, a fifth-grade teacher in an all-white school in Iowa, who showed her students the emotional impact of discrimination by creating a set of Jim Crow rules and enforcing them for a week, first against her blue-eyed students and then against their brown-eyed classmates.

After the documentary, students addressed three questions in their
journals: Have you ever been discriminated against? Have you ever discriminated against anyone? What do you think it feels like? Their candid and repentant responses touched Hoekwater deeply. "They all wrote about ways that they had discriminated against Lisa [an unpopular classmate]. One girl wrote that she discriminated against fat people. A boy admitted I know I have discriminated against people. If I was with a friend, I discriminated against a girl, or a younger child. I wouldn't do it now."

Of Sexism, Slavery, and Children's Rights

By spring, a visitor to these fifth grades finds students and teachers moving back and forth between the textbook and social issues of their own day. On May 8 they begin with the Grimke sisters, whose book identifies as the first female abolitionists to connect their opposition to slavery with the oppression of women. In describing the calumnies heaped upon these two women, Hasbach mentions that people said that they wouldn't be able to have children.

A girl interjects. "Some girls are tomboys, like they act like boys, but it doesn't mean that their physical body changes." Hasbach agrees, adding, "And some people think that even the term 'tomboy' is biased."

A few moments later, as the class discusses the meaning of the word, feminist, Andrew observes, "I was just thinking that there are not that many priests who are women," and Angela asks, "Is there a law about that?" The discussion then moves to the cultural and theological roots of the male priesthood, back to the definition of feminism, and on to the terms "forefather," and "foremother"—with Amy noting that "womankind" is actually a more inclusive term than "mankind," since it includes both the word "man" and the word "woman."

Ruth objects that even if they add "foremothers" to the list of those who brought forth a new nation, they will continue to exclude an important group: "It says that all people are created equal. Does that mean children?" Hasbach adds children to the list, agreeing that "children did work, too, to bring forth a new nation."

Edwin's next comment—"The forefathers really were only men: Jefferson, Washington, Kennedy, Lincoln"—reveals an interesting misconception: He thinks the word is spelled "fourfathers" and refers only to these four men. Hoekwater explains both the spelling and the meaning and then moves to consult the dictionary. "Forefathers means ancestors," she reports. "What we are trying to do is include everyone. 'Womankind' includes everyone."

This examination of basic terms raises basic questions for some of the 10-year-olds. "Why do people say that this is such a free country," Adam asks, "when we have had slavery and discrimination against women?"

"I think they mean now," Tina explains. "There isn't as much..."

"But freedom means everyone," Adam counters.

Hasbach asks the class to think about Tina's comment. Is everyone in this country free now? Is it true that no one is discriminated against? "There's discrimination against women," volunteers Andrea.

"Some people are in prison. They aren't free," adds Noah.

"Kids aren't free," asserts Ailene.

Michael wants to return to Adam's original question: "Maybe the thing about everyone being equal, maybe the white men made that up."

Throughout the remainder of the period, the 10-year-olds use their own experiences of relative powerlessness as a window on concepts of rights, obligations, and slavery. Are they slaves, some wonder, since they have to obey their parents. "Ruth is certain that they are not," because if we are bad, our parents have to teach us a lesson. Like ground us or something. "But the class ends on a sober note: "In the school I used to go to," volunteers one of the few black girls in the room, "people used to get paddled a lot. Not just for things that they did, but for things that they didn't do, too."

The Fruits of One Year's Work

Assessing the year's work, Hasbach notes, "Because this was the first time I had taught elementary school, I was struck by the depth and sophistication of students' thinking, their use of concepts." As an example she cites the simple elegance of one student's definition of exploitation: "I think exploitation is being taken advantage of." She was impressed, too, by students' ability to keep an eye on the big picture: "They kept making links that we didn't see, and didn't make for them."

The fifth graders readily saw that history ought to reflect multiple perspectives; they noticed that their textbook did not always score very high in this department. One girl asked Hoekwater "How come whenever they mention a woman it is on a grey page? And it's only a little." (The publishers of their textbook had sprinkled short profiles of interesting individuals—mostly women and people of color—through the narrative of political history.) Constanza Hazelwood, an MSU graduate student who observed the classes regularly, reports that "criticism of the text happened all the time. I would often hear a student say, 'A white male wrote this book. We need other perspectives.'"

Students claimed that their studies had made them more sensitive to issues like discrimination and reduced the incidence of name calling on the playground.
Children Look at the Work of Historians

Interested in learning more about the ways in which elementary school students think about history and historical interpretation, Jere Brophy, Bruce VanSledright, and Nancy Bredin of MSU interviewed 10 fourth graders who had not yet studied history in school. They found that although these 10-year-olds knew that history was about the past, they had rather hazy ideas about the ways in which historians did their work. Here are some of the answers the researchers got when they asked their young informants what historians might do to resolve disagreements about what happened or why it happened:

Sue: They can go to somebody who knows what the answer is.

Kay: They go exploring, both of them, and show each other what their proof is and see which one's right, maybe.

Rita: They'd talk to other scientists and try to see how they think and they'd try to work it out . . . like they'd take it to a judge or something, a judge that's higher than these scientists but that's a scientist judge. Someone that all of them trust and they'd know that he'd tell the truth . . . he'd listen to both sides and try to work it out.

Jason: People that wrote it, they look at it, they might not have enough equipment so then the person reads it with all the equipment, they might think, "We have more equipment so we can think better."

Mark: They could read a book and if they think that it's wrong, they could read different books and see if they said something else and see if they agree with that one. [What if they seem to disagree?] They can go to some other museum and see what they say.

"Most of the students appeared to believe, at least implicitly, that one could arrive at a right answer," the researchers comment. "In part this was because they were thinking of existence proofs (such as that King Arthur actually existed)—questions that could be answered yes or no—rather than thinking about more subtle matters of interpretation of the causes or meanings of known events." These children remind us that students who have had little chance to study history will often overlook the interpretive aspects of a historian's work. Until they are encouraged to do so, few question the "causes" and "effects" listed in the columns of their history text.

Putting the Heart Back in Social Studies

“Last year I did not think about ‘racism’ and ‘discrimination’ as the content of elementary social studies instruction,” MSU professor Kathy Roth reflected in her teaching journal in October, 1991.

Taking a disciplinary perspective I thought about “big ideas” in history and the social studies—the big ideas I thought about included some of the terms Elaine and Corinna are teaching to the fifth graders (justice, democracy, freedom, liberty, equality), but it seems that I was picking out concepts that were positive examples, safe topics.

Roth was reflecting on the way in which the work that Corinna Hasbach and Elaine Hoekwater were doing together in two Elliott School fifth-grade classrooms (see “Maybe the White Men Made That Up”) had altered the way she thought about social studies. Conversations with Hasbach and Hoekwater had helped to transform the way she and her colleagues taught a social studies methods course to prospective elementary school teachers in MSU’s College of Education.

The story of this elementary methods class shows the theory of “professional development schools” in action: Those who pushed for the establishment of professional development schools (PDS) argued that close ties between schools and universities would improve the learning of students in public schools, of these children’s teachers, and of men and women who are studying to be teachers. They hoped that, within a flexible collaborative structure, university faculty could bring new ideas into schools and school teachers and administrators could teach teacher educators and their students about important classroom realities. In “Many Voices: Learning to Teach Social Studies,” Roth and six coauthors—Hoekwater, Hasbach, two other Elliott School teachers, and two undergraduate students from the methods class—tell how that happened to them.

In the fall of 1989, as a part of ongoing PDS work at Elliott, Roth had invited Carol Ligett, who teaches third grade at Elliott, to work with her in an elementary social studies methods course. Roth planned this Year One version of the course while Ligett offered suggestions, reimmersed herself in the academic literature on teaching social studies, worked with individual college students, and brought stories from the third grade into the university classroom.

Roth and Ligett asked the college students to question the largely didactic approach to teaching that had shaped the schools most had attended for 13 years. They introduced them to the idea of “teaching for understanding” using a conceptual change approach—which meant planning lessons around the ideas that their students brought with them to the classroom, providing experiences and readings that would challenge these ideas in multiple ways, and allowing plenty of time for conversation and exploration.

In that first year of co-teaching the course, Roth and Ligett also pushed students to move beyond the “facts-focused” curricula that prevails in most schools and to look instead for big ideas—conceptual themes—to develop over time. None of this was easy: The 20-year-olds in the methods course had blackened the boxes on a lot of multiple choice tests and many had difficulty envisioning—or believing in—another kind of social studies. Looking back, however, Roth describes this approach as “well-organized and gently thought-provoking” rather than highly controversial because she and Ligett focused on ideas from the disciplines (history, economics, political science, etc.) and touched only glancingly on more politically explosive content.

A Collaborative Venture

In December of 1991, when the time to plan another round of the methods course arrived, Ligett and Roth met as full collaborators. This time they came up with a different framework: They decided—at Ligett’s suggestion—to set a few

framing questions, to pretest their students on these questions, and to keep them in focus throughout the course. Instead of trying to deal with important ideas—like discrimination against women—one at a time, they concentrated on designing a series of activities that would allow their students to engage with multiple issues repeatedly in different contexts. “By using framing questions that were continuously in front of us, we were no longer trapped into a lockstep pattern: ‘If this is Week Three, we must be in ‘Student Diversity.’’” Corinna Hasbach, who, like Elaine Hoekwater of Elliott, helped Ligett and Roth to plan and teach the course, liked this framework because it opened up possibilities for emphasizing race, class, and gender issues throughout the quarter.

Hasbach’s challenge seemed particularly appropriate because, as the group writes in their account of Year Two planning,

In Year One, Carol had observed that Kathy told the prospective teachers not to be afraid of addressing controversial issues in social studies—that controversy is at the heart of many social issues. But in her own teaching of the methods class, she would foray into a controversial issues and then quickly retreat.

The concerns of the three women converged. Ligett and Roth vowed to set controversial issues in the foreground this time around, and to keep them there.

The form of the Year Two course was also different. Roth and Ligett encouraged students to take a more central role in sharing experiences, perspectives and feelings. They allowed the enacted curriculum to unfold as a response to what happened in class, letting the undergraduates make significant decisions about which assignments they would complete and how they would be graded. Looking back, the two teachers compare the Year Two version of the course to a jazz improvisation and contrast it to the well-rehearsed orchestral performance of Year One.

Each of the course instructors and consultants also contributed new perspectives that shifted the view of social studies teaching from a disciplines-based perspective to a wider appreciation and understanding of social studies as including, for example, social criticism and personal social development.

“Out of the Mouths of Babes”: A Case

Given that the instructors and their consultants were teaching in elementary school every day and that teacher education students often hunger for a taste of real classrooms, it was natural for stories from the elementary school to make their way into the methods class. Roth and Ligett included in the course readings a description of an incident from the Hoekwater and Hasbach’s classroom, together with some commentary and a reaction from a teacher in another school. The incident occurred on the day that groups of fifth graders were writing definitions of key terms (see “Maybe the White Men Made That Up”):

One young woman wrote in her journal, “I realize that I would be prone to avoid issues like racism... in my classroom. This bothers me a great deal.”

As I was walking around, Maria (who is Hispanic) called me over to where her group was working on the concept of racism. She asked me if racism was “like against me because of my color”... Natalie (who is Caucasian) seeming to “correct” Maria explained (speaking directly to her), “It’s like teasing Beth (who is Black) because of her color. No... not you. You are the same as us. You just look like you have a tan—a tan that doesn’t go away.”... Maria turned away from Natalie, said nothing, and had a look on her face which I was unable to “read.” The closest I can come to explaining it is that it seemed like a mixture of resignation and disdain. I remember thinking, “What do I do now?” I did not know how to respond, but I remember being acutely aware that this was an important interaction which had many ramifications.

The exchange and Corinna’s discussion of her subsequent thinking brought the college students up short. Earlier in the course, when they had contrasted the teaching of Jane Elliott (in ‘A Class Divided’) to that of a more conventional teacher described by researcher Linda McNeil, members of the class had easily agreed that teachers ought to address issues like racism and discrimination in a forthright manner. But, because they knew Hasbach, they identified with her; as they considered her dilemma, teaching about controversial subjects no longer looked easy. Penny Woodhams, a student in the class, spoke of a similar confusion growing out of a classroom encounter: “What do you do when a five-year-old says ‘I’m tired of being Black,’ or a child teases someone about their ethnicity?”

Another young woman who had attended all-white parochial schools wrote in her journal:
After reading the McNeil article, Corinna's article, and participating in the methods class discussion, I realize that I would be prone to avoid issues like racism which may be controversial in my classroom. This bothers me a great deal....

I am afraid ... that just reading and learning about approaches to controversial topics in the classroom will not eliminate the approach I was exposed to all my life. I am afraid of my inexperience.

Am I prepared to handle occurrences in my classroom which may deal with race, class, or gender? I do not know, but I was pleased to read that Corinna also experienced many of the same doubts I have. I feel that I have so much to learn about these issues, especially in topics like history, where women and minorities were consistently absent from my school books.

**Putting Heart Into Social Studies**

Looking back on the course six months later, Roth feels that the case of Maria and the discussions it inspired contributed to her education by convincing her that emotions played an important role in good social studies teaching. Perhaps because of her background in the sciences, she had resisted this view energetically when Ligett and Hasbach first pressed it:

> It still sounded too 'feminine' to me, too 'touchy-feely.' But analyzing the different cases we explored in the course—especially the ones from Elaine and Corinna's classroom about racism and discrimination, etc. and from Carol's classroom about the Persian Gulf War—I was forced to reconsider. In cases where emotions were permitted to be part of instruction, there seemed to be much more powerful learning outcomes (or at least the potential for more powerful learning). Now I am determined to rewrite the unit I taught fifth graders about exploration and conflict with Native Americans using an approach that does not play it so safe, that gets more at the heart of the issues. I think this will be a very interesting unit plan to share with prospective teachers in contrast with my "kinder and gentler" unit I taught two years ago.

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**Fighting Eurocentrism**

"Last Friday's writing day that you instigated was great," Ann Moliassas tells the 10 eighth graders in her fourth-period social studies class. "We were so happy that you wanted to write."

In response to a question from Adrian, who had missed Friday's class, Moliassa explains that "people came in wanting to write, so we postponed the project we had planned to do."

"Do we write today?" asks Adrian.

"No, not today."

"Oooh," Adrian and several classmates sigh disappointedly.

Today, Moliassa continues, they will focus on the explorers that they have been studying, putting together what they have learned about what and when each man discovered and also probing motivations.

"That black man who walked to the North Pole, he didn't discover anything," Michael points out, commenting indirectly on the way in which we all tend to equate the terms "explorer" and "discoverer." A week earlier a visitor had told the eighth graders about an explorer he knew who had walked from New York City to the North Pole and who now visits schools to tell youngsters about his experiences. Because Michael and all his classmates are African-American, this explorer may have made a particularly vivid impression.

"No," Moliassa agrees, "but I think he discovered something within himself: that he could do it."

As students discuss, with evident amusement, whether this 1991 adventurer saw Santa Claus—Christmas break is less than a week away—Moliassa hands back the notes they have made on 16th-century Spanish explorers. Noting that she has invited the class to think about the explorers' motivations as well as their discoveries, Moliassa asks why anyone would leave friends, home, and family to set off for an unknown land. "We want to learn about their personalities—what they were like. Were they kind? Were they mean?"

"Columbus was mean," asserts David.

"That's true. Do we read that in many of the books?"

"No."

As Michael begins to copy in-
formation about the discoveries of Columbus from his paper onto a neatly-lettered chart taped to the blackboard. Moliassa asks his classmates to think about the skepticism that greeted Columbus when he proposed sailing west to China. One student explains that no one thought that this would work because most people believed that the world was flat—"because they had only been to certain areas and it looked flat."

When no one seems to know how Columbus became convinced that the world was round—"He saw it on TV?"—Moliassa asks them to imagine Columbus spending days and days in the harbor in Genoa, watching ships sail away and return. She then demonstrates with a book and a pencil the way in which the mast of a ship appears as it comes over the horizon, and together teacher and students consider what this phenomenon suggests about the earth's shape.

At this point Patti Wagner enters the room and Moliassa rises to leave. In the past Wagner and Moliassa have taught separate language arts and social studies classes to seventh and eighth graders who are eligible for special education services in Holmes Middle School in Flint. This year for the first time the two teachers have combined their third- and fourth-hour classes and are attempting to use literature to enrich the study of American history and vice versa.

Moliassa and Wagner had planned a writing project for today's double period, but altered their plans when they learned that each of them would have to leave the room for most of third period to attend an IEPC—a conference to plan an educational program for one of their students. Because these eighth graders need considerable help with writing, their teachers plan writing activities for times when both of them can be in the room.

In Moliassa's absence, Wagner helps the eighth graders to complete the chart on discoveries and to plot each voyage of exploration on the globe. Students speculate about why all these early discoverers sailed from Spain.

"Spain had more money?"
"They had bigger ships?"
"The king and queen wanted a reputation."

"Spain had a school for sailors..."

"Spain was crazy."
"Spain wanted more land?"
Wagner congratulates them on their conjectures and asks them to think about the state of communication in the early 16th century. "They had message birds," one boy asserts. All agree that news of Columbus's discoveries might have traveled very slowly to other European countries.

As Marcus writes "1519"—the date of Cortez's discovery of Mexico—Wagner asks how many years have elapsed since Columbus's first voyage. David and Laverne call out guesses, but Lenore has a more rigorous approach to the problem: "You add 8 to 1492 and it becomes 1500. Then add 19 more and it is 1519."

"Okay," Wagner agrees. "It's been 27 years. How much of the New World has been discovered?" Together students and teacher locate on the globe the parts of North and South America mentioned on the chart.

A large map on the back wall of the room offers another view of North America: It is decorated with teepees and divided with string into three large regions, showing the whereabouts of coastal, woodland, and desert Indians. Reminders of a long unit on Native Americans—student-made pottery, clay models of adobe pueblos and Navaho hogan, a beautiful painted backdrop to this model, Indian legends and poems—adorn Moliassa and Wagner's two rooms.

After covering several more explorers, the class turns to the textbook and Marcus reads aloud:

North of Mexico, the Indians told the Spanish, lay the golden cities of Cibola.
Undreamed of riches lay there for the taking,... The Spaniards sent out a scouting party to look for the "golden cities."

At the top of the page the caption beneath a color photograph of the Grand Canyon asks: "Can you see why Father Marcos and Estavanico might have thought that they were seeing cities of gold?"

The language of the text is far from straightforward and when Wagner asks "What 'Golden Cities' were they looking for?" Anthony throws out Cincinnati as a possibility and Michael suggests Detroit.

The next sentence offers Wagner an opportunity to connect these distant voyages to her students' interests and questions, and she grasps it firmly. "Two of the party's leaders were Father Marcos, a Catholic priest, and Estavanico [Little Steven], a black scout." Anthony, you asked whether there were any black explorers. That's your answer."
After some further discussion, the students return their textbooks to the shelves at the side of the room and Moliassa, who has returned, invites them to describe Cortez. "Greedy," Anthony proclaims. "Selfish," agrees Marcus. "White," adds David.

A classmate laughs. "He was," Moliassa demurs. "It's a description."

Pizarro and Columbus fare no better. One boy describes Pizarro as "a manipulator," while another says he was "a con artist." And Anthony dismisses Columbus as "a wimp" "because he wanted to discover things. The others wanted to have everything."

Moliassa then distributes some more lively written material: an issue of Scholastic Search which features, among other things, an expose of Columbus, Cortez, and Pizarro entitled "Explorers Who Abused the Indians—And Got Away With It." The explorers are guests on a talk show in which host Sarah Rose, with the help of another refugee from the 16th century, Bertolome de las Casas, excoriates them for offenses ranging from genocide to robbery and enslavement. Moliassa and Wagner assign parts; the boys volunteer eagerly for the parts of the villainous explorers they have just described so colorfully; no one wants to play Rose or de las Casas—the "nice guy."

For the next half hour, attention in the room stays riveted to the readers—even those who stumble frequently over difficult words—and the magazine. No one misses a cue, and when the stage directions call for applause, all students vigorously comply.

Moving Away From Eurocentrism

"The materials for teaching American history are so deficient, so Eurocentric," says Moliassa.

Like Hashbach and Hoekwater (see "Maybe the White Men Made

Violence in the Passive Voice

To combat the criticisms that their textbooks are blind to the concerns and accomplishments of women and people of color, the publishers of many social studies textbooks have in recent years added a few new faces to the parade of European explorers and presidents who continue to dominate elementary school children's first encounters with American history.

Yet the language of these fifth-grade books—for the publishers gear their simplest American history tests for 10-year-olds—still bespeaks a reluctance to tell the story of white violence against Africans and Native Americans clearly and directly. The writers omit many troubling facts. Others they bury in lists like this one:

On every trip Columbus thought he was visiting Asia. He still hoped to return to Spain with a shipload of gold, silk, and spices. Instead he returned with Indians he had taken as slaves, new kinds of animals and birds, and tobacco, which was unknown in Europe at that time.¹

Some abuses he becloud in social science "concepts." For example, under the Voyage of Columbus, the Houghton Mifflin text provides a section called Understanding Expansion, with a subsection, "Expansion and Change," which reads as follows:

Expansion often has dramatic effects. When one country occupies another, it usually changes the land it occupies.

The expansion of Spain into the Americas greatly reduced the number of Indians on these lands. The culture of Spain—Spanish language, food and architecture—became dominant in the lands Spain occupied.²

Communication Arts?

"The habitual use of the active voice," write Strunk and White in The Elements of Style, "makes for forcible writing." Surprisingly often, the authors of elementary social studies books choose circumlocutions and passive verbs to describe the actions Europeans took against people of color. The predominance of the passive voice is bound to surprise any adult reader who has ever tried to explain something to a child.

Consider this description of the introduction of slavery into North America, taken from the 1986 edition of McGraw Hill's United States:

These Blacks were captured in parts of western Africa. There they were put in chains and sold to slave traders. The slave traders brought them to America in ships. The conditions on these ships were horrible and many of the Africans died. When the survivors arrived in America, they were sold to buyers in slave markets. Usually, the buyer owned a slave for life.³

Following the advice of Strunk and White, the reader may wish to substitute active verbs for passive constructions and ask him or herself how the effect of the resulting sentences is different.

(Continued on page 14)
Violence in the Passive Voice
(Cont. from page 13)

An Economic Change

The Scott Foresman text introduces the practice of enslaving Africans in this way:

In 1619 three important events took place in Jamestown. Each event brought lasting changes to Virginia.

First, a Dutch ship brought 20 black workers to Jamestown. Many workers were needed to help plant, raise, and harvest Jamestown’s tobacco. These workers, the first black Americans, probably came here as indentured servants. An indentured servant had to work for a set time to pay off a debt. Usually such a person was working off the cost of the voyage to America.

Within a few years, however, most black workers were brought from Africa to America as slaves. Slaves were considered the property of another person and were forced to work for that person. Unlike indentured servants, slaves rarely got their freedom.

If the language of the text seems curiously bloodless, the accompanying directions to the teacher suggest that in social studies we pack up feelings and common sense in order to look at the past through an academic lens:

Remind students that the text discusses three changes that helped Jamestown become a stronger, more productive settlement. Ask: Which was an economic change—having to do with money or production of crops and goods? (arrival of indentured servants and slaves) Ask: Which was a political change—one having to do with the way the colony was governed? (the organization of a legislature) Finally, ask: Which was a social change—one affecting relationships among people? (the arrival of women to begin families)

Do we want to teach future citizens that when one group of people enslaves another their actions have no significant political or social implications? Do we want our young people to see slavery as an economic innovation whose main effect was to make Jamestown a “stronger, more productive settlement”?

When they finally opened their textbook to the chapter on “Finding and Naming America,” a student pointed out the inherent bias: “Wait a minute. Why would they call it that? It wasn’t lost in the first place. The Indians had already found it.”

Moliassa has been attending carefully to the current controversies about Columbus as she gathered material for her teaching: “I’ve learned a lot in the readings I’ve been doing for the last few weeks. I knew that he was not a great guy, but I didn’t know that he really introduced slavery into North and South America… A lot of this really ties in to the unit that we will do in a few months on how Blacks were brought to America as slaves, so I think that they are going to be able to develop a lot richer understanding of that.”

Integrating Language Arts and Social Studies

Observing that her students showed far more interest in ordinary people than they did in the political history and “facts” that filled the textbooks, Moliassa had in past years often wished that she could find children’s literature which would help them see more deeply into the realities of life in the past. From time to time Patti Wagner suggested books that Moliassa might read with her students—last year, for example, she found that the novels of Mildred Taylor helped her students to understand life in the 1950s. For years she and Wagner have discussed the possibility of team teaching social studies and language arts. This year, for the first time, they have pressed through the scheduling difficulties and put two classes together.

Both teachers have been pleased with the fit between their work in social studies and literature. Together the class read Island of the Blue Dolphins, an award winning novel about a Native American girl's
Revising Columbus

Most elementary social studies textbooks give us a Columbus of heroic stature. They describe a youth who dreamed of sailing west to the Orient, an adult who clung to that dream through many dark years, and whose persistent independent spirit transformed the European image of the world. This is the Columbus with whom today's parents and grandparents grew up, the Columbus who animated October 12 celebrations for decades.

But the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the West Indies has brought into the spotlight another image of Columbus and another interpretation of his legacy. During the past year, some commentators have argued that Columbus exploited and enslaved those who welcomed him and have reimagined his "discoveries" from the point of view of North Americans of color.

Three recent publications can help teachers bring into the classroom and to give their students compelling first-hand experiences with conflicting historical analyses:

The September 1991 issue of Scholastic Search is titled "Columbus: After 500 Years It's Time to Rock the Boat." The 32-page magazine includes a talk show host's critical interview with Columbus and other Spanish explorers (see Questioning Eurocentrism), three contrasting mini-biographies of Columbus showing how different historians can draw very different stories from the same historical record, excerpts from Columbus's journal, and novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez's imagined journey into the thoughts of the Tainos who greeted Columbus on October 12, 1492.

Cobblestone, a history magazine for elementary and middle school youngsters, titled its January 1992 issue "The Legacy of Columbus." Cobblestone sticks closer to the historical record (no talk shows). "The Taino Tragedy" describes the way in which Spanish conquerors despoiled the land they found and destroyed its inhabitants. The issue also includes a vivid snapshot of 16th century African slavery in the Americas, a discussion of plants brought from Europe to the Americas and vice versa, and a highly favorable portrait of Bartolome de las Casas. (Students may compare Cobblestone's de las Casas with Scholastic's slightly more fallible crusader for Native American rights.)

Rethinking Columbus is a larger and angrier publication that either Cobblestone or Scholastic Search. The introduction sets the tone: "Columbus's arrival began an American holocaust. If the writers and activists we've included seem angry it's because they have something to be angry about." The 96-page issue features teachers' accounts of their efforts to help both elementary and secondary students see Columbus from the point of view of Native Americans and discussions of stereotyping of Native Americans in children's literature. It also includes resources for students: poems of protest, nine questions for young readers to discuss as they critique books about Columbus, an excerpt from a Tony Hillerman novel, and a high school student's version of the Taino's Untold story.

For More Information
Write Cobblestone at 30 Grove St., Peterborough, NH 03458.
Rethinking Columbus is published by Rethinking Schools, 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212.
Write Scholastic Search at 2931 E. McCartt St., P. O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710.
As Molissa has ventured away from standard approaches to teaching she has come to see her students differently.

them to do this. We just expect them to have feelings and responses and to write about them. So what I did, the first week [when we were reading Island of the Blue Dolphins] I just asked them to think about what was happening to the main character, or things that they agreed with or didn’t understand. I wrote my responses on the overhead and I said, ‘You have to write something. If you can’t think of anything to write, copy mine.’ I think that took a burden off of them. On the first day, two kids copied mine or reworded it and everyone else did their own. After that, they all wrote their own. I didn’t get paragraphs, I got two or three or four sentences. But they were saying interesting things about how they related themselves to the main character, how they would have made a different decision than the main character. A lot of good statements and questions about the book.

Special education students often complain about the small size of their classes. Even though a class of eight creates some educational opportunities, it also looks different from the regular classes whose enrollment may run as high as forty. Molissa and Wagner hoped that by merging their two small groups they could create an environment that seemed more “regular” to their students.

Inevitably, they have encountered some problems. There are a limited number of special education classes for eighth graders, and

a few eighth graders whose education plan calls for special language arts can manage regular social studies and vice versa. In consequence, some of Molissa and Wagner’s students come to them only for language arts or only for social studies. This unexpected development has prevented the teachers from integrating the two subjects as fully as they had originally planned.

In addition, Molissa reports, the students themselves resisted full integration at first, asking querulously, when an activity began in third period extended into fourth, “When are we going to do social studies?” or “When are we going to do language arts?” After eight years of schooling, they were used to separating subjects into discreet time blocks. In addition, they knew that “regular” education was organized that way.

Seeing Students Differently

“We know that our learning disabilities kids have a richness of thought and wonderful ideas and they can often show what they know in nonstandard ways. They don’t read very well, many of them; many of them don’t write very well; and they often don’t take tests very well. And that used to mean that in other words they don’t know anything.’ We’ve found that they just are a wealth of knowledge and information and, if given options to show what they know, they can dazzle us.”

“Has this new work you have been doing helped you to see them differently,” asks the visitor, “or has it worked the other way: Has your confidence in their richness allowed you to imagine different ways of teaching?”

Molissa pauses thoughtfully, considering how the work has gone. She concludes that as she has ventured away from standard approaches to teaching she has come to see her students differently: “Seeing them get so excited about their learning and come up with very clever explanations for things, and be very creative in their decision making, I gained tremendous respect for their powers of thinking... I think I’ve been trained pretty classically as a learning disabilities teacher and as a special education teacher before then, where, you know, you still give them pretty structured tasks. And they all ended in writing. We have a lot of excellent thinkers in our room who, when we do writing, can’t put their ideas on paper. So now they’ll go next door with me or Patti and tell their story and we’ll write it for them. And they just get so excited when they see it written down.”

In the traditional setting, the writing tasks often prevented the teacher from seeing her students good ideas. “Now the kids are writing a lot more. They still have horrendous spelling, and problems with sentence structure. But that doesn’t stand in the way of their writing any more.”

In the traditional setting, the writing tasks often prevented the teacher from seeing her students good ideas.
Social Studies in the Teachable Moment

by Kathy Beasley
Averill Elementary School

I don't much like the social studies textbooks I have seen. Over the last few years, however, I have discovered that powerful social studies curriculum can evolve out of things children in my third-grade class—a rich mix of African-American, white, Hispanic, and Asian youngsters from middle class, working class, and poor families—say and do in the course of the school day. This is an example.

A Sharing Time Discussion

Towards the end of our morning sharing time, when it was my turn, I told how my husband had just returned from a three-day business trip to Washington, DC. I began by mentioning that he had stayed at a hotel which was hosting a birthday celebration for Dan Quayle. The children evinced zero interest in that. I pressed a little, asking if anyone knew who Dan Quayle was. No response. Then Mark said, "He is the Vice President of the United States." A general so-what response. Someone muttered that George Bush was the president. Others nodded passively.

I tried again. Hoping to generate some suspense, I described how John (my husband) had gone with some friends to a nice little Italian restaurant and noticed a man in an expensive dark blue suit and beautiful white shirt and red power tie at the table next to him: "Guess who?"

Before they could answer, and before I lost the mild interest I had generated, I answered my own question: "Jesse Jackson." An electric current streaked through the circle of children. Everyone exclaimed. They all knew who he was, but I explained a little bit more and then said, "Pass," as we do in our classroom when we have finished sharing.

All kinds of hands shot up. Amy, who was in charge of sharing that day, called on Cindy, who said she didn't like Jesse Jackson because he wants to take money and just give it to poor people and poor people should get a job and earn their own money. McDonald's and Burger King always want to hire people."

The other children were furious. They told tales of poverty and of helping poor people. Some talked about donating clothing and food. I offered the idea that when people are really poor, sometimes don't have a car or a phone and that it is hard to get to interviews and to a job if you don't have a car. The children debated heatedly the practicality of using a neighbor's phone or the public phone at the Quality Diner. Most felt that wouldn't work very well and explained why to Cindy.

Drucilla began the first of two different and very touching stories with much hesitating and several false starts; everyone waited politely. Finally she seemed to reach a

I think Jesse Jackson should keep helping poor people because the poor need help to live. I think Jesse Jackson is a good man because he cares about everybody. He don't care what the person looks like or what color they are or how they talk and what's their name. All Jesse Jackson cares about is that the poor get food and have a home to live in. I agree with Cindy that they should get a job—write away many after they have a home and food to live on then they can get a job and work.

In their journals, students continued the discussion that started in sharing time.
Jessie Jackson is not a very nice person because he wants to take money from the rich people because he can give to the poor people. I think the Jesse Jackson should ask his own money but if he were rich poor, he would give to the poor.

The third graders’ journals expressed a variety of reactions to Jesse Jackson and to issues that had surfaced during the class discussion.

decision: “I’m just going to say ‘white.”’. She then explained that her job was “free” for white people but “black people have to pay for them.” She explained how her uncle had tried to get a job and that a white man got the job because it was free for him. I asked if she was talking about discrimination and explained what I thought that meant. She agreed that it was discrimination. Children were animated throughout this discussion; their comments—particularly those of three black boys—were almost eloquent.

Amy, who is white, said her father had “walked in the street with Jesse Jackson,” referring, I think, to the march for the homeless that Jesse Jackson led last month in Lansing.

to read aloud Fly Away Home, a simple and compelling picture book about a little white boy and his father who are homeless and live in an airport. The father works as a janitor but can’t find an apartment they can afford. Immediately after listening to the story, the children pointed out that the characters were white and poor. Some wondered if that was because the illustrator always drew white characters, just as Pat Cummings (an author-illustrator we were studying in depth) always made her characters black. Others pointed out that some of the characters in this book were black and, on closer scrutiny, everyone agreed. Roberto noted that this was not a true story but realistic fiction: “It could have happened, but the author made it up.”

I felt a subtle shift in attitude and a new awareness of poverty and race and how they are portrayed. Our conversation got us all thinking.

At the time, the discussion and the work we did seemed very natural. Still, I was so moved by that scene: Sharing Time that I told other people about it. Reactions were mixed: Some felt I had said too much; some felt generally uneasy; others were as thrilled as I was. I shared my journal entry with my student teacher, as I often do. She was disturbed because I emphasized that more whites than blacks were poor; she felt it was important to note that the rate of poverty was higher among blacks than whites. Perhaps she felt that I was trying to discount the impact of poverty on minorities or perhaps she didn’t understand my deeper concerns about the stereotyping of poverty and race; economic status is not a racial characteristic even though many of the institutions of our society portray it as one. This exchange in our journals has opened up another opportunity for us to talk about issues that face every teacher today. It has also reminded me that when the social studies curriculum grows out of children’s ideas and concerns, it is bound to generate some controversy.

Some Poor People Are White

Mariah, also white and usually very quiet, pointed out that sometimes poor people were white. The children stared at her in disbelief. Feeling compelled to try to dispel stereotypical thinking, I interjected that more of the people who were classified as poor in the United States are white than black. I especially wanted the African-American chil-
Why Is Lansing the Capital of Michigan?

In the fall of 1989, as a part of her research on the role of knowledge of subject matter in teaching, Suzanne Wilson began to teach social studies to third graders in Kendon Elementary School in Lansing. An experienced high school teacher, a voracious reader both of history and of scholarship in the philosophy of history, and an assistant (now associate) professor at MSU’s College of Education, Wilson had never taught elementary school before. She saw herself as “an unusual natural experiment”: a beginner whose grounding in subject matter was far stronger than her knowledge of elementary school teaching and elementary school children.

Knowledge of history was not enough, she soon discovered. “I find the claim that subject matter knowledge is central to teaching to be sensible,” she wrote after six months in the third grade. “But I think that as scholars we too often oversimplify complicated concepts. Subject matter knowledge is not the solution to the problems of teaching, nor is it a simple matter to understand the ways in which subject matter knowledge affects teachers, their thinking, their decisions.”

“It was a miserable year,” Wilson recalls two years later. Like many other beginners, she had major management difficulties. “I was trying to figure out how to control a class without a system of rewards and punishments, through fascinating subject matter... I had glimpses of hope and long, long periods of disappointment.”

Two Years Later

Despite the pain and difficulty of this first year, in the summer of 1990 Wilson agreed to teach social studies in both third grades and to join the effort that third-grade teachers Carol Yurkis and Carol Miller were making to rethink aspects of their teaching. She continued this commitment in the fall of 1991. “I am still trying to figure out what it would mean to teach history at this level. I feel like I’m a little smarter but not much.”

Wilson launched the 1991-92 school year with a question: Why is Lansing the capital of Michigan? She chose this starting point because, having read considerable local history, she believed that the reasons for moving the capital from Detroit to Lansing would be accessible to her students: With relatively little help from their teacher, they would be able to figure out for themselves why politicians made this decision. She hoped that a unit that tapped what they knew would help her to teach the third graders productive ways to talk to each other. She also wanted to introduce the idea that important historical events often have multiple causes and she wanted to give the third graders a chance to write their own interpretive historical narratives. This central question about their home town seemed perfect.

Wilson soon learned that when the third graders referred to Lansing as the capital most were thinking about the big building downtown rather than the city that was the seat of state government. This focus on the building led them to some interesting speculations.

When the third graders referred to Lansing as the capital, most were thinking about the big building downtown rather than the city that was the seat of state government.

In the typical progress of our classroom talk, I often try to ask a question that will—through conversation—lead the students to construct a class understanding of an issue. For example, I told the class that the capital had been Detroit but a decision had been made to move it—why? I introduced the idea that Detroit was a port and asked if that would make a difference. Because my students were thinking about the building, they expressed some concerns like the building slipping into the water, about storms on the lake damaging the building. They did not think of the capital as a resource—except as an attractive piece of architecture.

Subsequent comments—especially her students’ contention that it would be “fairer” to have several
capitals instead of only one—convinced Wilson that it would be useful to explore the third graders’ ideas about the functions of centralized government. When she asked what they knew about mayors, governors, and presidents, they explained that governors “owned” the state.

When I pushed them on this and asked them how I could make sense of the fact that I owned my house—did the governor? the mayor? “OWN” my home too? They explained to me that the governor and/or mayor owned the extra stuff, for example, the land between the sidewalk and the street, the rights to the land where they decided to build highways, and train tracks.

Wilson pushed ahead, suggesting that there might be an analogy between the authority of their principal and that of a governor or president. The third graders asserted confidently that Dr. Thomas owned the school.

The next day, however, another idea began to emerge.

In the Third Grade

It is the afternoon of September 26 and Wilson has just answered Amy’s question about note taking (“You can take notes if that is something you would like to do, but you don’t have to”) and offered Cassie the floor.

Standing before a large pull-down map of the continental United States, Cassie points toward Washington, DC, explaining, “Well, like we were saying yesterday, the governor lives over there.”

“The governor?” Wilson asks.

“The president,” Cassie corrects herself. She gropes for words to express her ideas about the governor’s power and responsibility. “If someone has paid all the bills on their house and don’t have to pay anymore for about six or seven years, if they don’t have to pay any more rent, then I think they own that.” She pauses thoughtfully. “But, well, the governor is in charge, but you’ve got to take care of the yard and do the stuff you need to do to the house, and stuff.”

“Okay, let me stop you,” Wilson interjects eagerly. “You’ve made a distinction between being in charge and owning. What does it mean to be in charge?”

“He’s, like, in charge, because if you don’t pay your taxes, he might have these papers.”

The third graders worry... considerably more about what presidents and governors ought not to be able to do... than about what they can and should do.

“Okay, Cassie’s saying maybe he doesn’t own the state, maybe he’s in charge. What’s he in charge of?”

“The governor doesn’t tell me whether I can go to the grocery store,” James asserts.

“So what is he in charge of?” inquires Wilson.

“He’s in charge of the capital,” replies James.

“Okay, James agrees with Cassie, but he says that the governor isn’t in charge of everything, he’s in charge of the capital. Does anybody want to respond to James?” Wilson acknowledges Michelle’s raised hand.

“I don’t think he owns the United States. I think he works for the United States.”

“Why do you want to make that claim?” asks her teacher. Michelle shrugs. “It’s a good claim,” Wilson encourages her. “Why do you want to make it?” When Michelle continues to stare silently at her desk top, Wilson tosses the conversational ball to the other third graders. “Can anyone help her out?”

“She’s saying, ‘We vote for him, he works for it, but he doesn’t own it,’” Rachel explains, adding, a second later, “But I didn’t understand.”

“Okay, Michelle, can you help her?” Wilson asks.

“He can’t boss you around and make you do something,” Michelle responds immediately. “He just works for the United States.”

“Okay, what kind of work does he do?” her teacher inquires. Michelle grins and shrugs again, having gone as far as she can for the moment.

Eliza journeys off on a tangent: “What she’s trying to say is that if the president needs to go all the way across America, the governors would be helping him.”

Wilson reminds her of their collective focus. “I’m not sure how this is related. Now this is hard work and we’re getting much better at it. What we need to do is build on what other people are saying.” She summarizes Michelle’s point and asks Eliza to relate her comment to it.

“The governors help the president,” Eliza explains, “but I want to say something else: If you want to go from Texas to Alabama, you don’t have to ask the governor or the president. You can go anywhere you want.”

Like the founding fathers, these third graders worry about possible abuses of executive power, and during the remainder of their social studies period they talk considerably more about what presidents and governors ought not to be able to do—telling people to move out of their houses features prominently—than about what they can and should do. Caledonia asserts that the president makes you pay your taxes. “Other bosses are in charge of other things.”
The Problem with Social Studies

"I feel that people really underestimate children this age," Wilson tells a visitor from Israel who has accompanied her to Kendon. She explains that most American elementary schools build their social studies curriculum around a notion of "expanding communities." Reasoning that young children cannot really understand things that are outside of their immediate experience, publishers and curriculum developers have created a sequence in which children study themselves and their bodies in kindergarten, their families in first grade, their communities in second, their municipality in third, their state in fourth, American history in fifth, and ancient history in sixth.

Wilson takes issue with the premise as well as the result. "I have serious doubts that there is much difference between the difficulties third graders have and the difficulties 22-year-olds have understanding periods different from their own."

Several weeks later, sitting in an office at the University, she returns to this point.

"I have serious doubts that there is much difference between the difficulties third graders have and the difficulties 22-year-olds have understanding periods different from their own."

One of the things that bothers me is that I don't think a lot of people in social studies give kids credit for being very bright.

I want people to realize that kids can have meaningful conversations about complex ideas. This folklore about only being able to do stuff that is immediate to you I think is just all wrong. One day we were having this extended conversation about the difference between the capitol the building and capital the city, and Michelle said, "Well, actually, there's three: There's capitol the building; there's capital the city; and there's capital the spirit.'

And I said, "What ever do you mean, Michelle?" and she said, "You know, Dr. Wilson. You told us. The spirit of capital." Steve [an MSU graduate student] had been there all of that week and he said that he didn't remember me saying anything like that. And I was pretty sure that I would remember if I had said something like that. And she said, "You know, Dr. Wilson, it's like you explained to us: Even if there wasn't a building, and even if there wasn't a city, there would still be people who did the work of the government. So there's the spirit of the capital."

I thought that was quite wonderful, and I thought, "Whatever it is that Michelle's got her mind on right now, it's a pretty complicated idea, and it seems pretty reasonably expressed." I think that kids are, for the most part, capable of this kind of thinking, if you can just figure out how to get them inside these ideas. I'm not very good at it right now,

"Kids are so much more intelligent than we give them credit for."

but I continue to have this belief that they are so much more intelligent than we give them credit for.

Wilson worries that academic research that focuses on children's misconceptions about history and on curricular strategies for dispelling these misconceptions reinforce a general tendency to underestimate children's understandings.

I think this misconceptions stuff is really dangerous in talk about children. There are some things that children believe that are a problem: They get in the way of their being able to learn something. But talking about them as though they have misconceptions that we have to destruct in order to have them understand stuff seems to me exactly the opposite to the position that I think that you want to take when you say that people enter with hearts and minds that are important.

I think about when a kid would say something like, 'Well, Dr. Thomas owns the school.' I guess some people would call that a misconception, but I don't find thinking about it as a misconception very helpful for my thinking as a teacher. I mean, knowing that some person in the classroom honestly believes that at that moment makes me feel that I haven't chosen a very helpful analogy. But thinking of it as a misconception doesn't help me.
Multiple Foci and the Complexity of Goals

Over time, Wilson reports, her work in the third grade has helped her to learn more about the ways in which subject matter interweaves with other concerns. The classroom experience helps her to see teaching more holistically. To explain how, she tells another story.

A few days earlier, she and her students were discussing the idea that government was responsible for the well-being of citizens. She had introduced the idea of welfare because she suspected that many of the students thought of welfare in very negative terms—in terms of checks and only in relation to their mothers’ struggles to get off welfare—and she wanted to broaden their outlook. One little girl suggested that the job of caring for the needy ought not to fall exclusively to government: If a homeless person came to her door she would invite him in and ask him to spend the night.

At that point Luke leapt from his seat: “You can’t do that, Bonnie. What if the homeless person woke up in the night while your family was asleep and took a gun and killed all of you?”

Wilson’s own thoughts as she listened to this exchange were complex: As Bonnie spoke Wilson thought, “Ah, this is good. We’ve been talking about the responsibility of the government for its citizens but Bonnie is complicating our view by reminding us that individuals have responsibilities for other people too.” When she heard Luke’s comment she wondered, “Does he think all homeless people carry guns? I don’t want him to think that all homeless people are dangerous or bad.” Then she looked across the room at one of the other kids—a little boy who tries to act tough but who she believes is actually “a real marshmallow.” “And I thought, ‘I don’t want one single one of them to trust strange adults enough to get into a car with one.’” All these concerns—for students’ theories about individual and government responsibility, for their ideas about the homeless, for their stance towards strangers, for their actual safety, fought for her attention. “Subject matter is part of the stew, one of the things that is floating around in your head. But I’m also thinking that I want them to be the kind of person that would let someone in but would do it in a way that isn’t stupid.”

"It takes so long to construct a practice. I could do this for ten years and still be learning.”

This has helped me to think about other ways to think about teaching. It takes so long to construct a practice. I could do this for ten years and still be learning. My learning curve has not slowed down.

If I continued to work like this for 10 years, I think I’d know how to consistently engage kids in interesting questions. I’d have a bank of responses, and I’d know a lot more about what kids bring to school that I can use as we explore subject matter.

Every time I teach something, whether it’s in third grade or in graduate school, we get deeper. Because if you have a sense of what’s going to be difficult, of the different ways things can go, it helps you enormously as a teacher.

And after 10 years I think I’d be better at managing discussions and at using interesting subject matter to manage behavior. I came into the third grade with the idea that you do not need a management system: If children are involved in interesting discussions, discipline will mostly take care of itself. I still believe that: Classes control themselves when you get a critical mass of students committed to the exploration, when you have mutual respect, and when the work is fun.

It Takes So Long

Hand in hand with the message about complexity come the messages about time:
Making Connections: A Conversation with Peter Kressler, Peg Lamb, and Brenda Lynch

Peter Kressler, Peg Lamb, and Brenda Lynch teach social studies, special education, and English, respectively, at Holt High School. This year for the first time they are team teaching an American Studies class that integrates English and American History. They meet with their 54 students—five of whom have special needs—for two periods (a “block”) each day. Because many reformers recommend integrating social studies with other disciplines, Changing Minds asked Kressler, Lamb, and Lynch to talk with us about both the problems and the opportunities the collaboration has created for them and their students.

CM: Can you tell me a bit about why you wanted to integrate English and American history?

Lynch: Two years ago, a committee looking at what the school could do for at-risk kids concluded that they needed more of a learning community. We were hoping that having the kids for two hours would create a sense of family, that the kids would become close to each other, close to their group, and close to the teachers and not feel that school was a negative, threatening thing.

CM: So the American Studies block was created primarily to help out the students who were at risk?

Lynch: Primarily, but we came to the conclusion in that committee that almost all of our kids are at risk, whether they’re underachievers or overachievers academically. It isn’t necessarily an academic problem when they’re at risk. Often they have social problems.

Lamb: And I think one of the other reasons that we were inspired to do this was, with a block of time you can create more options and a greater variety of activities. With a team of three people, one person might be teaching and two others planning, or two people might be teaching while another person is developing something or meeting with a small group of kids. A team opens up a range of possibilities that you don’t typically have in a one classroom, one teacher situation.

It gives the kids a variety of people to interact with and, because you’re in there for two hours, there is a more sensitive connection between teachers and students.

Lamb: Having a variety of activities and a variety of ways to evaluate is one of the ways we support students who are at risk. One of the things I bring to the group is experience advocating for kids who find themselves in academic trouble because of attendance or because of they’re not in the habit of doing work.

We only have five students who are in special education but we have a lot more who are at risk. One comes to mind. At the beginning of the year we knew that one boy was going to be sentenced for a jail term in October. He really connected with the group and was getting an A-B kind of grade; he felt good enough to have his probation officer call me and ask, “Is there a way you can work out for him to be released from jail to come to school?” And because his grades were strong and he was very acclimated to the group, I worked with the teachers and we agreed to have him come back. He’s been able to be a really productive member of the group and is saying things like, “I love...
writing, I really think maybe I'd like to take some more advanced courses in writing."

Maybe that would not have happened if we weren't in his life. Because we have more adults, we can lobby more for kids. And we've done the same thing with probably about 20 others: They get behind, I meet with them individually, we develop a contract of when the work has got to be in. We meet with parents if we need to do that and I think, frankly, they're very surprised that someone's doing that at the high school level.

All this contributes to the community but I think what also happens is that they feel like they can do it. And then there's the support for them to be able to.

The confidence and poise that they now have in front of the class is not something that I think they would have gained in a classroom where they didn't have the opportunity to use their voice.

Lynch: Everybody has to think now; there aren't kids who are able to sit in the back and hide.

Lamb: So they're taking more risks, and they have the support of their group to do it. It's been wonderful to see.

Lynch: One thing that I really notice this year is that when I have regular English 10 kids, by January they've grown some and I've seen some improvement; but in these kids I've seen a lot of higher level thinking skills, a lot more maturity in terms of what they are able to handle. Their self-esteem is higher. Their writing is much better than the writing I normally get from my regular tenth grade.

CM: And why do you think that is so?

Lynch: I think it's the experience of working more than just 60 minutes, of integrating history, so that they're thinking of ideas that are at a higher level than just simply what we get into in literature.

Lamb: They do much more writing, I think.

Lynch: At the beginning of the year they had a really hard time seeing the integration. They wanted English and they wanted history. Now they're seeing the connections better.

Kressler: I don't think they know which is which.

Lamb: We did a unit on family life in the 1900s and then we did Our Town. It appeared to me that they were able to make better sense of the play, having this historical context and having looked at the issues of racism and sexism. I felt it was very powerful.

Lynch: Definitely. Normally my sophomores don't get Our Town. These kids generated fantastic ideas.

CM: Can you think of some of the things that came out?

Lamb: We gave each team a quote to interpret, to restate in their own words and to relate to their lives.

Lynch: They wrote about the insignificance of one person in life but also about the fact that one person can make a difference. They wrote about appreciating and valuing life. Kids 16 or 17 years of age usually aren't that introspective. I was amazed that they were able to generate these ideas without me prodding them.

Lamb: And we did a creative writing piece where they had to identify something that they take for granted around the theme of this play and describe why they take it for granted and how they're thinking about it differently.

I thought it was really amazing that the boy who's in jail wrote about how he took his freedom for granted. I don't know if all that would have happened if they hadn't studied the historical context.

Lynch: That's what's nice about having the team: You have that whole background that one person alone wouldn't have. I never used historical background when I presented Our Town before.

Lamb: In the report that we did on Native Americans, we had the historical background plus we had a film about a Native American who won the Olympics and then we did a book, Dances With Wolves, and some poetry.

CM: I'm particularly interested in how you see this integration of English and social studies changing what 10th graders get out of American history.

Kressler: I'm trying to help students to see relationships and connections and causes and effects. Integrating literature gives more time and a lot more opportunity to make connections, which in an American history class is not always possible.

Then, too, I think that the literature really gives kids a chance to personally identify with ideas and situations and feelings and people. They have a sense of actually doing history rather than just reading about it in a text. One of the things that this integration allows us to do is to not rely on history texts.
CM: Do you use the book at all?  
Kressler: Only as a reference, in order to do certain things.

Lynch: I'm having a similar experience. I have taught that play many times, but learning some of the history made thinking about Our Town a much more powerful experience for me.

Lamb: Hearing talk about the historical, economic, and social components of all of those things, I've learned a lot from teaching this class.

Lynch: I want to pay a little tribute to Pete and the way he thinks about teaching history. He really makes an attempt to use primary sources and to have kids get at the heart of the time and how people were writing and thinking about issues then. I think that's made a real difference in the way students have been able to conceptualize the events we have studied.

Lamb: They're doing things that I am amazed at. If it's too hard

In my work with cooperative groups I've come to realize that the best task for a group is one that most individual 10th graders couldn't do by themselves—one that makes them totally overwhelmed—but that they can do with three or four other people.

CM: What are they using for sources and how are they coming up with these ideas?

Kressler: Stuff that we hand them.

Lynch: Primary sources—the book, the video, the short stories. Even though the presentations have taken a long time, I was very gratified, listening to them speak, by the way the kids were able to connect very abstract, difficult concepts—urbanization, racism, immigration, laws, equality—and talk about the links that they saw. I don't think individually they would have been able to tackle this, but they had a group, thinking, working, writing, talking together.

Lamb: Some of the kids that I wasn't sure could handle this came up with great ideas. In fact, the last group to present isn't our strongest but they had one of the best connections.

One of our most insightful students is special ed.

Kressler: One of our most insightful students is special ed, which may not have come out in another class situation. She has some difficulties that make her special ed, but her ability to think is not one of the things affected.

Lynch: Her ideas and the connections she draws are incredible.

Kressler: If this young lady were in the special education class, she would have never been able to do what she's done in American Studies.

Lamb: She wouldn't have been pushed by the other kids either.

Kressler: Exactly. The environment wouldn't lend itself to that. There may be some special education kids that would not survive American Studies, but a lot of them are surviving very well.

CM: You've talked about the opportunities that teaching together has created for you and your students. Can you describe some of the problems?

Kressler: The numbers are too large. Part of it has to do with the physical set-up: There are too many tables and too many bodies and too many desks.

Lamb: We do a lot of cooperative learning. With 54 kids, group presentations take forever to get through.

Kressler: It's hard to maintain interest. Also, in my experience, groups of three work better.

CM: And why is that, Pete?

Lamb: Kids take more responsibility.

Kressler: Yeah, number one. Number two, if they are writing something, it is more possible for them to really collaborate. But with 54 kids we have to have four in each group. If we had fewer kids, three would be better.
CM: What about having several teachers? Is that ever a problem?

Kressler: In September and October we had five adults: the three of us, plus Tom Bird [of MSU] who taught with us everyday for the first nine weeks, and a student teacher. I'm not sure that was a real good thing: It was hard for five people to figure out what they were going to do. Particularly at the beginning, when we'd never done it before.

Lynch: It intimidated the kids, too. They didn't get to know us as well because there were so many of us.

Kressler: And we didn't roll as well as we could have.

Lamb: Now when we're doing things we interject and work together. We referred to it as a dance this morning and I like that.

Kressler: The content has also been a problem: One of the things we've been talking about is that we need to pick up a lot of stuff in order to give students a more pluralistic, less Eurocentric view of American literature.

Lynch: We are very limited. Almost none of the materials we have for English 10 work in Our Town is about the only thing that we ended up using.

The other problem is that we teach American literature in 11th grade so I have to be very careful that what I use in this class is not what they read in eleventh grade. And that's been difficult because a lot of the things that I thought would be really good I can't use.

CM: Do you think it's really a problem if they read something twice?

Lynch: Yes, oh yes. Kids say, "I've read this; I'm not going to read it again." Even though it might be good for them and they might learn more from it, they refuse to spend the time to do something that they've already done.

CM: Other problems?

Lynch: Planning, resources, money, and Pete, Peg, and I are all different people, we all have different styles and different expectations.

Lamb: Sometimes we don't agree about how to handle issues with kids. And it plays out with kind of a mom and pop routine where Pete comes down a little harder and so a kid will then come to us and say, "Could you please help me work this out?" That's happened a lot.

CM: What do you do?

Lynch: We negotiate. Pete and I talked for a long time yesterday about how I handled one of the kids, because he thought that I was being too easy on him.

Lamb: And we sometimes think he's being too hard.

Lynch: It happens in other blocks too. Even at the high school level the male and female roles are set in the kids’ minds.

Lamb: We are three very experienced teachers, with our own styles of dealing with things. In this setting, we've got to talk things through. I think one of the incredible strengths of our team is that we can lay issues on the table.

Lynch: And we do.

Lamb: We're honest and we can disagree and come to some agreement about it and walk away friends. That's been wonderful.

Lynch: At the beginning of the year, Pete would say something to the class and I wouldn't agree with it, but I would wait till we had planning time to tell him. Now I speak up in class. I'll say, "I'm not real sure about that, maybe we ought to think about it." The kids see us collaborating as a team and they model that collaboration in their own groups. That's been very strong; I feel very comfortable and I'm teaching now second semester with another woman in another one of my classes and that's what I'm trying to tell her: if I say something and you disagree with it, let's talk it over in front of the kids. It's so easy to pick up on this new team situation because of my experiences here.

Pete and I have both been through personal problems that we haven't normally had in our lives. If I hadn't had the support of those two to help me do this, I never would have made it—if I'd been stuck in my little room with my 32 kids for five hours a day. It's like having a family.

For years I went home with all these frustrations about kids and there was nobody to share them with.

Lamb: It's like being a single parent versus a double parent. There are days when each of us comes in at 7:40 not ready to deal with some things. Brenda might say, "I'll do the coffee today, you start class," or vice versa. We have that latitude. When you're the one-person show you have to be on. Starting the morning this way has felt good.

Lynch: I love it; I would never want to go back to teaching five hours alone.

Lamb: Another real strength of the team is that although we do more writing, we have more people to help grade papers. We share that, and, sometimes if I've been really overloaded, Brenda will say, "Well, let me grade the papers this weekend," and vice versa. The block gives that kind of flexibility.

Lynch: I think that the isolation is one of the reasons that teachers burn out and end up hating what they do. If I'm not up, Peg's enthusiasm and Pete's enthusiasm brings me up.

Kressler [interrupts]: One of the best things about this class is the teaming, the fact that we read, write, and speak together.

CM: And why is that helpful?

Kressler: Because if we are expecting kids to become collaborative, then we have to be working collaboratively ourselves. Otherwise we are working at cross-purposes with them. If I'm not engaged in collaborative work myself, I can't think that way: I can't construct activities and learning situations for kids that are designed to be collaborative. Maybe somebody else could, but it wouldn't work for me.
History For What?

In the past five years, three major reports have taken on the reform of social studies. The Bradley Commission's *Building a History Curriculum* (1988), the state of California's *History-Social Science Framework* (1989) and, most recently, the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools' *Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century* (1989) all urge schools to teach more narrative history. But a number of educators argue that the goals they identify for social studies seem unconnected to the curriculum they recommend. Walter Parker of the University of Washington describes the difficulty this way:

[Charting a Course] shares a debilitating flaw with [Building a History Curriculum and the California Framework]: Its goal statement and its curriculum contradict one another. Critical understandings of history and geography and critical attitudes “appropriate to analysis of the human condition” are set out as goals along with participatory citizenship. But the actual curriculum recommended could not by any stretch of the imagination achieve such goals: Generally, students are to absorb loads of geography and narrative history for 12 years.

Almost everyone agrees that students ought to know something about history—and it is rhetorically effective to launch a stirring call for change by showing that an alarmingly large proportion of high school graduates don’t know some historical fact that their elders believe they learned before they could tie their shoes. In addition, social studies sounds like the place where children and adolescents should learn what effective and public-spirited citizens need to know. If we admit that social studies cannot do everything, we face some difficult choices. The obvious solution is to declare that studying history will enhance critical citizenship. Unfortunately, we have no evidence that this is true.

**Letters, Diaries, and The Congressional Record**

Parker and others argue that the issues-centered curricula developed in the 1950s and 60s provide a way to resolve the tension between teaching history and teaching the skills necessary for thinking critically about public issues. By bringing primary sources—letters, diaries, political speeches, newspaper articles—into classrooms and bookbags, these materials help students to see the moral messiness of complex issues.

In the 1960s, Donald Oliver, Fred Newmann, and James Shaver created student booklets on 40-odd topics in history, science, law, and the like. Teachers can use the materials in such a way as to help students to connect what they are learning about the past to current controversies.

In the 1960s, as a part of Harvard Project Social Studies (HPSS), Donald Oliver, Fred Newmann, and James Shaver created student booklets on 40-odd topics in world history, behavioral science, law, and the like. Over 20 years later, the Social Science Consortium in Colorado began to reissue updated versions of some of the booklets that dealt with topics in American history—religious freedom, the New Deal, and the railroad era, for example. David Harris, social studies education consultant to Oakland County schools, declares the exercise designed to help students understand the economics of competition and monopoly during the railroad era is “the best social studies simulation game I’ve ever seen.”

**Immigration: Pluralism and National Identity**, another HPSS booklet, launches students into a 67-page collection of letters, political speeches, autobiographical fragments, 19th-century labor reports, and historical narrative with guidelines for thinking about the sorts of
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<th>General Public Issue</th>
<th>Should the United States restrict immigration?</th>
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<td>Should all people have a right to settle where they wish?</td>
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<td>Definitional Issue:</td>
<td>Is someone who cannot find work in his/her homeland oppressed?</td>
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<td>Fact-Explanation Issue:</td>
<td>Will increased immigration lower the U.S. standard of living?</td>
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Reprinted from Immigration: Pluralism and National Identity with permission from Social Science Education Consortium Publications.

**A boy suggests admitting applicants who have had no opportunities for schooling and excluding those who have dropped out of school.**

Can immigrants strike a balance between their traditions and the "American Way"?

Should the United States still be a refuge for the oppressed? Do we still see ourselves as a nation of immigrants? What should our immigration policy be?

"**Why Let in More Ignorant People?**"

Frank Buford's American History classes at Andover High School in Bloomfield Hills are tackling the last of these questions. As his students settle into their seats, Buford announces, "Today we are imagining that we are making up an application for people who want to come into the country. You are a blue ribbon commission selected to make up this application. What are you going to put on it?"

The suggestions come rapidly and Buford writes them on the board. "Just numbers," Mike insists. "Nothing else."

"No religious or racial restrictions," volunteers David. "If they have relatives who are already citizens," offers a boy in glasses. "Or residents?" asks Buford. "Would it be just as good if they were just residents of the United States?"

The boy nods. "Occupation," suggests a girl. "Okay," says Buford, writing this on the board alongside the others. "You want to give preference to those with desirable occupations?"

"Exclude criminals," offers Marcus. "If they have a job or a home to go to..."

"Let them in if they have a job and a home waiting?" asks Buford. "Restrict those with contagious diseases," suggests Dirck.

"They should be literate. If not in English, at least in their own language."

Perhaps inspired by Woodrow Wilson's angry denunciation of the 1915 literacy bill, Mark asks permission to debate this last suggestion. "If they are from a poor country, they may not have had the chance to learn to read."

Bruce agrees: "I don't see what literacy has to do with it. Maybe they didn't have the opportunity..."

"But why let in more ignorant people?" protests Jenny, "We have enough already."

A boy suggests admitting applicants who have had no opportunities for schooling and excluding those who have dropped out of school.

"But how will you tell the difference?" a classmate objects.

"This is the only country where people drop out of school," Joshua asserts confidently.

"Do you have statistics on that?" asks Buford. "I've never seen any."

"Yes," replies Josh. "In third-world countries people are grateful for the chance to get an education."

Martin raises a different question: "Why limit on the basis of country?"

"Can you answer your own question, from what you know about the Immigration Act of 1924?" asks Buford. "Why did they want to limit by national origin?"

"Prejudice," replies Janine, af-
“If all these people come in looking for jobs, will they be able to find them?”

Ter Martin has shrugged uncertainly. “Prejudice against Jews who wanted to come to America.”

“They were trying to limit the numbers of people from Southern and Eastern Europe because the policy was that these people were less desirable,” explains Buford. “And my ethnic group of Catholics certainly were among those who weren’t wanted. That’s what quotas seem to be about. And that,” he turns to Janine, “is why I was a little surprised that someone of your background would be espousing quotas.”

“Well, you have to be realistic. You can’t just say that they should have let all those Jewish people in. I mean, I think they should have, but…”

**A Definitional Question**

“Could we have a system of quotas that isn’t discriminatory?” Buford asks. He is answered with a chorus of nays.

“What if we just let a certain number of people in each year, and then that would be that?” proposes Marcus. “And then, after that, look at each case individually and see who needs to come most. I think each person from an oppressed country could, if given the opportunity in America, help our economy.”

Terrence disagrees: “With such a high unemployment rate, if all these people come in looking for jobs, will they be able to find them? And if not, how will they live? Will they drive wages down?”

“How does what you just said differ from what Samuel Gompers said at the turn of the century?”

Buford asks. “Has your question been answered?”

Terrence shrugs. Rene addresses his question, sidestepping Buford’s invitation to examine the historical record: “They won’t drive wages down around here because it is unionized. And I think the immigrants might look favorably on unions. And you have to be fair.”

“But they are unemployed,” Terrence shoots back. “They won’t join unions, they’ll be strike breakers. Also, I want to ask Rene a question: You keep saying, ‘You have to be fair.’ Well, what’s fair?”

“Ah ha,” Buford breaks in delightedly, “you’re raising a definitional question.”

“And you can’t look at each case,” Terrence continues. “You’re dealing with a lot of people.”

“You can’t decide what’s fair,” Rene shoots back. “That’s my point. If you let more people in, we can make more jobs.”

**Are We Our Brother’s Keeper?**

A few minutes later, Buford consults the list on the blackboard again and inquires whether everyone has agreed to exclude people with communicable diseases.

“Are we talking about the flu or AIDS?” asks Mark.

Buford suggests that he take a stab at deciding.

“Well, add the word ‘fatal,’” Mark responds.

“Define ‘fatal,’” Jenny challenges, amidst general laughter.

“I think we can agree what fatal means,” Buford concludes. “So you would exclude someone with AIDS and let in someone with the flu. What about someone with TB?”

“Is that communicable?”

“It can be.”

“Is it fatal?”

“It’s treatable,” replies Buford.

“It can be fatal if it isn’t treated.”

“Well,” Mark suggests, “let them get treated in their own country and then they can come.”

“We are not our brother’s keeper?” Buford challenges him. “What’s the point? When it costs us?”

“We have lots of problems of our own,” Lisa asserts, among a chorus of other voices.

“I really feel sorry for them,” adds Tina, “but we can’t fill up our country with sick people.”

“I think if they have any disease, even cancer,” interjects Terrence, “because they’re going to be spending our money on treatment.”

**The Richest Opportunities for Social Studies May Occur When a Teacher Can Offer Students Materials That Engage Their Hearts as Well as Their Minds with a Complex Public Issue.**

“Okay, Terrence,” Buford grins, “let me restate your position clearly: You don’t want to let anyone in who is going to cause your taxes to go up.”

When the class ends a few minutes later, it certainly has not reached consensus on what is fair, on obligations of Americans to the world’s oppressed, or on how an influx of immigrants might affect the United States’s economy. However, when Buford asks who was influenced by something someone else said, more than half of the 11th graders raise their hands. “Great. You were listening to each other. That’s what we want,” their teacher crowed delightedly.
Are Some Groups More American Than Others?

Harris, who says that he has made a personal resolution to teach the disciplines of social studies—geography, history, psychology, economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology—only to the extent and in ways that they promote his primary goal of helping young people develop the skills they need in order to think critically about public issues and act effectively as citizens concerned for the public good, uses immigration in classes for prospective and practicing teachers.

Like Buford's teenagers, Harris's students become deeply engaged by questions about who the United States ought to admit as residents and citizens. Even more riveting, he reports, are discussions of the question "Are some groups more American than other groups?" Often Asians in his classes confront their classmates with the realities that lie beneath easy rhetoric: To the Cabots and Smiths who claim that we are all equally American they say, "But we had to change to become like you; you did not have to change to become like us."

Buford's adolescents and Harris's adults remind us that the richest opportunities for social studies may occur when a teacher can offer students materials that engage their hearts as well as their minds with a complex public issue, when these materials allow them to see the present freshly through the mirror of our complicated past, and when students trust their classmates and their teacher enough to share the full richness of their experience—their family history, their personal struggles—with one another.

At the same time, Buford points out, the teacher who encourages this sort of conversation may plough a stony furrow: Parents and citizen groups sometimes attack them on political grounds, "I'm a little controversial," he reports, "and I'm very moderate." He does not, however, see a responsible alternative. "People who are afraid don't teach anything that's controversial, and the kids don't learn anything."

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Student booklets and teacher guides in the Public Issues series are available from Social Science Education Consortium Publications, 855 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80332.

Can I Help You?

Three years ago, Peter Hart Research Associates asked a representative national sample of 1000 15- to 24-year-old Americans about their goals in life, their perceptions of politics and government, and their ideas about citizenship. Seven hundred of these young people told the researchers that, "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on." An overwhelming majority of those polled saw their contemporaries as less involved in public affairs than young people of the past. As a group they ranked "being involved in helping your community to be a better place," last among seven possible life goals—far behind making good money and having a good time.

Politicians, the economy, the media, and the wider culture have all helped to shape these attitudes and schools cannot, all by themselves, reverse them. Most social studies curricula do, however, aim to foster the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions necessary for committed, effective citizenship. Teachers and principals worry about students' attitudes and wonder how to change them.

Some reformers argue that the best way to nurture the empathy, passion, and belief in public action that are needed for good citizenship is to show students a new slice of life and to give them a chance to act effectively on behalf of others. Perhaps these apparently disaffected young people agree: 51% of them favored requiring high school students to do some community service before graduating; 42% agreed with the statement, "No one asks young people to get involved or shows them how."

Studying Society While Studying Theater

In January 1990, Kathy Dewsbury-White, Community Development Director of Ingham Intermediate School District, approached Lee Wheaton, principal of Leslie High School, with a proposal to develop a community service lab within any high school class.

whose teacher wanted to work with her.

Dewsbury-White ended up designing classroom and field experiences with Gail Vallilee for Vallilee's beginning theater class. Vallilee and Dewsbury-White told their students that they were going to study one important social issue and, at the end of the semester, express their new understandings in a theatrical production. They invited the 16-year-olds to choose between homelessness and abuse of the elderly. "These were issues we thought kids could get enraged over," says Dewsbury-White. After reading several articles and listening to the stories of a social epidemiologist, the teenagers voted to focus on homelessness.

The two teachers searched out readings, videos, and speakers that could help their students dig deeply into the causes of homelessness and the way in which it affects people's lives. Dewsbury-White also arranged a variety of field and service experiences. The class first visited the Daytime Resource Center in Lansing, where they prepared and served a festive lunch, performed skits of their own devising, and visited with clients.

As a part of Gardner Middle School's Food Distribution Program, a seventh grader weighs out onions for a senior citizen while his teacher, Jack Cooper, adds up her purchases.

They then went as a group to the Economic Crisis Center in East Lansing, where they told resident children stories they had memorized and rehearsed. They also chose one of three possible projects to do on their own and present to the class, using their growing theatrical skills. Some fasted from Thursday afternoon until they secured a promise of food from an appropriate agency (learning first-hand what it is like to try to be civil on a truly empty stomach); others spent an evening preparing dinner and visiting with residents at an overnight shelter in Lansing; a few interviewed professionals who worked on issues related to homelessness.

All students kept journals in which they reflected on readings, class discussions, and field experiences. Their entries vividly demonstrated the effect of meeting the "social problem" face to face and of trying to help. Says Dewsbury-White:

"Before the first field visit, they used words like bum, drunk, crazy, and hobo as synonyms for homeless person. The readings and the visitors [various professionals working on issues related to homelessness who talked to the class and answered questions] made absolutely no impact on this. But as soon as they did their fieldwork this stopped. I never saw it again in a journal."

The students' perceptions echo those of Dewsbury-White: "We just thought they were drunks or bums or people who had committed crimes," 16-year-old Shamus Smith
told a reporter for the *Lansing State Journal*, describing the collective change of heart.

Miles from their home turf, some of the high school students exposed a different side of themselves. Sitting in a circle of children in the grass outside the Economic Crisis Center, the high school storytellers had to compete with the temptations of a beautiful spring day. Some forgot their lines and were too flustered to *ad lib* well; they must surely have felt hurt and disappointed as children wriggled and wandered away. "But what they did very well," recalls Dewsbury White, "was they interacted beautifully with the kids."

They acted as support for one another. Especially the boys. They’d take a kid on their laps and direct his attention to the story, saying, ‘Oh, wow, can you believe he did that…?’

There aren't many men at the Economic Crisis Center and the boys were magnets. Boys with a really tough persona—leather jackets, long hair—were so loving and warm interacting with the kids. It was wonderful to see.

At the end of the semester the students used what they had learned to put on a play about homelessness. Says Dewsbury-White: "I thought the production was exceptional. The play came from an avant-garde theater group in New York City and it had no staging directions, lighting directions, or music. Students did their own with much interpretive skill." In an effort to raise public awareness of the problem they had been studying, the students publicized their play within their community and got a local television station and the newspaper to cover their activities. They also donated box office proceeds to the Daytime Resource Center.

Dewsbury-White and Valliilee drew several lessons from the theater class. First, they decided that they needed to build more reflection time into any course of this sort, for the field experiences took students into a completely unknown world and even the readings challenged them in new ways. "They read a lot of primary source material," explains Dewsbury-White, "so they got conflicting stories. The kids were enraged. They staged an uprising, saying, in effect, 'In school..."
you get tests. You are held accountable. Tell us the right story.”

Second, the teachers concluded that fieldwork should begin early. Their class read about and discussed homelessness for nine weeks before they visited the shelters. As a result, she reports, they had little time left to work on the issues after the students had discarded their stereotypes.

In addition, the class confirmed their teachers’ belief that an experience of this sort ought to culminate in a real product—like the play—rather than an artificial test.

Dewsbury-White’s conclusions echo those of Robert Rutter and Fred Newmann, two University of Wisconsin researchers who have reviewed research on a wide variety of high school community service programs and conducted their own study of eight programs that they consider exemplary. Rutter and Newmann report that although good programs offer students developmental opportunities that few find in the classroom—opportunities to help other people solve their problems, for example, and to develop relationships with people outside of their age group—the structure of most programs leads students to focus on improving their personal competence in a new area rather than on learning about ways to improve their community. If those in charge want to nourish students’ sense of social responsibility, Rutter and Newmann urge them to create programs with these three characteristics: Programs should respond directly to critical social need; a reflective seminar which focuses on issues of social responsibility should accompany service experiences; programs should give students enough time to develop reflective commitment. Donna Fowler of People for the American Way adds several more caveats: service programs should be integrated into the curriculum; they should offer in-school as well as out-of-school opportunities for service so all students can participate.

Vallilee was delighted by the growth she saw in her students over the course of the 1990 spring term. She knew, however, that without Dewsbury-White’s help she could never do all the work this version of her course had entailed. Unfortunately, therefore, she is no longer integrating service experiences of this sort into her beginning theater course.

Vallilee’s decision saddened Dewsbury-White; it also taught her that, if teachers are to create service programs that last, they need to set goals they can achieve with the time and resources they have available. She and Vallilee had added a whole new set of objectives to the Beginning Theater class without deleting any of the one’s Vallilee started off with. Dewsbury-White wonders whether the ideal structure might involve two or three teachers in an interdisciplinary block with a service learning component.

Usually it takes time and experimentation for a service program to find a form that can be institutionalized. A program that is now in its 18th year in Lansing suggests a bit about how this can happen.

“*We Need to Render a Service*”

In 1974, a few days after the first residents moved into the new high-rise for senior citizens on Cedar Place in Lansing, a student from Gardner Middle School snatched a purse from one of the elderly women. Not wanting the school’s elderly neighbors to live in fear of his students, the principal of Gardner asked his faculty to think about what they might do to rebuild trust. “We need to render them a service,” replied Jack Cooper, who taught an alternative education class for youngsters on the edge of dropping out.

In the weeks that followed, Cooper created a program which has brought 12-year-olds into the

**The Food Distribution Program has provided a vital service to the senior citizens and given seventh graders powerful reasons to sharpen their understanding and skill with the basic processes of arithmetic.**

*lives of people seven times their age, changing attitudes on both sides of the generation gap. For 18 years, Cooper and his students have delivered food to the residents of five different senior citizen apartment complexes at about 40% of what these groceries would cost the older people at local stores. The Food Distribution Program has provided a vital service to the senior citizens and given seventh graders powerful reasons to sharpen their understanding and skill with the basic pro-

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“I’ve taken some real hard kids into those buildings and watched them melt.”

cesses of arithmetic—addition, subtraction, multiplication, percentages, fractions, and the like. By releasing Cooper for two periods a day, the school system has helped teacher and students to keep the program going.

For 15 of the program’s 18 years, the middle schoolers who collated orders and carried groceries were some of those most seriously at risk of school failure—alternative education students and boys and girls whose scores on tests of math skills fell into the bottom 20% of the national distribution. For the last three years, however, Cooper has been teaching regular seventh-grade math classes, so these 12-year-olds now help him with the work.

The Food Distribution Program now serves four buildings. Because only a few residents of this elderly housing have access to a car that could take them to a large supermarket, many depend on Cooper and his students for affordable groceries. Cooper shops the major sales at the big chain stores, patronizes a wholesaler used by many small grocers, and gets reduced-price bread from the thrift store and free items from the Red Cross’s Project Aid. He and his seventh graders deliver everything to the elderly at cost.

Residents of the two smallest buildings mail their orders to the Middle School; the seventh graders weigh out amounts, pack the orders in boxes, and compute a total for each one—getting valuable practice in real-world math. At the two high-rises they set up a small store twice each month.

Pricing Eggs and Hauling Groceries

By 12:30 on this snowy Wednesday afternoon, the lobby of 3200 South Washington Street has filled up with women bearing bags and pulling shopping carts. A 70-year-old man who has come to call on his mother stops to chat with four women who are waiting for the van which takes them to the mall on Wednesday afternoons. Half the residents of this building are over 85. He is the youngest person in sight.

Inside the adjacent cafeteria, Cooper and 10 seventh graders cover long cafeteria tables with newspapers and spread out their wares: everything from onions, potatoes (both 15¢ a pound) and frozen asparagus (free to anyone making a purchase) to toilet paper, cereal, and eggs. Keith is pricing the eggs (65¢ a dozen); Amy transfers the contents of a 50-lb. bag of potatoes into a cardboard box; Lauren has volunteered to make change at the cash box; Dennis will weigh and price the onions and potatoes. By 1:00, students and teacher have reached their market; Ryan opens the doors and the customers pour in.

Cooper stations himself next to Lauren’s cash box where he adds up orders—with about 50 men and women moving unsteadily through the check-out line in less than 30 minutes, the pace of these calculations would panic most seventh graders—and supports Lauren’s first efforts to make change. After finding that, under the pressure of watching adult eyes and a long line, most 12-year-olds give $3.25 change to a customer offering them a $5 bill for a $2.75 order (75¢ for the 25¢, $2.50), he began insisting on a standard change-making procedure: students count up from the cost of the order.

Finding a Way to Help

Noticing a woman trying to balance three cereal boxes on the small front basket of her electric wheelchair, Cooper leaves his station to ask whether she could use some help. When she nods, he hands Mark a cardboard carton and sends him over to carry the groceries. Octogenarian and seventh grader move slowly around the room. She inspects the items on each table carefully, then slips those she likes into Mark’s box.

These 12-year olds are visiting the Washington Street apartments for the first time and a few watch shyly from the sidelines. “At first they don’t know what to say,” reports Cooper, “but they see me asking, ‘Would you like some help with that, Mrs. Smith?’” and “Would you like someone to carry this?” and pretty soon I hear them saying, ‘Would you like to carry that?’”

Wheelchairs and walkers proclaim the sort of practical need that even a self-conscious adolescent can’t miss: Many of the seniors have difficulty getting around even without parcels. Says Cooper, “I’ve taken some real hard kids into those buildings and watched them melt.”

Sometimes Cooper finds it hard to be sure what or how a student is learning. He remembers one hard-hit youth who pocketed two $20 bills from the cash box while making change. When a classmate reported him, the boy admitted the theft but refused to make restitution; he explained that if he took his punishment from the school disciplinary office, he was entitled to the money.

“If there’s a problem, I say to them, ‘Please eliminate that behavior or I won’t be able to take you next Wednesday.’ And they shape right up.”
Cooper was nonplussed, but decided not to push the matter (privately he wondered whether to connect the boy's logic to the fact that his mother was in prison for shoplifting). Four months later, as Cooper exited the school building on the last day of the academic year, the miscreant handed him $40, saying only, "You know what this is for.

It is now 1:20 and forty elderly shoppers crowd the room. A solitary man grumbles about the shortage of bananas. A lady with two overflowing bags offers Cooper a $20 bill. "This is all I brought. I'm not sure it will be enough." Her jaw drops when Cooper tells her she owes only $5.85: the beans, applesauce and salad dressing are free, the cans of soup cost only 35¢ apiece, you get three large cereal boxes for a dollar. . . . Lauren, by now quite confident, counts out $1.45 in change, and Tony and Amy follow her to the elevator, each bearing a bag and a box of cereal. They will help her put the parcels away in her kitchen.

Cooper's students consider it a privilege to work in the Food Distribution Program. "It's by invitation," he explains. No one who is neglecting homework assignments or misbehaving in class gets to go. "If there's a problem, I say to them, 'Please eliminate that behavior or I won't be able to take you next Wednesday.' And they shape right up."

Interpreting the Messages

Their behavior may tell us something important about the lives of American students. If the hope of carrying groceries for someone seven times his age will motivate a 12-year-old more surely than the threat of a detention, ought we to rethink the way we organize the education of our young people?

The senior citizens who patronize the Food Distribution Program also send us a powerful message. Many retirees move to senior apartment buildings partly for protection against the predatory violence of youth. As their mobility decreases they feel increasingly vulnerable to muggers and other criminals. Most are happy to pay for the most elaborate security system they can afford. As Cooper points out, they have little reason to think well of teenagers. "They lock themselves in and never see a good kid. They only know what they read in the newspapers."

Although school millage requests do not usually do well with the elderly, residents of South Washington Park Apartments voted 46 to 14 for the 1988 millage. Perhaps this is social studies for seniors as well as for seventh graders. ■

Editor: Helen Featherstone

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Changing Minds is published by the Educational Extension Service, a component of the Michigan Partnership for New Education. The Partnership brings together schools, families and communities, business and industry, universities, government, and other concerned citizens to discover and demonstrate new educational approaches that enable both students and educators to thrive in a complex democracy and a global economy. Partnership member institutions work intensively with a growing number of Michigan schools and communities to improve learning, both in school and out, for young people and for the educators and other professionals who nurture their growth. These Professional Development Schools (see list) and the emerging Local Area Partnerships that will support them develop new insights, ideas, know-how, and tools for potential use by other Michigan schools and communities.

The function of the Educational Extension Service (EES) is to communicate this practical, research-based knowledge to schools and communities statewide. To do so, the EES collaborates with intermediate school districts, professional associations, colleges and universities, consortia, and other organizations that provide information, professional development, and assistance to local educators, youth service professionals, family and community members, business people, and other citizens committed to improved learning and development for the state’s young people. In addition to these human and organizational networks, the EES will also use two-way television, computer networks, and other technological networks to support the communication of knowledge and know-how statewide. Thus, EES is not a new, free-standing organization but a network of networks. Through a variety of projects, the EES is now working with over sixty partner organizations. Because the list of our partners is large, growing, and changing, it is not possible to recognize each by name. You know who you are, and we are honored to have you as colleagues.

The EES also creates products for dissemination through the network of networks, including Changing Minds. Each issue of Changing Minds focuses in some depth on a difficult problem or topic in the renewal of teaching, learning, and the organizations that support these functions. Changing Minds includes both summaries or distillations of research and descriptions of ongoing innovation efforts, principally within Michigan but also in other parts of the country. Our goal is to blend research with thoughtful innovative practice, thus contributing to the continuous renewal of education in Michigan.

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