Social Studies Research and Practice
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The State of K-12 Social Studies Instruction in Ohio

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This study describes the complex state of social studies instruction in Ohio. It explores teacher conceptualizations of the purpose of social studies and the impact of state standards and high-stakes testing on the citizenship mission of social studies. Understanding the impact of state standards and high-stakes testing on the citizenship mission of social studies is essential for teachers as they attempt to respond to this mission while simultaneously ensuring student mastery of prescribed content. Unfortunately, the findings show that teachers may not recognize the congruence of this mission with state standards and high-stakes testing. Although some of the instructional strategies the teachers in this study reported using were aligned with Ohio’s goals, other pedagogical issues, such as infrequent attention to multiple perspectives, lack of document analysis, and infrequent attention to economic concepts require attention.

Introduction

Social studies education is the nation’s primary vehicle for the education and preparation of tomorrow’s citizens. The critical importance of this objective is not readily identifiable in our culture, as recent international studies have demonstrated that citizenship education in the United States lags behind that of other mature democracies (Torney-Purta, Lehman, Oswald, & Schulz, 2002). Coupled with this poor international showing is concern about the possible negative impacts of testing on teacher choices and student performance. Finally, there is an alarming number of regional studies (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Heafner, Lipscomb, & Rock, 2006; Rock, Heafner, O’Connor, Passe, Oldendorf, Good, & Byrd, 2006; VanFossen, 2005) that suggest social studies education is frequently marginalized within the context of high-stakes testing that often privileges reading, writing, math, and science.

Certainly the hope is that standardized testing and a common curriculum can improve teaching, thereby uniting student learning and promoting progress. The No Child Left Behind legislation states the purpose of this comprehensive assessment program is to “close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency” (United States Department of Education, 2001). Unfortunately, for social studies, not only is the achievement gap widening in the context of such testing (Lapp, Grigg, & Lay-Tim, 2002) but social studies pedagogy is also changing, and social studies itself is being marginalized in a number of states.

In this study, we sought to understand the impact of high-stakes testing and state standards on social studies education in Ohio. To do this, we focused on teacher perceptions of the present purposes of social studies education, standards, and tests; standards-based planning; and the perceived impact of this context on teaching for democratic citizenship.
Review of Literature

There are mixed findings about the impact of testing on the status of social studies in the curriculum and student achievement related to it. Marker (2001) has argued that there is “no research evidence whatsoever” to indicate that high-stakes testing enhances student performance (p. 359). There are also questions about the degree to which testing has an impact on practice, the concern being that with the test in place, teachers will simply teach to it, neglecting established practice that argues against such prescriptive pedagogies and relegating students to mindless rote memorization.

In New York, Grant (2001) found that although teachers may differ in the ways they give attention to the state test, it does not seem to drive teaching and learning, and is “an uncertain lever at best” in changing teacher’s practices (p. 421). In Michigan, Segall (2003) suggested that although the social studies state test was tied to monetary rewards for the school rather than for individual students, social studies teachers, nonetheless, thought it was important for their students to be successful and therefore compromised their values “as much on how [they taught] as on what they taught” (p. 319). More recently, Yeager and Van Hover (2006) described two beginning social studies teachers in Florida and Virginia who took it as a personal challenge not to let the state test drive the nature of their teaching (p. 354). Although the absence of a social studies test in Florida led one teacher to focus on teaching her students literacy skills that were directly tested on the state exam, in Virginia the end-of-year state tests led a teacher to cover the required curriculum for the courses she taught “at a brisk pace,” (p. 354) as she would be personally held accountable for her students’ test scores (p. 342).

It does appear that the presence or absence of the tests has had important impacts on the ways teachers teach. In a comparison of social studies teachers’ practices in Mississippi and Tennessee, Vogler (2006) found that in the presence of a high-stakes high school graduation examination, Mississippi teachers used significantly more instructional tools and practices associated with test preparation than Tennessee teachers whose students faced lower-stakes, end-of-the-course examinations.

In a comparison of two social studies teachers’ instructional practices in both their state-tested and untested elective courses, Gerwin and Visone (2006) found results similar to Vogler’s (2006). Although these teachers did not sacrifice all forms of higher-order thinking, similar to lower-track classes, they emphasized covering, memorizing, recalling, and contrasting information in their state-tested courses. On the other hand, in their elective courses, they were much more likely to engage in what Grant (2007) has referred to as ambitious teaching that is nuanced, complex, contextualized, and grounded in teachers’ in-depth content knowledge. Consequently, teachers of these courses value depth over breadth, open-ended discussion, and evidence-based learning.

Ohio Context

In December 2002, Ohio adopted the statewide Ohio Academic Content Standards (OACS) for social studies at all grade levels (Ohio Department of Education, 2002). Published in 2004, the social studies standards are comprehensive in their treatment of citizenship education and explicitly include a Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities standard at each grade level. They focus on strengthening students’ abilities to act responsibly and become successful problem solvers while learning about significant people, places, events, and issues of the past in order to understand the present. Benchmarks at the 5th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grade level emphasize these objectives:

- 5th: Explain how citizens take part in civic life in order to promote the common good.
• 8th: Show the relationship between civic participation and attainment of civic and public goals.

• 10th: Analyze ways people achieve governmental change, including political action, social protest, and revolution; explain how individual rights are relative, not absolute, and describe the balance between individual rights, the rights of others, and the common good.

• 12th: Evaluate various means for citizens to take action on a particular issue; explain how the exercise of a citizen's rights and responsibilities helps to strengthen a democracy. (pp. 38-39)

Recently, Ohio developed statewide assessments in the spirit of these standards that measure the intricate balance of knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skill development appropriate for the demands of citizenship in a pluralistic, democratic society. For example, these assessments provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities to reason about important historical content and issues and apply their understandings through open-ended, short answer, and extended response items. In short, these standards and assessments are rigorous and higher order with the potential to fulfill the promise of effective citizenship education in Ohio.

Social studies education is well defined in Ohio standards and assessment, but little is known about the ways in which social studies teachers align practice with the OACS for social studies or about the impact of Ohio’s state-wide test on instructional practice. Social studies has been part of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) for grade 10 since its third administration in March 2005 while in May 2007 the state initiated an Ohio Achievement Test (OAT) for social studies in grade 5 and grade 8.

It is in this context that we sought to understand the interaction between social studies teaching, standards, and increased testing. Since the completion of this study, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has twice published the results of the state social studies test. Although the state requires a pass rate of 75% on the OAT social studies test, only 57.9% passed the fifth-grade test, and 49.3% passed the eighth-grade test in 2007. Although scores improved in 2008, only 64.8% passed the fifth-grade test, and 53.3% passed the eighth-grade test. In addition, the state requires a pass rate of 75% on the tenth-grade test and a cumulative pass rate of 85% for tenth- and eleventh-grade students. In 2007, the respective pass rates for these assessments were 76.4% and 87.6%, while in 2008 they were 78.4% and 86.5%.

This study is significant because of ongoing challenges associated with state standards, high-stakes testing, and teacher preparation in a climate of educational change. The results of this study will hopefully help social studies teacher education programs and state policy makers create more effective and supporting pre-service and in-service experiences for teachers as they face the daunting challenges of covering content while fostering active democratic citizens. It also makes a significant contribution through a loosely-conceived replication of previous studies, thereby adding to the body of knowledge we have that informs us about the impacts of state testing on social studies across the nation.

Methodology

We designed a state-wide survey to understand the interplay of standards and testing with the citizenship mission of schools. Understanding this relationship is integral to the preparation of future teachers and the professional development of practicing teachers as they attempt to respond to the citizenship-oriented purposes of social studies while simultaneously ensuring student mastery of
prescribed content. Survey design involved the collaboration of four social studies teacher educators from four state universities in Ohio. To develop our survey, we reviewed the format and results of a survey from a previously conducted study of K-5 teachers in Indiana (Van Fossen, 2005). We selected several questions from the instrument related to the state curriculum standards and classroom practice and adapted them to the Ohio context. In addition, we included new questions about the impact of state testing and the teachers’ perceptions of the citizenship mission of social studies (see Appendix A). Consequently, our research questions included the following:

1. What do teachers perceive to be the present purposes of social studies education in Ohio?

2. To what extent do the Ohio Academic Content Standards (OACS), Ohio Achievement Tests (OAT), and the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) influence teacher decision-making and practice?

3. To what extent are teacher perceptions and practices congruent with the citizenship mission of social studies education?

We suspected that in the context of high-stakes testing, teachers make the assumption that increased assessment requires rote or low-level learning and the acquisition of declarative knowledge. In Ohio, however, the OAT and OGT invite higher-order application of all knowledge, skills, and understandings, but teachers may not recognize the unity of powerful social studies teaching and the Ohio Achievement Tests. Given the rich potential for promoting effective citizenship education through the content standards, we were keenly interested in understanding the degree to which pre-figured conceptions of low-level declarative knowledge direct teacher perceptions of the assessments.

We invited participants for this survey through a stratified random sample of 2,000 teachers selected from a database of all elementary teachers and all secondary social studies teachers in the state of Ohio. We disaggregated data by grade bands which approximate the grade levels at which the OAT (grades 5 and 8) and OGT (grade 10) are administered. We asked teachers to participate via a hard-copy letter of invitation and postcard reminders.

We developed the survey as an online, multiple-page questionnaire with an invitation sent through postal mail. On the invitation letter and follow-up postcard, we included a URL to the survey the respondent could access through the Internet. To maximize the response rate of the respondents, we used a variety of techniques known to increase response rates. The structure of the survey employed a preliminary notification (Cole, Palmer, & Schwanz 1997; Dillman, 1991; Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988; Yammarino, Skinner, & Childers, 1991), which increased responses from 7.7% (Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988) to 28.5% (Yammarino, Skinner, & Childers, 1992). In addition, we offered a small monetary incentive in the form of ten $100 gift cards given the strong correlation between small incentives and increased response rates (Cole, Palmer, & Schwanz, 1997; Dillman, 1991; Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988; Yammarino, Skinner, & Childers, 1991). Finally, we also used less effective, but still statistically significant strategies, including university sponsorship (Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988) and a relatively small survey with an easy to follow format (Cole, Palmer, & Schwanz, 1997).

Findings

Our findings are organized according to the research questions, preceded by a description of the sample with relevant contextual information. A total of 198 out of 2,000 randomly
selected social studies teachers in Ohio completed the online survey, which yielded a response rate of 9.9%. In the absence of any meaningful differences between middle and high school teachers, we refer to them as secondary teachers.

**Contextual Information**

Contextual information includes grade level, subject, ethnic breakdown, teacher experience, and training. Among the 196 participants who indicated the grade level at which they taught, only 36 said they taught at more than one grade level, while three taught across licensure bands. Elementary and secondary teachers were evenly represented with almost half from elementary and half from secondary assignments. A total of 74 teachers taught a middle school social studies subject: 6 K-5 teachers, 66 middle school teachers, and 2 high school teachers. Their courses included World Cultures, World Studies/History, American Studies/History, and other subjects. A total of 4 middle school teachers and 77 high school teachers indicated they taught at the high school level. Their courses included World History, American History, U.S. Government, Economics, and other electives.

The teachers in this study were overwhelmingly Caucasians. Roughly two fifths of the teachers taught in rural or suburban settings, while approximately one fifth of the group taught in an urban setting. Most participants were seasoned teachers as nearly two thirds had more than ten years of classroom experience and almost three fourths held a Master’s degree.

More than three out of every four K-5 and 6-8 participants held an undergraduate major in education, while slightly less than one out of every three secondary teachers did. Among the 158 participants who held a graduate degree, nearly three out of four majored in education while less than one in ten did so in one of the social sciences. Significantly fewer high school teachers majored in education in comparison with the other teachers, and more majored in history than any of the other social studies disciplines.

**Perceived Purpose of Social Studies**

In this section, we sought to understand teacher perceptions of the purpose of social studies as stated in the Ohio Academic Content Standards (OACS). The OACS (2004) describe effective social studies as helping students “develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for themselves and for the common good” and further describe this “good citizen” as someone who can do the following:

- make decisions in a diverse, democratic society;
- understand specific people, places, events, and issues in the past in order to understand the present;
- act responsibly and become a successful problem-solver in an interdependent world of limited resources. (p. 24)

In view of this definition, we asked the participants to rank social studies by importance in relation to other content areas, rank reasons for teaching it, and define citizenship.

Several patterns emerged when the participants were asked to rank six subject areas of the overall school experience in order of importance (see Appendix B, Table B-1). At all grade levels, these social studies teachers ranked Reading/Language Arts as the most important subject and Health/Physical Education and Art/Music as the least important. Although the elementary and middle school social studies teachers ranked mathematics and science as either the second or third most important subject, the high school teachers ranked social studies second, ahead of mathematics and science. A possible explanation for this trend is that high school social studies teachers are more specialized in their content
area and therefore place a higher value on their subject than K-8 teachers.

Regarding reasons for teaching social studies, the top two responses were “to prepare students for the next grade level” followed by “because it is a requirement.” The two lowest rated responses were “developing skills in language arts and reading” with “preparing good citizens” ranking last. Elementary and high school teachers ranked teaching content knowledge as having relatively low importance, while middle school teachers ranked it as having relatively high importance (see Appendix B, Table B-2).

When asked to describe the characteristics of a “good citizen,” participant answers fell along a continuum of citizenship that included elements of the above definition to greater or lesser degrees. We used three pre-established categories to summarize responses (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). They describe the “personally responsible” citizen as someone who acts responsibly in her or his community, works and pays taxes, obeys laws, recycles, gives blood, and volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis. The “participatory” citizen is an active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts and organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promotes economic development, and cleans up the environment. Participatory citizens know how government agencies work and know strategies for accomplishing collective tasks. The “justice-oriented” citizen critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to look beyond surface causes, seeks out and addresses areas of injustice, and knows about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change.

We aligned responses with these categories through the use of the constant-comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994). We conducted this analysis by first reading all participant responses and coding for themes. We then read through the survey results a second time to further explain categories by identifying characteristic language from coded responses. Finally, we generated a citizenship continuum, with each category defined by representative responses. Each participant response was then categorized according to alignment with the emergent continuum.

Of the total 169 responses, the majority fell equally in the “responsible” and “participatory” (46.2%) categories. More high school teachers described citizenship as participatory than did elementary or middle grades teachers, with twice as many falling into the “participatory” category as into the “responsible” category (see Appendix B, Table B-3).

We also sought to determine the degree to which practicing teachers believe that preparing students to “make personal decisions and take responsibility for those decisions is an aim of social studies education.” Given the historically controversial nature of moral education and the recent apotheosis of content knowledge, we had expected varied responses to this question. Instead, a very large majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this central aim of social studies education. About two thirds of these teachers in all three grade bands indicated that they frequently attended to this aim in their classrooms, although the frequency waned somewhat over vertical progression through the public school experience.

Impact of Standards and Testing

In this section, we sought to understand how the presence of curriculum standards and state testing influenced classroom practice, including time allocated to social studies, whether that amount of time was sufficient, degrees of integration of standards in planning, and perceived readiness to teach with the standards. We also asked about overall perceptions of academic freedom, content and pedagogy, and the nature of strategies used in the planning process.

As for time spent teaching social studies, we asked teachers to report time spent in the
past year and predict time to be spent in the present and coming year. The data indicated that elementary teachers are spending more time on social studies instruction and plan to continue to do so (see Appendix B, Table 4-6). However, there appeared to be a great deal of range among the elementary teachers in the amount of time they dedicate to social studies: an approximate one third spends less than one hour weekly; one third spends one to two hours weekly, and one third spends more than two hours weekly. Nonetheless, there was a slight upward trend in the amount of time spent among these teachers, which is most likely due to the OAT for social studies that was first administered in May 2007.

The participants were divided about whether they spent a sufficient amount of time teaching the Ohio Academic Content Standards. On the one hand, elementary teachers (30.1%) felt they did not spend enough time on the OACS for Social Studies. On the other hand, 44.9% of the middle school teachers and 54.3% of the high school teachers felt they spent more than enough time on the standards. Nearly 80% of the teachers stated they “almost always” implemented the OACS when planning for instruction, whereas slightly less than 20% indicated they did so occasionally, rarely, or never. To a higher degree than high school teachers, elementary teachers (12.0%) and middle grades teachers (13.2%) stated that they “almost always” implemented the standards (see Appendix B, Table B-7).

Given the assumption that teachers must be able to teach about controversy in order to build the essential skills of engaged citizenship, we also asked several questions to determine whether teachers, in the presence of new testing requirements, believe they have the flexibility to make curricular and pedagogical decisions. There were no significant differences in these teachers’ responses from one grade band to the next. The majority of teachers believed they have more flexibility within these contexts to make pedagogical decisions than to make curricular decisions:

- 62% of the teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they have flexibility to make curricular decisions about social studies content.

- 92% of the teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they have flexibility to make decisions about how social studies will be taught in their classrooms.

**Congruence with Citizenship Mission**

The participants were asked to rank six instructional strategies in terms of their effectiveness in preparing students for the state test. They ranked inquiry-based projects and discussion as the most effective, followed by lecture. Cooperative learning and document analysis were listed as less effective. Surprisingly, the elementary as well as the middle school teachers ranked lecture as more effective than cooperative learning and document analysis. The high school teachers ranked all strategies as nearly equally effective (see Appendix B, Table B-8).

More than two-thirds of teachers in this study agreed with the statement that the OAT and the OGT had a strong impact on the way they taught their social studies courses. When asked to reflect on what was most important to them as they prepared their students to succeed on the social studies state test, these teachers, regardless of their grade band, clearly attached more importance to developing basic content knowledge and critical thinking skills than developing writing skills, test taking skills, and citizenship skills (see Appendix B, Table B-9).

When asked to reflect upon what would be important for teaching social studies in the absence of a state test, the participants, likewise at all grade bands, emphasized the importance of developing basic content knowledge and critical thinking skills. Most notably, however, developing citizenship skills increased in importance from fifth to third place at each grade band, ahead of developing...
writing skills and test taking skills (see Appendix B, Table B-10).

Our survey also addressed instructional tools, sources of content for curricula, and general topical questions. The participants indicated that they never or rarely integrated historical fiction in their instruction, used primary source documents, asked their students to study multiple perspectives, or taught their students how to influence governmental policies or about economic concepts and governmental structures. They suggested a more frequent but moderate use of student note-taking from lectures, student completion of textbook-based worksheets, and student video-viewing. The participants did, however, suggest that they frequently discussed current events, used newspapers and periodicals, addressed issues related to the common good, addressed multicultural issues, and used the textbook.

Conclusion

Our conclusions about the state of K-12 social studies instruction in Ohio are preliminary. Based on the aforementioned research questions, we respond to each with tentative understandings. We first present findings related to teachers’ beliefs about the purpose of social studies and the perceived impacts of standards on testing, and then analyze the congruence of these findings with the citizenship mission of schools.

Perceived Purpose of Social Studies

We described participants’ perceived purposes of social studies by examining their rankings of social studies importance in relation to other content areas, rankings of reasons for teaching it, and definitions of citizenship. The alignment of teacher perceptions of the purpose of social studies with the OACS definition was variable. Teachers did not rank social studies as highly as language arts and math, ranking it third out of six before health/physical education and art/music. Yet, the status of elementary social studies teaching appears to be improving as teachers report a slight increase over the years in the amount of time spent on teaching the subject.

A majority of respondents listed teaching content knowledge and preparing citizens as the least important reasons for teaching social studies. Although a minority of teachers listed these two reasons as the most important, a myopic focus on grade advancement and fulfillment of state standards may very well marginalize the ultimate goals of our field, the primary aim of which is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to become active democratic citizens.

More than 90% of the teachers fell equally into the “responsible” and “participatory” categories. The number of teachers who described themselves as “responsible” was twice as large among the elementary teachers. While such citizens work responsibly within their communities, pay taxes, obey laws, recycle, give blood, and volunteer to lend a hand in times of crisis, they are unlikely to entertain change for the common good. This is a concern if we hope to attain the goals embedded in the spirit of the OACS—promoting skills of citizenship that include active and informed participation. It is important to note that the teachers in this study reported comfort with addressing controversial issues in their classrooms and placed a high value on preparing students to make decisions.

Impact of Standards and Testing

We extended our understanding of the teachers’ perception of the purpose of social studies along with their assessment of how the state test affects their curricular decision-making comfort with teaching about controversial topics and the value placed on moral education. We reported on how the presence of curriculum standards and state testing influenced classroom practice, including time
allocated to social studies, as to whether or not that amount of time was sufficient, the degree of integration of standards in planning, and the perceived readiness to teach with the standards. We also asked about overall perceptions of academic freedom, content and pedagogy, and the nature of strategies used in the planning process.

Our findings suggest that the presence of state testing has had an impact on teacher decision making with regard to the degree to which citizenship is a focus in social studies classrooms. Almost four fifths of the teacher participants reported always using the OACS for social studies in their planning and teaching, and they suggested being confident in their knowledge of the standards and their understanding of how to use the standards. They rated basic content knowledge as most important both for student success on the OAT and OGT and in learning social studies generally. It is important to note that while these teachers ranked citizenship skills as least important for student success on the tests, citizenship skills climbed to third in teacher ratings of what is important for learning social studies in the absence of test requirements. It appears that the presence of the test and teacher perceptions of the purpose of the test compels them to elevate the importance of content knowledge at the expense of citizenship skills. However, these teachers ranked critical thinking — one among many citizenship skills — second, both for test preparation and learning social studies.

This study did not assuage our concern about instructional time allocated to social studies. Most secondary teachers teach full-time in their content area and more than four fifths in this study reported doing so. However, although there appeared to be a slight trend among the elementary teachers in this study to spend more time on social studies, more than two thirds (69%) continued, on average, to spend less than 2 out of 30 hours on social studies instruction during the regular school week.

Some of the findings regarding teacher decisions about instructional strategies were encouraging and aligned with the goals of the OACS for social studies. For example, respondents assigned student-centered strategies a high ranking, with critical thinking and discussion skills enjoying more importance than traditional strategies. Among the most frequently-used strategies were those that ultimately address current events, engage discussions about issues for the common good, and address cultural differences.

**Congruence with Citizenship Mission**

Although many respondents strongly agreed with the central aim of social studies to help students make informed and reasoned decisions, the gap between teachers’ perceptions of the civic mission of schools and Ohio’s stated purpose appears to be substantial. Many teachers in this study do not rate social studies as having primary importance and state the reason they teach it is because it is required and important for advancing students to the next grade level. Citizenship does not appear to be a guiding concept and is, in fact, defined by the majority as personally responsible or participatory. Very few teachers aligned with the justice-oriented mission of schools, whose citizens are charged with informed action for the common good. There were also some areas that require attention in classroom practice, including infrequent use of primary source documents, minimal attention to multiple perspectives, lack of document analysis, and infrequent attention to economic concepts. It is disheartening that the elementary as well as the middle school teachers in this study preferred lecture over cooperative learning.

Often, there is a disconnect between what people say and what they actually do. Citizenship platitudes are promulgated, but the key components of lesson design, instructional strategies, assessment, and dispositional development do not actually embrace a citizen-
ship-oriented curriculum. To be sure, social studies researchers, departments of teacher education, and in-service professional development staff need to ensure a cohesive approach toward preparing thoughtful, active, tolerant, and reflective democratic citizens.

**Implications**

The gap between the citizenship mission of schools in Ohio and social studies teachers’ perceptions of that purpose suggest a need for increased time and devotion to in-service and pre-service efforts to strengthen teacher resources in this area. We cannot expect excellent teaching and student mastery of state-approved content unless all teachers experience a certain level of comfort and ease in locating necessary materials. Teacher preparation and in-service programs should provide teachers access to high quality content that is aligned with the OACS.

However and perhaps more importantly, the infrequent use of active citizenship activities suggests that more resources and energies need to be dedicated to reducing the spurious dichotomy between “required content” and “citizenship education.” The teachers in this study indicated they were able to account for teaching the OACS, but one has to wonder whether they grasped its difference with accountability, i.e., the concept of taking responsibility. Although the respondents claimed to value citizenship education, they ranked it low in importance.

In Ohio, the OAT and OGT invite higher-order application of all knowledge, skills, and understandings. We submit that, contrary to Grant’s (2001) assertion that state tests serve as “an uncertain lever at best” in changing teacher’s practices (p. 421), Ohio’s current combination of standards and testing, despite the first round of low test scores, may very well have a significant impact on social studies teaching and learning and is driving change. Unfortunately, teachers in Ohio may not recognize the unity of powerful social studies teaching and the social studies state tests, and it is uncertain what the nature of the change may be. Given the rich potential for promoting effective citizenship education through the content standards, we suggest the imperative for continued and increased efforts in helping teachers better understand and promote the citizenship-oriented purposes of social studies while simultaneously ensuring student mastery of prescribed content.

**References**


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Appendix A

An Overview of Social Studies Instruction in Ohio in Grades K-12

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Which grade levels do you teach? [Please check all that apply.]

☐ Kindergarten
☐ 1st grade
☐ 2nd grade
☐ 3rd grade
☐ 4th grade
☐ 5th grade
☐ 6th grade
☐ 7th grade
☐ 8th grade
☐ 9th grade
☐ 10th grade
☐ 11th grade
☐ 12th grade

2. What is your highest degree?

☐ B.A./B.S.
☐ M.A.
☐ M.A.T.
☐ M.Ed.
☐ Ph.D.
☐ J.D.
☐ Other

3. What was your undergraduate major?

☐ Education
☐ History
☐ Geography
☐ Political Science
☐ Sociology
☐ Psychology
☐ Economics
☐ Other

4. If applicable, what was your graduate major?

☐ Education
☐ History
☐ Geography
☐ Political Science
☐ Sociology
☐ Psychology
☐ Economics
☐ Other
5. If you teach high school, which subjects do you teach for the major portion of the day?

- World History [World Studies]
- U.S. History [American Studies]
- Economics
- U.S. Government
- Other
- I do not teach high school

6. If you teach middle school, which subjects do you teach for the major portion of the day?

- World Cultures
- World Studies / World History
- American Studies / American History
- Other
- I do not teach middle school
- Psychology
- Economics
- Other

7. From your perspective, as a teacher, please rank the following content/subject areas in order of importance. [1 = most important ... 6 = least important]

- Art/Music
- Health/Physical Education
- Mathematics
- Reading/Language Arts
- Science
- Social Studies

8. Your licensure/certification path:

- I am not licensed.
- I was licensed after attending a four-year teacher preparation program.
- I was licensed as part of a Master's degree program.
- I was licensed as part of a post-baccalaureate program.
- I was licensed through emergency certification.
- I was licensed through an alternative program not listed above.

9. Number of years you have taught:

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16 or more years

10. You have a license in:

- I do not have a license.
- Early Childhood Education [K-3]
- Elementary Education [K-6]
- Middle Childhood Education [4-9]
- Adolescent-to-Young-Adult [7-12]
- Secondary Education [7-12]
- Other
11. Your race/ethnicity is:
   - American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - Asian or Pacific Islander
   - Black
   - Hispanic, Non-white
   - Multiracial
   - White

12. Your school district is located primarily in a[n]:
   - Rural, small town community.
   - Suburban community.
   - Urban community.

13. Your school district uses the following: [Please check all that apply.]
   - Course of study
   - Curriculum guide outlining course content
   - Pacing chart
   - Curriculum map outlining lesson sequence
   - Other, please describe

14. If you taught in a self-contained classroom, how much instructional time do you estimate you devoted (on average) to social studies instruction per week during the previous school year (2005-06)? If you did not, please skip.
   - 0 – 30 minutes per week
   - 31 – 60 minutes per week
   - 61 – 90 minutes per week
   - 91 – 120 minutes per week
   - 121 – 150 minutes per week
   - 151+ minutes per week
   - I did not teach in a self-contained classroom

15. If you taught in a self-contained classroom during the 2006-07 school year, how much instructional time do you estimate you devoted (on average) to social studies instruction per week?
   - 0 – 30 minutes per week
   - 31 – 60 minutes per week
   - 61 – 90 minutes per week
   - 91 – 120 minutes per week
   - 121 – 150 minutes per week
   - 151+ minutes per week
   - I did not teach in a self-contained classroom

16. If you expect to teach in a self-contained classroom during the 2007-08 school year, how much instructional time do you estimate you will devote (on average) to social studies instruction per week?
   - 0 – 30 minutes per week
   - 31 – 60 minutes per week
   - 61 – 90 minutes per week
   - 91 – 120 minutes per week
   - 121 – 150 minutes per week
   - 151+ minutes per week
   - I did not teach in a self-contained classroom.
II. STANDARDS AND TESTING

17. The amount of time I spent teaching the OACS for social studies this year was:

☐ More than enough to address the grade level indicators.
☐ Just right for addressing the grade level indicators.
☐ Insufficient to address the grade level indicators.

18. How often do you implement the Ohio Academic Content Standards [OACS] for Social Studies in your grade level?

☐ I almost always implement the OACS when planning instruction.
☐ I occasionally implement the OACS when planning instruction.
☐ I rarely implement the OACS when planning instruction.
☐ I almost never implement the OACS when planning instruction.

19. What value does your building administration place on teaching social studies at your grade level?

☐ High value
☐ Some value
☐ No value

20. Please respond to the following statement: “The Ohio Achievement Tests for Social Studies (5th grade, 8th grade) and the Ohio Graduation Test (10th grade) had a strong impact on the way I taught social studies.

☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

21. As you reflect on preparing students to succeed on the OGT for social studies, what is most important to you? Please rank the following in order of importance. (1 = least important … 5 = most important)

☐ Developing basic content knowledge
☐ Developing critical thinking skills
☐ Developing test taking skills
☐ Developing writing skills
☐ Developing citizenship skills

22. If there were not a state social studies test, how would you rank the following in order of importance for teaching social studies? (1 = least important … 5 = most important)

☐ Developing basic content knowledge
☐ Developing critical thinking skills
☐ Developing test taking skills
☐ Developing writing skills
☐ Developing citizenship skills
23. From your perspective as a teacher, how would you rank the effectiveness of the following instructional strategies for preparing students for the state test? (1 = most effective … 6 = least effective)

☐ Cooperative learning
☐ Discussion
☐ Document analysis
☐ Lecture
☐ Simulation
☐ Teacher modeling
☐ Other, please list:

24. You feel competent ...

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

a. implementing standards-based instruction.
b. preparing your students for the Ohio Achievement Test for Social Studies.
c. understanding the relationship between the Benchmarks and Grade-Level Indicators for Social Studies.
d. integrating the Ohio ACS for Social Studies with other content areas.
e. creating classroom assessments aligned with the Ohio ACS.
f. teaching lessons that integrate the seven OACS standards.

III. RATIONALE

25. Please indicate how you would rank the following reasons for teaching social studies. (1 = most important ... 7 = least important)

☐ Because it is required by state standards.
☐ To teach students content knowledge.
☐ To teach students life skills.
☐ To teach students an appreciation and awareness of their community, nation, and the world.
☐ To prepare students for the next grade level.
☐ To prepare good citizens.
☐ To develop skills in language arts/reading.

26. Please describe the qualities of a good citizen.

27. I have the flexibility to make curricular decisions about social studies content.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

28. I have the flexibility to make decisions about how social studies will be taught in my classroom.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
29. Please rate your level of comfort with teaching the following topics. If you answer “3” or “4,” please tell us why.

1. Very comfortable
2. Somewhat comfortable
3. Somewhat uncomfortable
4. Very uncomfortable

a. Citizen responsibilities
b. Civil liberties
c. Class structure
d. Environmental issues
e. Ethnic conflict
f. Freedom from political and religious oppression
g. Gender roles and the struggle for gender equality
h. Governmental restrictions of freedom
i. Healthcare
j. Homelessness
k. Multinational corporations
l. Political conflict
m. Poverty
n. Prejudice and discrimination
o. Problems of democracy
p. Racism
q. Religious conflict
r. Social protest
s. Struggle for racial equality

IV. CLASSROOM PRACTICE

30. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: “I believe that preparing students to make personal decisions and take responsibility for those decisions is an aim of social studies education.”

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

31. How comfortable are you preparing students to make these personal decisions?

☐ Very comfortable
☐ Somewhat comfortable
☐ Somewhat uncomfortable
☐ Very uncomfortable

32. To what extent do you prepare students to make these kinds of decisions?

☐ Frequently
☐ Occasionally
☐ Rarely
☐ Never
33. Which of the following best describes your approach to teaching social studies content?

- [ ] It is integrated throughout my curriculum.
- [ ] It is taught during a particular portion of each school day (or week).
- [ ] It is taught when I have instructional time left over from other content areas.
- [ ] I rarely teach social studies content.

34. When you teach social studies, how often do your students…

1. Almost daily
2. Frequently, 1-2 times weekly
3. Occasionally, 2-3 times per month
4. Rarely, 1-2 times yearly
5. Never
6. Does not apply to my curriculum

a. interact with primary documents (photographs, artifacts, documents)?

b. study multiple perspectives?

c. discuss current events?

d. discuss the common good?

e. learn about different cultures?

f. study economic concepts?

g. learn about how the government is organized?

h. learn how they can influence governmental policies?

i. use the textbook?

j. complete textbook-based worksheet?

k. view videos/films?

l. read social studies trade books?

m. read newspapers and periodicals?

n. read historical fiction?

o. use atlases, maps, or globes?

p. take notes from lectures and PowerPoint presentations?

35. Please describe the level of technology training you have received over the past two years:

- [ ] Multiple training sessions/workshops
- [ ] One training session/workshop
- [ ] College course on technology
- [ ] No training

36. How often do your students use the Internet to…

1. Almost daily
2. Frequently, 1-2 times weekly
3. Occasionally, 2-3 times per month
4. Rarely, 1-2 times yearly
5. Never
6. Does not apply to my curriculum

a. examine primary source materials (e.g. photographs, maps, etc.)?

b. complete a WebQuest, take virtual field trips, or complete other inquiry-based activities?

c. collect information for reports or projects?

d. communicate with experts (e.g. historians, politicians, etc.)?
V. RESOURCES

37. How difficult is it to locate quality resources that align with the OACS?

- Very easy
- Somewhat Easy
- Somewhat Difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult

38. Please check which of the following technology resources you have used to support your teaching of the OACS for Social Studies.

- Smart Boards
- Projector
- Word processors (e.g., MS Word, WordPerfect)
- Email
- Spreadsheets (e.g., MS Excel, QuattroPro)
- Databases (e.g., MS Access, MySQL)
- Video Editing Software (e.g., I-Movie, Final Cut Pro)
- Educational Software (e.g., “Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?”)
- Photo Editing Software (e.g., Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro)
- Audio/Video Equipment
- Web Design Programs (e.g., Front Page, Dreamweaver)
- Other

39. Please check which of the following resources you have used to support your teaching of the OACS for Social Studies.

- Online teacher resources (e.g., lesson plans, content resources, rubric generators)
- The Ohio Social Studies Resource Center
- The Ohio Department of Education’s website
- OCSS
- Ohio Historical Society
- Ohio Center for Law Related Education
- Social studies curriculum tools (e.g., History Alive)
- Graphic organizers
- Field trips (e.g., museums, historical landmarks)
- Published OGT preparation materials
- Libraries
- Textbook ancillary materials

40. Please check which of the following professional resources you have used to build your mastery in social studies education.

- Professional academic journals (e.g., Social Studies and the Young Learner, Social Education, The Social Studies)
- Educational magazines (e.g., Teacher Magazine, Instructor, American Heritage)
- Involvement in professional organizations (e.g., Ohio Council for Social Studies)
- Continued education courses at universities or colleges
- District-wide or county-wide professional development
- State-wide conferences or workshops
- Private consultant-conducted workshops
- Online discussion forums
- Other teachers
41. I would be interested in professional development opportunities in:

1. Very interested
2. Somewhat interested
3. Not interested
   a. History
   b. Peoples in Societies
   c. Geography
   d. Economics
   e. Government
   f. Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities
   g. Social Studies Skills and Methods

Appendix B

Tables

Table B.1

Importance of Content/Subject Area by Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content/Subject Area</th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Language Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Physical Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/Music</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (most important [1] to least important [6])
Table B.2

*Reason for Teaching Social Studies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>K-5 Level</th>
<th>K-5 Rank</th>
<th>6-8 Level</th>
<th>6-8 Rank</th>
<th>9-12 Level</th>
<th>9-12 Rank</th>
<th>K-12 Level</th>
<th>K-12 Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To prepare students for the next grade level.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because it is required by state standards.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To teach students an appreciation and awareness of their community, nation, and the world.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To teach students life skills.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To teach students content knowledge.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop skills in language arts and reading.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prepare good citizens.</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (most important [1] to least important [7])
Table B.3

*Teacher Categorizations of a “Good Citizen”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.4

*Amount of Social Studies Instructional Time in Self-Contained Classrooms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 hour</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2 hours</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (2005-06)
Table B.5

*Amount of Social Studies Instructional Time in Self-Contained Classrooms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 hour</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2 hours</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (2006-07)

Table B.6

*Anticipated Amount of Social Studies Instructional Time in Self-Contained Classrooms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 hour</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2 hours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (2007-08)
Table B.7

Implementing the OACS in Instructional Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost always</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.8

Effectiveness of Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry-based projects</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (most effective [1] to least effective [6])
Table B.9

*Most Important Skills in Preparing Students for the OAT/OGT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic content knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test taking skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (most effective [1] to least effective [5])

Table B.10

*Most Important Skills for Learning Social Studies Regardless of the OAT/OGT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>K-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic content knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test taking skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (most effective [1] to least effective [5])