

social studies JOURNAL

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Guidelines for Manuscripts

Aims and Scope

The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies seeks to publish manuscripts in the *Journal* that focus on any of the following:

- Creative ways of teaching social studies at the elementary, secondary, & higher education levels
- Research articles
- Explanations of new types of materials and/or equipment that directly relate to social studies teaching, particularly those developed and/or implemented by teachers
- Explanations of teacher developed projects that help social studies students and teachers work with community groups
- Reviews of books and other media that are relevant to the teaching of social studies
- Analysis of how other academic disciplines relate to the teaching of social studies

Instructions for Authors

All manuscripts must adhere to the following formatting guidelines. Manuscripts that do not meet the guidelines will be returned to the author without going out for peer review. The editors of *Social Studies Journal* accept submissions on a rolling basis. However, calls for manuscripts are issued for both regular and special issues.

- Type and double-space submissions using 12point font and one-inch margins
- Include any figures and/or images at the end of the article
- Authors are responsible for obtaining copyright permission for all images
- Average manuscript length is between five and fifteen pages, though exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis
- Follow guidelines of the current APA Publication Manual

- Do not include author name(s) or other identifying information in the text or references of the paper
- Include a separate title page that contains the title
 of the article, author(s) name(s), institution(s),
 and email address(es)
- With submission email, authors must attest that the manuscript is original, not under review elsewhere, and not published previously
- Papers must be submitted as Word documents to the editors at <u>editors.ssj@gmail.com</u>

Journal Information

Social Studies Journal is a biannual publication of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. The *Journal* seeks to provide space for the exchange of ideas among social studies educators and scholars in Pennsylvania and beyond. The editors encourage authors both in and out of Pennsylvania to submit to the *Journal*.

All manuscripts go through a blinded peer-review process. In order to encourage and assist writers, the reviewers make suggestions and notations for revisions that are shared with the author before papers are accepted for final publication. The editors encourage authors in both K-12 and higher education settings to consider submitting to *Social Studies Journal*.

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Prologue

Jessica B. Schocker, SSJ Editor

We are so proud to introduce the inaugural edition of our new column: SS Stories. We are so excited, in fact, that the entire summer issue of *SSJ* is dedicated to this column and features ten stories written by a diverse group of authors that include a fifth grade student, teachers with varying levels of experience, university faculty, and the scholar who likely wrote the textbook you read in your social studies methods classes in college.

We want to begin this issue by sharing the genesis of this new column. As a graduate student and then early in my career, I used to feel compelled to write research as though I, the author, was irrelevant. In research methods courses, I learned the importance of objectivity and minimizing bias. So many research papers I read in graduate school were written in a third person, passive voice. I, too, tried to write in a way devoid of personality, of experience. In doing this, we also remove critical context: who is asking the research questions? And, why? Who is interpreting the results? Who is positioning this research and its implications for our field?

Over our years as colleagues, I can remember several occasions where Mark and I commented how much we appreciated "voice" in academic writing. In May of 2020, for example, I co-wrote an editorial in *SSJ* with Sarah Brooks about the intersections of our personal and professional worlds during the COVID-19 stay-at-home order. In writing about how to teach "about and during a pandemic," we also shared our experiences raising young children and figuring out how to navigate what the pandemic meant for their education and recreation. I remember Mark saying, "I wish we had more of *this* kind of writing in our field" in response to those anecdotes.

Out of these conversations, the idea to collect and share stories that situate both the *self* and the *context* of social studies was born. In SS Stories, we want to create a space for everyone and anyone who *sees*, *experiences*, *or teaches social studies* to share. We believe there is much to learn from storytelling. Storytelling inspires our practice and our research. It encourages reflection, synthesis, and creativity, and can be a catalyst for research and new ideas. Storytelling is unifying, and there are no divisions or limits on who can participate.

The call for SS Stories is intentionally vague. We seek to be inclusive and to encourage everyone, including school support staff, parents, and community members, to see themselves as part of social studies. Social studies is inseparable from the greater community context, and the best way to meet the needs of the current sociopolitical climate is to create bridges between school

and the outside world and between individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds. Storytelling builds connections, creates opportunities to teach empathy, and encourages us to consider different perspectives.

The first round of submissions were beautifully diverse. We received stories in various forms—letter, poem, diary entry, prose—from a diverse group of authors spanning multiple generations and from different regions of the United States. I always feel like it is a remarkable privilege when someone chooses to share something deeply personal with me, and this is exactly how I felt as I read each one of these stories. I felt honored to read and comment on these stories with Mark as we worked with the authors to prepare them for publication. Quickly, we realized that it wasn't just the stories as individual pieces that would make this column so unique, but also the ordering and grouping of the stories. We identified several themes among the stories and thought about the stories and their authors in conversation with each other. Mark wrote more about this for the epilogue of this issue. This process made us realize how collections of stories can be used as tools in a social studies methods class, and for further research.

The first several stories in this issue address social studies curriculum in different ways. Authors explore what (and who) drives curriculum and how student-centered practice requires navigating advanced planning with organic experiences. The first story is written by Walter Parker, Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington in Seattle. Though Walter is an intellectual giant in social studies education, he reflects relatably on his own continued struggles as an educator attempting to bridge the gaps between students and curriculum. The second story builds on this idea of students as curriculum, where Nell Becker shares a story about taking her students out into the world and watching them discover what she could have never planned on purpose. The third story is written by fifth grader Madeleine Castellanos and her teacher, Jen Cody, about their experience of learning/teaching and enacting informed activism.

The next three stories are written by Pennsylvania teachers creating meaningful and unique experiences in their respective social studies classrooms. These authors write about their positionality as white teachers confronting issues of race and justice in their classrooms. Kat Hoffman and Paul McCormick tell a story about their attempts to decolonize the curriculum where every educator is white and almost all the students are white. Then, Colleen Hackendahl and Kelly Whalen each share a story about their early career efforts to disrupt the status quo of master narratives dominating curriculum. Colleen describes how she approaches heritage months in her middle level ELA classroom. Then, Kelly describes her experience teaching a children's book about Black inventors to supplement her prescribed second-grade curriculum.

The last collection of stories addresses teaching during contentious and disruptive sociopolitical times. Kim Mowery, a teaching professor, writes about the parallels between life and work during the COVID-19 pandemic and the German reunification of schools. Chantelle Grace, a teaching professor in Florida, writes (and reads – we have an audio link!) a poem she wrote titled the "so-called 'free' state of Florida." And Casey Cook, a Virginia middle school teacher, vulnerably shares a story about her personal life, decisions, and choices, and how life is inseparable from her profession; she asks us to think about how to move toward becoming "a more self-actualized teacher" and, in doing so, inspires us to look within.

Finally, we selected a very special story to close the final issue. Jacqueline Kwun is a rising tenth grade student in Georgia. Her story is written as an open letter to teachers; we editors view it as a call to action for more and better Asian and Asian American representation in social studies curriculum. Jacqueline's story inspires us to feel optimistic about the future of social studies. In conjunction with the submissions from early career teachers and from Madeleine, we see so much hope for the future of our field and our world. This fall, for example, Kelly will be a second-year teacher, and Maddie will be a sixth grader; what world will they help create ten years from now?

As you read this issue, we encourage you to journey through the stories in the order we present them, as we carefully crafted this issue. Throughout the stories, we include hyperlinks for ease of connecting to resources. At the end of each story, you will find a list of recommended texts; some of these texts were selected by the authors, and others were selected by us editors. As always, we are very grateful for the support of Abigail Stebbins, our graduate student copyeditor who not only formatted and proofread the issue but contributed to the lists of recommended texts.

If you are inspired by this issue, as we are, please consider submitting one or more of your own stories for SS Stories in the future. Also encourage others such as your neighbor, your child, your school custodian, or a local school board member to consider writing a story.

Windows and Mirrors

Walter C. Parker

Walter Parker is professor emeritus of social studies education at the University of Washington in Seattle. He began his teaching career at Northglenn High School on Denver's northside. This essay draws from his new book "Education for Liberal Democracy: Using Classroom Discussion to Build Knowledge and Voice" (Teachers College Press, 2023).



I first thought seriously about what we might call the "windows and mirrors" problem when teaching World Affairs to high school sophomores in Colorado. I had asked the school principal for a single prep for Fall semester so that I could also focus on writing my doctoral dissertation. Though concerned that this arrangement could drive me nuts, he agreed. So, come September, I had five classes of 15-year-olds. Over the summer, I had outlined four units on migration, international conflict and diplomacy, world news, and "regional studies" where the class is divided into expert teams on Asia, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

High school sophomores are children not adults, nor even young adults. They are continuing their emergence from the private worlds of family and kin, their brains and personalities are still forming, and alongside life in their homes they are enmeshed in peer cultures of various kinds. Yikes. They are "teenagers" experiencing a liminal developmental period. This makes it both difficult and fun to try teaching them anything at all.

I decided to concentrate that semester on closing the gap between "the child and the curriculum," a problem John Dewey wrote about in his famous essay of that title in 1902; that is, the chasm between the units I had planned and the hearts, minds, and lived experience of these particular suburban teenagers. I wanted to make the curriculum "relevant" to them, yes, but more precisely I wanted to make the units *meaningful* to them. I didn't want to surrender the curriculum to their interests, whatever they may be. And I didn't want to sacrifice their interests to the stuff a 30-year-old teacher and doctoral student like me thought they should learn. I wanted them to see themselves in the curriculum ("mirrors"), but I also wanted a curriculum that would open "windows" onto a world they had never seen and perhaps never imagined.

Here is the perennial tension in education between subject-centered and student-centered pedagogy. The question, framed as a simple either/or, goes like this: Should the curriculum precede the student, having been decided already by adults in faculty and school board meetings or, in my case, a lone teacher who was also writing his dissertation? *Or* should the curriculum follow from students' interests, strengths, and funds of cultural (home) knowledge? Note that the former hands curriculum decision making to adults (teachers, parents, elected school board members, scholars), the latter hands it to students and their familiar, everyday experience.

There is a ton of disagreement surrounding this tension, and it has riled educators' and parents' passions for centuries. It grabbed my attention from my first day as a teacher. Dewey saw that extremist camps had formed around the problem and were waging sectarian battle by the end of the 19th century. Progressives on one side and Traditionalists on the other. Attempting to moderate the dispute, <u>Dewey (1902)</u> wrote, "Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction" (p. 16). This was a both/and answer to the either/or question. As usual, this was too complicated for true-believers on either side.

Decades later, African-American scholar <u>Lisa Delpit (1988)</u> took a similar position, although from a different standpoint and conceptual framework. She argued in a seminal paper, *The Silenced Dialogue*, that white progressive educators (like me) were often ambivalent about their power in the classroom; consequently, they were reluctant to exercise their legitimate curricular authority over students, especially students of color, saying to colleagues things like, "Who am I to tell them what to learn?" This amounts to doubting their authority as adults and as professional educators to direct student learning. However well-intentioned, this insecurity tips the scale toward student-centered pedagogy while lowering curriculum standards for poor and minoritized children. The result, Delpit

wrote, is not liberatory but confining. It maintains the status quo and ensures "that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it" (p. 285).

My colleague at the University of Washington, Geneva Gay, elaborates the both/and theme and gets specific in a way that I find helpful. Gay (2018) is renowned for producing a body of work on "culturally responsive teaching" that has influenced a generation of teachers. While some educators misunderstand her work to be a cultural form of student-centered education, she advises teachers to honor the two poles of the dyad and urges us to build two-way "meaningfulness bridges." The bridges connect the curriculum to the child and the child to the curriculum. They connect horizon-expanding disciplinary knowledge ("windows") to students' socio-cultural knowledge ("mirrors"). Or as the psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1962) put it, they mediate scientific knowledge with everyday knowledge.

I've come to believe that Dewey, Delpit, Gay, and Vygotsky offer the right advice. If pedagogy is to be liberating and just, it needs to be mind-altering. This means it needs to recognize and respect the familiar while at the same time exposing students to a world that is decidedly not familiar or ordinary. The former mirrors students' everyday experience while the latter introduces disciplinary knowledge and, with it, the habits of evidence-based reasoning, argumentation, verification, and, consequently, the capacity to make uncoerced decisions; that is, to think for yourself.

The earth seems flat to our everyday perception. We *feel* its flatness and and even *observe* its flatness. And until we learn otherwise, we believe it. Should school mirror that? It should not. It should begin but not end there. The school curriculum, for the sake of the child's growth, must lead outward from the familiar to the strange, for this is education (Latin, "educere" = leading out).

As we have learned from cognitive scientists, the acquisition of new knowledge needs to be articulated with our funds of prior knowledge. This connection, this bridge, defines learning and explains the "ah ha!" moments that transform us. Here is the linking of the novel to the known. It allows students to appreciate and to draw from the well of experiential knowledge acquired in familiar contexts but also to venture into the world of abstract knowledge that enables them to think outside the boxes of their upbringing and everyday seeing and thinking. Both "home knowledge" and "school knowledge" are needed if students are to see the not-yet-seen and think the not-yet-thought. Students might then become aware of the forces structuring their lives and, perhaps, spread their *own* wings.

Meaningfulness bridges fit windows to mirrors and vice versa. They need to be built with care, of course, for while prior knowledge can facilitate the learning of disciplinary knowledge, it can also obstruct it. Recall the sarcastic phrase, "Don't bother me with the facts, I've already made up my mind." Research on learning has taught us that prior knowledge can cause students of any age (all of

us) to ignore new information and to rely on existing beliefs to solve new problems. Stubbornness doesn't let much light in.

So, we have one of the biggest and oldest problems of teaching: closing the gap between the child and the curriculum, between the mirror and the window, the familiar and the strange, experiential knowledge and disciplinary knowledge. Pedagogy needs to be both student-centered and subject-centered, one mediating the other.

In the World Affairs course, I found it not too difficult to bridge international conflict and diplomacy (e.g., the 1978 Israel-Egypt peace accord) to students' own experiences with strife, negotiation, and compromise at home, school, and in peer groups. And a concept like migration can be unpacked across students' own movements from country to country, or street to street and town to town, as it can in asylum seekers' movements around the world. But I struggled to build meaningful bridges between other curriculum units and these teens' lives. I am still grappling with the problem, now in the area of teaching and learning about democracy. Fortunately, I should note, I never again had to keep straight in my mind teaching five sections of the same course.

Recommended Texts

Bishop, R.S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Perspectives, 6(3), ix-xi.

Delpit, L. D. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, *58*(3), 280-298.

Dewey, J. (1902). The child and the curriculum. University of Chicago Press.

Gay, G. (2018). Culturally responsive teaching (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. (2018). *How people learn II: Learners, contexts, and cultures.* National Academies Press.

Parker, W. C. (2023). Education for liberal democracy: Using classroom discussion to build knowledge and voice. Teachers College Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). Thought and language. MIT Press.

Asking Permission: Creating Meaningful Relationships with the Earth

Margaret Nell Becker

Margaret Nell Becker is a New York City public school teacher, a writer, and a mom. Nell has worked as a 4th/5th grade teacher at Central Park East 2, a progressive public school in East Harlem, for the past decade. In Nell's classroom, students research and explore the world by asking questions and figuring out meaningful ways to find answers. Nell is an anti-racist educator dedicated to providing a community of care for her students and community.



On our weekly excursions to <u>Randall's Island</u>, my students and I do not go with an agenda. This is by design. I want my students to develop relationships with nature. Forming a relationship requires my students to make their own choices about how they spend their time among the trees, plants, animals and river. I want my students to notice what their attention is drawn to, what makes them wonder, what makes them exclaim in joy. We sit in the grass and throw rocks in the river. We will play games together, and take walks, and trail hawks as they fly from branch to branch. We will crouch around a dead squirrel carcass, week after week, and observe the changes to its flesh and bones.



Figure 1. Students commune with nature on Randall's Island

The children love to collect things, sea glass and rocks and fallen branches. When they see a flower, they have the inclination to pick the flower. This collecting is an act of love, an admiration of the natural space they are forming a relationship with. However, I watched as stem after stem was snapped from the flowers, and wondered how to convey that sometimes, when we love something, we don't take it.

Past and present members of the <u>Haudenosaunee</u> helped me with this lesson. In our yearlong study of New York State's original dwellers, our research workshop became alive with just these sorts of situations, in which humans wanted something of the Earth. In our research, we learned that the Haudenosaunee use every part of the animal. We learned that they live off the land, and celebrate each new season of maple sap and strawberries. We learned that the Haudnoasuanee never pick the first plant they see, because it may be the last.

In our research of Haudenosaunee ashwood baskets, we learned how the Haudenosaunee mindfully take from the Earth. We learned that when the Haudenosaunee make ashwood baskets out of Ashwood trees, they ask the tree's permission before cutting it down. Sometimes, the tree says no.

"How do they know if the tree says yes or no?" our students asked, and I explained to them a concept I had learned in <u>Robin Wall Kimmerer's (2016)</u> *Braiding Sweetgrass*. "It might be a cue in the surroundings—a vireo nest in the branches, or the bark's adamant resistance to the questioning knife-that suggests a tree is not willing" (p. 178). I worried that in explaining this to my students they may not understand that there is no clear yes or no; rather, to ask permission of a living thing requires one to listen to nature.

In the spring, Randall's Island provided us with beautiful flowers to smell and admire and feel. One of my students knelt over a particularly beautiful flower and called out to me. "Nell, can I pick this?" Instead of saying yes or no, I told her to ask permission. I watched from a distance as she crouched next to the flower and felt its stem and petals. Her head was bent and her lips were moving. A moment later she stood up and shook her head. "I don't need this, so I think it said no," she said.

I've listened to my students reiterate this lesson to one another when there is an enticing stalk of lavender or a particularly beautiful leaf growing from a tree branch. "Ask permission!" They call out to each other. "Don't take the first one, it may be the last!"

It seems that my students understood after all the importance of listening to nature. I believe this was understandable to them because they already have a relationship with Randall's, that these weekly excursions allow them the care and space to listen.

It would have been difficult for me to plan this lesson. What would the objective have been? Children will grow a mindful, loving relationship with the Earth. This is not the sort of objective that can be accomplished by simply learning about the Haudenosaunee and their relationship with the Earth. Like the Ashwood trees and the flowers, the lesson to give gratitude and respect to the life in nature had to grow in the right conditions. The Haudenosaunee showed us the way, but we as a class had to also have a natural place that we had a relationship with in the first place to apply those valuable lessons.

We can't teach love, but we can provide the right conditions for it. We can learn lessons from our elders, from the people who came before, and then we can empower students by bringing them out into the world and helping them form their own relationship with it, with all these lessons in their minds and hopefully, over time, in their hearts.





Figure 2. Students growing their three sisters garden Figure 3. Finding joy in nature and each other

Recommended Texts

- Becker, M. N. (2022). How urban forest school gave us the connections we needed during the pandemic. *Bank Street Occasional Papers Series*, (48), 48-61. https://doi.org/ 10.58295/2375-3668.1448
- Bigelow, B. (2014). How my schooling taught me contempt for the earth. In *A people's curriculum for the earth*. (First Ed, pp. 36-41). Rethinking Schools.
- Kimmerer, R.W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teaching of plants.* Milkweed Editions.
- Pelo, A (2014). A pedagogy for ecology. In *A people's curriculum for the earth*. (First Ed, pp. 42-47). Rethinking Schools.
- Rovics, D. (2014). The commons. In *A people's curriculum for the earth*. (First Ed, p. 24). Rethinking Schools.

Fifth Grade Action for Recess

Madeleine Castellanos and Jennifer Cody

Madeleine (Maddie) Castellanos is a rising 6th grader in State College, PA. Last school year she was a student in Jen Cody's 5th grade classroom at Park Forest Elementary School in the State College Area School District.



Maddie

It was several days into last school year in our 5th grade class at Park Forest Elementary (PFE) School. Our school is located in Patton Township, Pennsylvania, and it is a part of the State College Area School District (SCASD). I (Maddie) and the other students in the room were asking Mrs. Cody, our teacher, all the questions we could think of about our last year before going off to middle school.

Somebody asked about recess. This led to Mrs. Cody sharing that recess time in our district's middle school right across the street from PFE drops to 15 minutes a day in 6th grade and basically goes away in 7th-8th grades. Most of us students were really disappointed by this news.

Jen

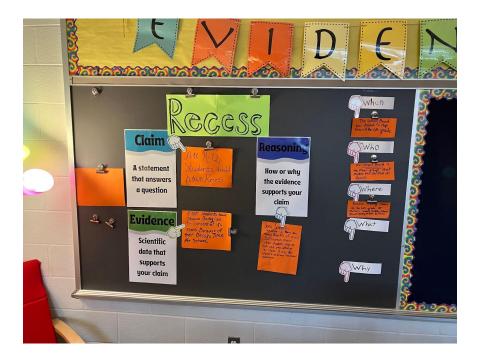
Going into the school year, my 16th teaching 5th grade at PFE, I (Jen) was eager to teach directly about local community issues. I had been doing this in different ways for years but I wanted to be very intentional about it from the beginning of, and throughout, the school year.

Over the summer I brainstormed curricular ideas with an education professor from a local university, with whom I had collaborated in prior years, to plan and teach a yearlong, interdisciplinary English Language Arts and social studies (ELA/SS) inquiry. With my students, I wanted to explore the essential question: *How can local policies and local civic issues shape living in our community?*

When some of my students were visibly frustrated by the prospect of losing recess in middle school, I felt we had a terrific opportunity to consider the issue in our ELA/SS inquiry. Over the next couple months, the students deepened their research skills as we worked to understand our school's—and the district's—recess policies as well as information from experts about and related to the topic. In doing this discovery work, the students learned about the structure of their school board, how its members are elected to the board, and how the board deliberates to create and enact policy. Additionally, the students learned that the school board utilized research in its policymaking.

Within their exploration of the research, the students learned that <u>the Centers for Disease</u> <u>Control and Prevention recommend that recess take place before lunch</u>. However, this was not the case for our lunch and recess schedule as some PFE students eat lunch before recess. The students could immediately understand the benefits of recess taking place before lunch and wondered why the school's practice didn't align with the recommendation.

In January, I invited our school board president to our classroom, to speak about the operation of the board and the recess policy, and to answer all of the questions students had as a result of their research. The students shared that they were interested in formally asking the board to consider adding more recess time in the middle school grades. The board president encouraged them to further their advocacy by first talking about the issue with our school's principal. After the school board president's visit, through our writing curriculum, we completed an informational writing assignment about recess and recess policy utilizing a couple of the sources that the board president mentioned were used in the formation of the district's policy.



Our ongoing inquiry into local community issues then shifted toward examining the state of outdoor recreation at our county's jail. Despite the topical shift, a few students, including Maddie, remained interested in taking action related to the recess policy. Over the next months, we didn't have a deep curricular focus on recess but the issue lingered in relation to our evolving ELA/SS inquiry. Maddie and a small group of students met with our school's principal, who was receptive to their questions and ideas, including moving recess before lunch for the whole school. A group also met with the middle school principal across the street. Then, in April, we learned that 7th graders across the street had been advocating for a more robust recess policy at the middle school. We were fortunate to have one of them visit us during his lunch break and share about his and his peers' efforts.

Maddie and several of the other students were resolved to take immediate further action. At the next meeting of the school board, they sought to share their thoughts and feelings with the entire board.

Maddie

During public comment near the beginning of the board meeting, I (Maddie) read this statement:

Good evening. My name is Madeleine Castellanos. I am a student at Park Forest Elementary School in Mrs. Cody's 5th grade class. I am here to speak with you about adding recess time for middle school students in grades 7 and 8. As a rising middle school student, I am concerned about the lack of break time scheduled for the day of middle schoolers, especially as school gets harder each year.

During our school year so far, Mrs. Cody has helped us to learn how the State College Area School District policy is formed and implemented. One of our guest speakers, [school board president] Ms. Amber Concepcion, spoke with our class to help us better understand the steps necessary to affect school district policy change. One of those steps was to talk with you about my concerns.

Recess is very important to all students. Recess is something that we as humans need. We need to breathe fresh air, rest our brains, and release energy - and it doesn't even cost money. Local business owner, Josh Helke, the owner of Nittany Mountain Works and Organic Climbing, spoke to our class about the importance of outdoor recreation. Currently, our school district policy states that all students in grades K-5 should receive at least 30 minutes of recess daily with K-2 having an additional 15 minutes daily. Josh Helke stated that "outdoor rec should be K-life." His point is that you should always be able to participate in outdoor recreation.

Recess and time outside are important to our health just like having access to breakfast and lunch in all grades K-12, which our schools ensure, because it is important for our growing bodies to be nourished. Why is it not equally important to ensure that all students also receive an appropriate amount of recess or break time each day? Recess provides Vitamin D, helps with growth, and relieves stress, which helps with mental health.

We can't assume students will have a chance to go outside after school. A poll of students in my class revealed that three students do not ever opt to play outside [during non-school hours], which means that recess at school is the only real time they get physical activity.

The Center for Disease Control policy states that recess should be for K-12th graders. Why are

students in the upper grades not guaranteed this important break time in their schedules? SCASD has stated that we will follow most of the CDC policies but recess is not one of them. I believe it should be.

Again, recess is: 1) important for students' health, and their physical and mental well-being; 2) not all students are able to spend time outside after school; and 3) it is even a CDC recommendation for K-12. John Downs, the principal of Delta [Middle and High, within SCASD] made the point that just because you are a 7th and 8th grader it doesn't mean you stop needing fresh air. And I agree. Thank you for listening to my concern.



Jen

I can point to countless exciting moments that occurred over the course of this school year as the students worked through this inquiry. In particular, I am proud of them for their ability to find valid research and check the validity of the research against other reports followed by them sharing that research with adults to advocate for change. During a building leadership team meeting at the end of the school year, my administrator shared the tentative daily schedule for the 2023-2024 school year with us and made note that recess would officially be moved for all elementary grades to time slots before lunch in order to address the concerns and recommendations brought forth by the fifth grade students during their meetings with her and the middle school principal. A few teachers in the meeting were curious about the change, and I had the opportunity to briefly share about the work the fifth graders accomplished over the course of the school year. The teachers were excited to learn that some of their former students played a part in the shift.

Maddie

After the school board meeting I felt confident in my case. That night is important to me because of the fact that my speaking might have a positive outcome for other people. The educational value of this is memorable because of the fact that I could do it with people I admire and look up to, including Mrs. Cody and my mom. When you do a project like this you don't know what will happen next. All the projects we did in class led up to something impactful. I learned a great deal of things that will help me in the future like public speaking and standing up for things I believe in. This showed me the importance of doing real-life projects instead of just reading about them in a book or sitting back watching other people take action.

Recommended Texts

- Christie, E. M. & Montgomery, S. E. (2010). Beyond Pilgrim hats and turkey hands: Using Thanksgiving to promote citizenship and activism. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 23(1), 27-30.
- Cody, J., Katunich, J., & Kissling, M. T. (2016). Problems in our backyard: What changes when young students grapple with real, local issues? *Green Teacher*, 110, 17-20.
- Schocker, J.B., Zook, C. & Hummel, D. (2016). Growing citizenship: Confronting the "civic empowerment gap" with a garden project. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 28(4), 27-31.
- Serriere, S. Mitra, D., Cody, J. (2010). Young citizens take action for better school lunches. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 23(2), 4-8.

What's Appropriate, and What's Appropriation? Teaching Indigenous History & Literature in a Middle School Classroom Context

Kat Hoffman and Paul McCormick

Kat Hoffman and Paul McCormick teach in the Delta Middle Program in the State College Area School District in Central Pennsylvania. As Kat says, "we're just 2 teachers, doing teacher stuff."



Pedagogy should work in tandem with students' own knowledge of their community and grassroots organizations to push forward new ideas for social change, not just be a tool to enhance test scores or grades. Pedagogy, regardless of its name, is useless without teachers dedicated to challenging systemic oppression with intersectional social justice.

— Bettina L. Love (2019)

Our story begins with the planning of a celebration of Thanksgiving in the Fall of 2022 at Delta Middle, a small democratic magnet program in Central Pennsylvania, located close to Penn State's

University Park campus. At our bi-monthly staff meeting with teachers and our principal, we added to the agenda the need to discuss a land acknowledgement for Delta Middle, noting how Penn State had incorporated one in many of its courses, celebrations, and public materials. A parent email even had a land acknowledgement in the signature line. When a few of the faculty began developing our program's land acknowledgment, we began sharing stories about Native American texts and history, as well as world Indigenous stories. We lamented not having had much experience with Indigenous stories in middle school or high school, although Kat remembered reading Louise Erdrich's novel *Tracks* during her senior year.

At this point, we didn't have students involved, but we wanted to. We wondered how to do that, and we soon realized that our curricular flexibility in this small school environment would allow us to create a learning opportunity for both students and us, as teachers. A note about Delta Middle: each year, we ask students what courses they want to take, and teachers develop the courses that resonate most with the students. For example, students wanted a course on film analysis, so we added it to the curriculum. This means teachers constantly create new courses, which can be exciting and sometimes, as an educator, overwhelming.

Paul and our gifted support teacher, Diane, started by <u>constructing a land acknowledgement</u> for our all-school feast. That led to more conversations about issues affecting Indigenous people, and many of our faculty began emailing each other with articles, films, and books related to Indigenous populations and even incorporating them into classes. For example, in Natural Neighbors, a science class about local science/nature, Kat shared an article (<u>Evans, 2022</u>) about Indigenous maple sugaring techniques with her students. Another colleague shared an article (<u>Roberts, 2020</u>) about an Indigenous high schooler who ran with a red hand painted on her face to raise awareness about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement.

We knew going in that decolonizing our curriculum was going to be a huge undertaking, but we slowly came to realize just what a big task it would be—especially because of our own blind spots. We wondered if we could offer a survey class, but we worried if in a semester we could do it justice. We continued unpacking our own identities as two white, middle class educators who would be "learning alongside their students." We had to develop a course description for this class that would meet every other day for 65 minutes, and ended up keeping it short and to the point:

What does it mean to be Indigenous? This course will explore that question regarding populations around the world. Dominant themes in history and literature leave out, overlook, and silence Indigenous stories and knowledge. In this class, teachers will learn alongside students about the various groups of people in the present who are fighting for their voices to be heard. Guest speakers will visit the class, there may be field trips, and teachers will reach out to parents for permission to watch films such as *Rabbit Proof Fence*.

Writing this course description forced us to ask and face a difficult question: Who are we to teach this class? Then again, who will do it, if we don't? We don't have a diverse staff here in our small middle school. (Our staff of 13 is five white men and eight white women.) However, we regularly teach curriculum developed by the Anti-Defamation League, and have recently noticed our students addressing microaggressions and racist behavior by other students. We have a humanities curriculum that addresses marginalized texts, people, and historical events. We are trying to embody what Bettina Love (2019) talks about in terms of "challenging systemic oppression with intersectional social justice" (p. 19).

We're nervous about this. We worry we'll say the wrong thing, we'll teach a problematic text, we'll mess up in some way or another. What if we aren't including enough women or LGBTQ+ Indigenous authors? Should we teach Sherman Alexie's (2007) The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian or should we avoid it because of the accusations that he sexually harassed multiple women? How can we keep ourselves accountable for our language choices and our content selections? But we're moving forward with the idea that our students can demonstrate an open-minded approach to this topic, and that in many cases, they may know more than us, and we challenge ourselves to learn and grow alongside them.

In preparation, this summer, we're reaching out to folks at Penn State for support and suggestions and also reading all kinds of texts: <u>Borders</u>, the graphic novel adaptation of Thomas King's short story; <u>500 Years of Indigenous Resistance</u> by Gord Hill; <u>Apple</u> by Eric Gansworth; <u>The Rediscovery of America</u> by Ned Blackhawk; <u>Path Lit by Lightning</u> by David Maraniss; <u>Chickadee</u> by Louise Erdrich; <u>Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults</u> by Robin Wall Kimmerer and Monique Gray Smith; <u>this collection of articles from a recent issue of Bank Street's Occasional Papers Series focused on Indigenous pedagogies</u>. We'd welcome any suggestions from readers about middle-level appropriate texts, relevant videos, books, or essays for us to read.

We hope to revisit this story as it unfolds, at the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies, so that we can share our learning, joys, and mistakes with educators across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Recommended Texts

Blackhawk, N. (2023). *The rediscovery of America: Native peoples and the unmaking of US history.* Yale University Press.

Erdich, L. (2013). Chickadee. Birchbark House.

Evans, T. T. (2022). The Indigenous origins of maple syrup. *American Indian*, 23(4). https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/Indigenous-origins-of-maple-syrup

- Gansworth, E. (2020). Apple. Chronicle Books.
- Hill, G. (2009). 500 years of Indigenous resistance. PM Press.
- Kimmerer, R. W. & Smith, M. G. (2022). *Braiding sweetgrass for young adults: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants.* Zest Books.
- King, T. (2021). Borders. Little, Brown Books.
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- Love, B. L. (2019). We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom. Beacon Press.
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- Roberts, A. (2020, Dec. 31). *Lending a hand(print): Athletes raise awareness for missing, murdered Indigenous women*. Cronkite News. https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2020/12/31/lending-a-handprint-athletes-raise-awareness-for-missing-murder-indigenous-women/

Anchoring Social Studies in My ELA Classroom

Colleen Hackendahl

Born and raised in Bucks County, PA, Colleen Hackendahl is a 7th grade English Language Arts teacher at Colonial Middle School in Plymouth Meeting, PA, where she also coaches cheerleading and track.



Social studies teaching and learning do not always take place in a social studies classroom. I am a relatively new teacher, having exited college in 2021 with a degree in Middle Level Social Studies Education. After graduating, I embarked on my journey to find a classroom and school that were the right fit for me. A bit surprisingly, I've ended up in a 7th grade English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. I have loved teaching ELA for the past two years because of the relationships I have cultivated with my students and the growth I observed in their reading comprehension and writing skills. However, when I first started teaching ELA, I found guilt in the fact that it was not social studies. I constantly asked myself, am I wasting the degree I worked so hard to earn? As I faced this internal dilemma, I remembered what my favorite professor would always say: social studies teaching and learning do not always take place in a social studies classroom.

I do believe that social studies can be found in everything, whether it is when we explore our identities or learn about the world around us or so many other things. I brought this belief into my

ELA classroom, which is more standards-based and test-driven than a social studies classroom. As my ELA students needed to learn the tools and strategies for reading comprehension and writing about their reading, I added traditional social studies content to my teaching through engagement with historical fiction and non-fiction texts, such as *The War of the Wall* by Toni Cade Bambara and other short stories from <u>CommonLit.org</u>. But I wanted more! Always seeking to incorporate project-based learning into my classroom, I created social studies-based anchor projects for my students to undertake.

An anchor is an activity or project that students can work on whenever there is free time, such as coming into the classroom, finishing early on a task, and waiting for extra help. They allow students to turn what could be unproductive time in the classroom into time when they can continue to grow their learning. Further, anchors provide engaging opportunities for students to pursue their individual interests (and needs) and tap into areas of their creativity that might not easily be accessed in the other parts of the class.

Knowing that I wanted to create anchor projects based on social studies topics, I asked myself what specific aspects of social studies I wanted to embrace in my ELA classroom. A high priority for me is creating opportunities for my students to explore and share their unique identities and cultures, so our classroom can be a more welcoming and safer place for everyone in it. In early 2023, I came up with the idea of creating a recurring anchor project to recognize the upcoming national heritage months: Black History Month in February and Women's History Month in March.

At the start of each month, I did a little explicit social studies teaching by introducing the topics. We had discussions about why the highlighted groups of people are intentionally named and recognized, why their histories are important to learn about, and how learning more about these groups and their histories can lead to the making of a better classroom environment. In these introductions, students who could identify with the groups of people often shared glimpses of their lives or family history, though it was important to me not to single them out as spokespersons for the groups. We also discussed how learning more about different groups—whether we identify with them or not—can help us grow as respectful citizens.

Next, I asked each student to pick a well-known person we could celebrate during the month and research them. The well-known requirement was to make sure that students could find enough information. From there I encouraged the students to be creative with how they wanted to present information about their chosen people, whether that be on paper or online. I did add a few guidelines for my students so that we could meet ELA standards while doing this work, such as utilizing figurative language or writing a paragraph biography about their person. The rest was student-driven on how they wanted to proceed. I wanted them to have decision making power, to imagine, to dream!

At the end of March, I surveyed the students for feedback on their projects, as I did not know if I should continue with this anchor. Most of my students really enjoyed them. For example, one commented, "that was the best project so far" while another wrote, "I liked being able to draw instead of using my Chromebook with this project." Many students asked to continue the projects, and a few mentioned that the next month was Arab American Heritage Month, for which they wanted to continue the anchor because that monthly celebration represented them and a community of which they were a part. Because they wanted their peers to learn more about who they are through these projects, I took this request as an indication that my goal of making students feel they were in a safe classroom environment was met.

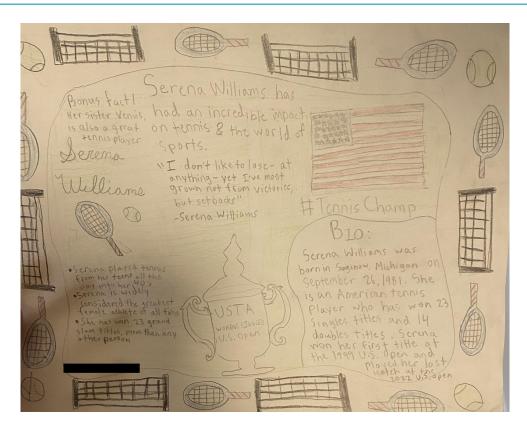
The monthly anchors not only allowed me to engage and embrace my social studies background in an ELA classroom, but also they allowed for my students to learn more about themselves and others while showcasing their creativity in their chosen way.

As my future students lead their own learning through anchor projects, I hope they might begin to recognize that social studies teaching and learning do not always take place in a social studies classroom.

Student Examples

See below for three examples of students' anchor projects. I used the student examples and this article to help me with the idea of the projects.







Recommended Texts

- Berson, I. R., Berson, M. J., Dennis, D. V., & Powell, R. L. (2017). Leveraging literacy: Research on critical reading in the social studies. In M. M. Manfra & C. M. Bolick (h.), *The Wiley Handbook of social studies research* (pp. 414-439). Wiley Blackwell.
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Integrating Critical Conversations Into the Elementary Classroom

Kelly Whalen

I am honored to serve as a second grade teacher at Mosser Elementary School in the Allentown School District. I graduated from Penn State Berks in three years as the Student Marshal with a major in Elementary and Early Childhood Education and a minor in Special Education. It was at Penn State Berks that I realized my deep passion for culturally responsive education, social studies, and social justice. I strive to include these components throughout my teaching, and I especially love to integrate them with literacy. I am currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Literacy within the Reading Specialist Program at Wilkes University. Teaching and being with my students brings me so much joy, but outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family, exercising, crafting, photography, playing board games, and traveling!



Black lives matter, yet our education system fails to support our young Black students and other minoritized groups of students through a lack of accurate representation. I teach second grade in an urban elementary school in the Allentown School District where most of my students identify as Latinx and/or Black. Throughout my first year of teaching, the topic of race came up in our classroom and I did not ignore it, contrary to recent political controversy, to ensure I am serving my students responsively. I sought out opportunities to discuss race after receiving

administrative approval and encouragement. As a white educator, who felt betrayed by the education system after not learning of the deep systemic roots racism holds in our country until I was in college, I want to make sure that my students are taught the truth and feel seen, valued, and heard.

In the beginning of this past school year, after building solid rapport with my students, we discussed race mainly as a factual observation about our physical appearance. Then, as the year progressed, we expanded our conversations to touch on the impacts of representation of race in media and literature and how it impacts our view of ourselves and others. In my classroom, specifically when discussing race, I strive to use open-ended questions that seek to enable my students to discover and share their own feelings and observations regarding race. In my undergraduate studies at Penn State Berks, Dr. Francisco Torres was my literacy professor. He not only taught us about best literacy practices but also taught and modeled how to be an abolitionist educator. He taught me that it is merely impossible for educators to take a neutral stance when it comes to race in our country. By either choosing to discuss it or not discuss it in the classroom, we are indirectly teaching our students where we stand on the topic. I want to ensure that my students know I see them for who they are and love them as they are.

One week, I was teaching about Benjamin Franklin as part of my district's required English Language Arts curriculum. For the past few years, our district did not have a designated social studies block or curriculum; rather, some social studies standards were met through our ELA curriculum. Given my experience, I did not feel right only teaching my students about one historical inventor, who was white, when so many of our country's important progressions originated in the Black community. According to Takaki (2008), "An incomplete history is like a mirror that does not reflect everything, a mirror that treats some people as if they were invisible" (p. 19). If I were to have let my lessons that week reach the extent of teaching my students that inventors and the wonderful inventions of our country came only from white people, which is what reasonably could have been implied by only teaching about Benjamin Franklin, I would have been inaccurately representing history and enabling my students to feel invisible. I knew I had to do something to diversify the curriculum my students were being exposed to.

Our curriculum required us to read <u>Now and Ben</u> by Gene Barretta, which is a biography of Benjamin Franklin and it highlights his many inventions and contributions to our country. Given that one of the week's <u>ELA Standards</u> was to "compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic," I had an exemplary opportunity to include a book about inventors of color, while still meeting the required ELA standard. After reading our curriculum story, *Now & Ben*, and doing some work with that story, I decided to read the book, <u>Have You Thanked an Inventor Today?</u> by Patrice McLaurin with my students. In this piece of literature, stories

of Black inventors' contributions are shared. According to <u>Bruyere (2019)</u>, "A worthwhile text should serve to launch counternarratives or conversations about identity and social issues, or about differences in power and privilege." I was required to teach *Now and Ben*, a piece of literature that supports "The Master Narrative, [which] says that our country was settled by European immigrants, and that Americans are white" (<u>Takaki, 2008, p. 6</u>). Therefore, I knew I wanted to incorporate a story that challenges the Master Narrative to ensure that my students are not only able to see through windows into the lives of other people, but also read literature that serves as a mirror enabling them to see their own lives accurately reflected (<u>Bishop, 1990</u>).

While reading the fun and engaging story, Have You Thanked an Inventor Today?, I asked my students what they noticed on a page with a few illustrations of Black inventors and a corresponding short biography of each. One student said with a little uncertainty, "They are all Black?" That was actually the exact answer I was looking for. I wanted my students to see that not all inventors are white, despite what they might have thought after reading Now and Ben, since who we see represented in literature can greatly influence our perspective. Another student said that all the inventors shown on the page were males. On another page, I asked the students what they noticed again and how they felt about what they noticed. This time, my students noticed that one of the inventors was a female. I used their observations to lead into asking them questions like, Who can be an inventor? Did you know these groups of people could be inventors? Why did you think this before reading this story? Who else can be an inventor? These questions stimulated extensive comments from my students saying that many diverse people are and have been inventors who have created many important items for us. It was absolutely beautiful and inspiring to hear my students' empowered voices speaking out saying, "Girls can be inventors too" along with Black, Hispanic, Asian, younger, and older people. We even got to discuss that a general way to refer to various groups of people who are nonwhite is to say, "people of color." My students realized that we can all be inventors no matter who we are.

I wanted to ensure that their perspective of who they can be and what they can do was not hampered by only learning of one, white, older male who was an inventor in our country. I knew I was successful in doing this after hearing their remarks. We also worked together to make a poster that included a list of Black inventors and what they invented based on the book, *Have You Thanked an Inventor Today?* I made the heading of our poster "More inventors to thank!" before addressing the topic with my students. After reading and discussing the book, I asked if there is anything else they would like to add to our poster about more inventors to thank and they said they wanted the poster to say "Girls and people of color can be inventors too." We chose to emphasize this on the poster because these groups of people are less commonly seen and portrayed as important inventors in literature and our curriculum (see Figure 1).

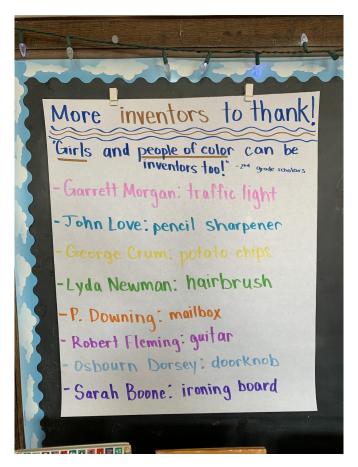


Figure 1. "More inventors to thank" poster

This lesson went beyond teaching about race to include the intersectionality of race and gender within representation of literature as compared between *Now and Ben* and *Have You Thanked an Inventor Today?*. As <u>Dr. Bettina Love (2019)</u> said, "When teachers shy away from intersectionality, they shy away from ever fully knowing their students' humanity and the richness of their identities. Mattering cannot happen if identities are isolated and students cannot be their full selves" p. 7). To extend this lesson even further, next year I would love to include deeper dialogue regarding people with disabilities who were inventors since this is also a very important part of intersectionality. It is not enough to teach our students within the Master Narrative, for we must challenge it to ensure that all children are able to see themselves accurately represented in their education to empower them to reach their full potential. It is not up to educators to "rescue" our students as they have the tools within themselves to be successful, but it is up to us to empower them to use these tools by providing support and guidance. They not only deserve a seat at the table but deserve to know that there *should* be a seat for them because they deserve to feel seen, valued, and heard for who they are and their unique gifts and talents.

Recommended Texts

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- Love, B. & Culley-Love, C. (Hosts). (2020-present). Teaching to thrive [Audio podcast]. https://abolitionistteachingnetwork.org/podcast
- McLaurin, P. (2016). Have you thanked an inventor today? Khemrah Publishing.
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The "Free" State of Florida

Chantelle Grace

Dr. Chantelle Grace is a Teaching Faculty I in Social Science Education in the School of Teacher Education. She began working at Florida State University in Fall 2022 and currently serves as the Program Coordinator for its Social Science Education program. Dr. Grace is an emerging scholar with a passion for social and racial justice. Her research specifically focuses on race/ism and the ways in which social studies educators can be better equipped with the essential racial, pedagogical, and content knowledge needed to engage in dialogue with students about racial issues.



Throughout this past academic year, human rights have been under attack in Florida by both the state governor and congressional representatives in a political crusade to make Florida "the freest state in these United States." In education specifically, Governor DeSantis has claimed that children in Florida's K-12 public schools are being indoctrinated by "woke ideology" and that its perpetuation "will destroy this country if we let [it] take hold across these institutions more than it has" (Schemmel, 2022). Such rhetoric has had reverberating effects on teachers throughout the state, especially those in the field of social studies attempting to equip students with fundamental thinking skills needed to think critically about the past.

As a social studies teacher educator, I have prided myself in being able to provide future teachers with meaningful, educational experiences that offer them opportunities to grapple with hard truths from the past and present, reflect on their evolving identities, and learn how these conversations can then be brought together in the classroom with students. However, being in Florida has made such commitments more challenging to pursue. My identities, as well as the identities of many of my students and fellow colleagues, have been scrutinized and debated; our rights restricted and, in some instances, eliminated. Florida claims to be a "free" state, a "land of liberty and sanity." But how can a state be free when its legislation and policies are built on the confinement of others?

In the poem that follows, which you can also <u>listen to me read aloud here</u>, I attempt to speak back to the fallacious pretense that Florida is a "free" state by outlining the many ways in which it has restricted the freedom of others and neglected underlying issues in favor of culture wars. It is my hope that this poem disrupts the master narrative being driven by the state governor and congressional representatives and inspires others' resistance to similar narratives being propagated in their own states.

The "Free" State of Florida

Welcome to the "free" state of Florida.

Where books are banned, and you can't say gay.

Where reproductive rights are severely restricted,

And DEI is being pushed away.

Yes, the "free" state of Florida.

Where "woke indoctrination" and drag shows are our biggest concern.

Not the hundreds of mass shootings,

Or the lack of resources for those already born.

So, I ask you Florida...

Who is the state actually "free" for?

Because if current legislation is any indication,

Every minoritized group is barred from entering the door.

Our very existence in this world is trying to be denied.

As well as our contributions to society.

But little do they know,

That we are not going out quietly.

We will teach the truth!

And we will say gay!

We will continue to fight for the rights of others.

Despite the ignorance in our way.

It is clear the "free" state of Florida

Needs a new slogan to proclaim.

Because in no way should a "free" state

Have people treated as some great fire that needs to be tamed.

But let's be clear, the people will not be smothered,

For we are trailblazers and activists.

We are leaders of social change,

And sought-after panelists.

We are HUMANS.

Point blank.

And that's all that should matter.

Not our identities, documentation, or previous encounters.

People are not dying by swords they create,

They're dying from societal hate.

So, Florida, it is time we look inward,

And transform our institutions,

Not with performative measures, but true resolutions.

"Whiteness thrives in darkness,"

But that darkness is slowly coming to light.

There is a new generation of activists emerging,

Whose flames are just beginning to ignite.

Link to Audio Recording of Dr. Grace performing "The 'Free' State of Florida"

Recommended Texts

Altieri, J. L. (2020). Enhancing social studies learning through student-created poetry. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 32(3), 9-13.

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Beginning Again: Schooling Transformation in Changing Times

Kim Mowery

Kim Mowery is an Assistant Teaching Professor at Penn State. She has taught and supervised student teachers at both the elementary and middle school level. Middle school is her passion, and working with soon-to-be middle school teachers (and their classroom mentors) has been her favorite career move so far. She's also taught middle and high school math and science. When she's not thinking about middle school, she's reading, swimming, doing word puzzles and listening to her sons make music.



Everyone involved with schools experienced how the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted education. My own perspective, as a university teaching professor and also a parent of school-age kids, was shaped by spending the 2021-22 school year with my family in Berlin, Germany. As Berlin's public schools struggled to emerge from the pandemic, I became curious about a time, three decades earlier, when those schools had grappled with a disruption every bit as profound as COVID-19. In researching how Berlin's schools adapted to the challenge of German reunification, I was struck by some of the parallels to schools' COVID experiences.

I have no answers for how we help students overcome academic gaps developed in the past several years, nor can I help teachers reclaim energy lost to burnout from doing their jobs under impossible demands. But the experience of Berlin schools suggests to me some general lessons for public schools facing unexpected and acute dislocations.

The roots of this story reach deep into history, but we join it on November 9, 1989, when the border crossings between East and West Berlin were unexpectedly opened by order of the East German government. That same night, citizens of East Germany began to dismantle the Berlin Wall with sledgehammers, crowbars, and screwdrivers. Earlier that same year, East Germany's leader, Erich Honecker, had declared that the Wall would stand for 100 years. But on the night of November 9, the process leading to German reunification began without an official starting gun.

Here lies one point of perspective for school communities facing challenging times. There won't be an official heads-up, at least, not with enough time to make it useful, for whatever the seismic event is. You turn on the TV one night and see people tearing down the concrete that separates one country from its neighbor. You check your email and find a notice from your superintendent that she's not bringing students back after Spring Break. You may have heard of some rumblings leading up to these events, but the flash point itself can happen with no notice. All we can do is figure out the best path forward. Spending time and energy dwelling on "how did we get here" or "what might we have done differently" in the face of serious needs is a poor use of energy. Leaders of schools can help model this and set the tone for productive discourse and immediate plans of action.

Once the Wall fell, institutions had to determine what came next. The two countries' school systems differed greatly, and the education officials of the government in the East wasted no time announcing their new goals; in fact, they did so *two days* after the collapse of the Wall. Nowhere was adapting to the new reality more challenging than in Berlin, the only German municipality with one foot in East Germany and one in West Germany.

These changes may have felt as challenging as 5-year-old children joining a classroom via a computer or teachers building relationships with students while wearing masks. They included transitioning from a primarily vocational school system in the East, which ended at grade 10 and prepared students to begin a trade, to one with an option for a Westernized university-prep experience that would extend through grade 13. The school week would shift to 5 days from a shorter week. The Marxist/Leninist foundation of the overall curriculum would certainly be removed. Other changes would be rolled out later. Students in the East were all learning Russian; with four months notice, schools would be required to teach English. Some teachers, administrators, and university faculty were fired because of their perceived ties to the East German political regime or ideology.

The level of turmoil and even outrage those communities must have experienced is reminiscent of ours in recent years—locally as well as globally—as we wondered under what conditions our schools would re-open. Is it safe to send my kid to school without a surgical mask? Should teachers with pre-existing health conditions be forced to fulfill the obligations of their work contracts given the risks of infection? Both worlds were trying to figure out the next steps with no existing playbook.

This brings me to another suggestion. If we are waiting for "the right" answer to institutional changes, we'll be waiting for a long time. "Right" for whom? How will we know when we find it? The days of the calendar will keep turning, summer will pass, and the new year will begin whether we have a perfect plan for how to open an essentially new school system (or start a new reading curriculum or what have you) regardless of whether we feel ready or not. Leadership of the schools—administration, school boards, union officials and teacher leaders—can try to present a coherent vision and plan, and to bring people along with it, through transparency and information shared quickly. The perfect plan is the enemy of the good-enough plan. When there are needs to be met for children, sometimes initiatives need to be started with the understanding that they can be tweaked or overhauled as necessary.

It's been 34 years, and East and West Berlin's schools are now a united public school system. It faces challenges that are familiar to most urban school systems, including lack of funding, aging infrastructure, teacher turnover and a high percentage of students with different languages of origin. But unite it did. It now serves hundreds of thousands of students. Similarly, anecdotes of how schools "got by" during covid have become a chapter in history demonstrating how humans adapt to a worldwide pandemic. COVID-19 is now (almost) in the books alongside the Plague, the Spanish flu, and HIV/ AIDS; so is reunification. These histories include how institutions, particularly schools, pivoted during uncertain times. Neither story's ending has been set in stone: there will always be new needs that present themselves

I was 13 when the Wall fell. If you had asked me then what happened to it, I may have cobbled together an explanation that Reagan asked Gorbachev to tear it down, and a wrecking ball showed up soon after. I have a much richer understanding of the gymnastics our society has gone through during COVID, one that necessarily draws heavily from my own lived experience. There's always more to a particular story about schools than any individual can understand. That's why I generally seek other perspectives through research and discussion. This practice is always useful, but especially as we are tackling challenging situations together.

Finally, we can have patience with and empathy for school leaders who are working with the best of intentions. We can remind each other, whether we primarily identify as a teacher or an administrator, family member or student, that we've been through uncertain times before and have prevailed. We surely will again.

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A Personal Interrogation of Choice

Casey Cook

Casey Cook is a Teacher, Wife, Artist, and Writer originally from Pennsylvania and currently living in Fredericksburg Virginia.



It would be unsurprising if this article presents more questions than answers. Why do we teach? What is our goal? Do my goals as an educator align with the goals my district has? One goal of education I believe in is preparedness for life. We, as teachers, can help our students to make meaning of the world they are growing into. Do we help them meet some level of success? Do we help them find a calling? Should we ensure they get into college? Or should we focus on job readiness right out of high school?

I am known by my friends and family as a distinctly decisive person. I knew that I wanted to be a teacher in 8th grade and then I did it. I knew, 6 months in, that I wanted to marry my partner. I have a very strong sense of right and wrong. I have been tiptoeing the line between the goals of my district and my personal goals for my entire career. How can I teach a class that I believe is good for students, and meet the impossible expectations of my district? We all make these choices to follow a curriculum or to generate our own lessons. To teach to a standardized test, or to life.

Life. I graduated from public school. I am a product of the choices my teachers and parents made. Am I successful? Do I make good decisions?

I was at my local goodwill, looking for nothing and everything. On a rack I found an orange item of clothing. Was it a vest, cardigan, sweater, or shawl? Whichever it was, I knew that I would purchase it. The fabric was soft, the sleeve holes were large, and the color matched many things that I already own in my wardrobe. This decision was a good one.

Days later, I was on the couch, scrolling TikTok. Each small 7-15 second video was eerily similar. My list was only growing as the sun began to set. I needed to start writing, to take the dishes to the kitchen. I needed to fold laundry, and I needed to rehang the shelves that clattered to the floor during dinner. I needed to call my dad. I could not move. The overwhelming number of choices forced me to stay, immobilized, on my phone. How can one decision seem so easy, while others are not?

How do we make decisions?

For the context of this article, I defined 4 different types of decisions. I did this through my own thinking. I have not consulted any outside sources. I do believe other opinions and theories will be incredibly useful on my journey, but in order to begin we must start at the beginning, and that must come from me. The Categories are Necessary, Considered, Intuitive, and Impulsive decisions.

Necessary decisions are made when we are up against some kind of deadline. We are hungry, or tired. Perhaps, panic has set in and taken over our brains. The decision must be made now, or all will feel lost.

Considered decisions are carefully weighed. We have time to think and process the best option. This could be a life changing choice. We know that we must think before choosing. We are often the most worried here about choosing the wrong path.

Intuitive decisions are breathtakingly easy. They feel "right" and often joyous. Seeing a donut box at work and your favorite flavor is there. Your child is crying and rubbing their back immediately calms them down.

Finally, impulsive decisions are made without thinking. They could be intuitive, but they often lack the satisfaction of "doing the right thing."

What is the difference between a good and bad decision?

The difference lies completely in the emotional aftermath of each choice. How did it impact your life? When a knife slips from the counter we impulsively go to catch it. If we succeed we congratulate ourselves for our quick thinking. If we cut ourselves as it clatters to the floor we feel like fools. Decisions are neutral, our emotions are the defining factor.

How do we learn to make decisions?

Children must be presented with the opportunity to make their own choices in order to learn. We must put ourselves in new and different situations to learn what our likes, needs, hopes, and fears are. Experience teaches us about ourselves.

How do we learn to make good decisions?

When I make a mistake I am curious to know what could have gone different. Perhaps my shoes were only uncomfortable because I was wearing thin socks. Maybe I will like shrimp if I cook it a different way. I experiment with different factors that could influence my outcome and then repeat.

Some decisions are too big for us to allow children to truly be free in their choices. Choices can be costly, so we use stories to share our knowledge. I have never put my hand on a hot stove, but I remember my mother telling me, "If you touch this, it will hurt. It is very hot." She described how a burn feels and I learned without experience that stove burners are dangerous.

Educational Theory is Disappointing

At this point in writing I have made many decisions. Some of you will agree with my choices and some will not. Each word written presents a different possibility of how this will go, how I will sound. Is this article attention grabbing? Is it thought provoking? Does my age show? Does my experience show?

Are you wondering where we will go next? These ideas feel incredible. They feel breathtakingly simple. It *feels* as though I have found the answer to everything. But, it is summer. I am writing on my couch, not in my classroom. School and students are weeks away. How can this information be useful? I should have a neat 5 pages of information for you to learn and take back to your classroom. I should have a success story, an example of these ideas perfectly implemented.

During the 2021-22 school year I was required to have all of my curricular material covered a full month before the end of school. My students took their standardized test and asked me, "What are we going to do now?"

I devised a project, broken down into three parts, inspired by Shark Tank. It included a product proposal that I would approve. Then, a detailed analysis of how the product would be made and the economic decisions necessary. Finally a Product Pitch that other teachers would come to our class to hear and review. Students were allowed to work in groups, or alone. They had to come up with the product. Out of 150 students that I taught, only 15 were able to meet the expectations I laid out at the beginning of the project. There are many reasons I could interrogate to figure out why this project was so difficult for the majority of my students. The reason I find the

most interesting is choice. When my 7th grade students in a public school setting were given choice in their academic pursuits, they floundered.

Let's look deeper at the four types of choices I have identified for the sake of this essay. Necessary, Considered, Intuitive, and Impulsive. The decisions I recognize my students making are overwhelmingly impulsive or necessary. Either they decide in the moment to do something, allowing themselves to react to their environment rather than participate in it. Or they make a choice out of pressing necessity. One day I found a student grinding Cheetos into the carpet with their shoe and another student emailed me at 11pm asking for help on an assignment minutes before the deadline.

Where did things go wrong? I was working with children long before stepping into my formal public teaching position. One of the most formative experiences I had was teaching preschool at a Montessori school. This preschool is where I saw my first examples of effective student choice. Each classroom was filled with different paths towards independence and learning that the students could choose at their leisure. A three year old would confidently tell me which math activity they wanted to do. A kindergartener would neatly pack their bag before helping the child next to them.

Consistent unstructured time should be provided to our students in classrooms where good opportunities to learn are plentiful. This time must be preserved throughout public school if we want to teach students to make good decisions.

As much as this article is about education, it is also about life. Making decisions is exhausting for many adults. In order to keep ourselves alive we have to decide what to eat roughly 81,030 times. That's what it takes to keep us standing. What if we want a vibrant life? There are many more decisions to be made. Are you going to go to college? Where, when? Are you going to choose a life partner? Buy a house? Start a business? Travel? Buy a book? Wash your sheets? Get up off the couch?

The only difference between impulsive decisions and intuitive ones is the joy and "rightness" that making intuitive decisions gives us. When we make intuitive decisions we feel proud of ourselves. We listened to our needs, our souls and we find the choice easy. Every person deserves to have this feeling. To know yourself so well that daily choices become second nature. Perhaps the most altruistic goal of education is to help our students know themselves.

Freire wrote, "The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves." Is it possible to bring our students out of themselves when it is ourselves we struggle to know? Can we achieve this lofty goal under a system with such skewed values? It is in these questions and thoughts that I hope to inspire curiosity, passion, and a path towards a more self-actualized future.

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A Letter

Jacqueline J. Kwun

Jacqueline Kwun is a rising 10th grade student in Georgia and a student ambassador of Asian American Voices for Education

Dear social studies teachers everywhere,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Jacqueline, and I attend a public high school in Georgia. I wanted to take a moment to thank you for the role you play as a social studies teacher. I have always considered social studies to be one of the most important subjects because it helps us understand why things are the way they are and how we can create a more just world. Also, learning the histories and stories of various groups of people, particularly those who are marginalized in the United States, has been enlightening for me and compelled me to act. Teachers who take the time to delve into these stories for their social studies lessons truly deserve our appreciation. It's not a requirement for all teachers to go that extra mile, so it's especially admirable when some do.

I also write to you to share my experience as an Asian American student with the hope that you will consider the inclusion of Asian American histories in your social studies curriculum if it is not already part of your lessons. To start, I would like to introduce a poem that expresses my overall feelings about the social studies lessons I have gotten at school:

the reason we indent

by Boonmee Yang

we're instructed
by white men to indent our paragraphs at half an inch
regardless of how our lives began but I see how
their history books have hundreds of pages of paragraphs
that can afford losing thousands of half inches' worth of words
leaving out their crimes of horror while my people
only have two paragraphs to fit in everything wrong about my culture
and you might think losing an inch
is no big deal yet white men are
all about that extra
inch

In this poem, Boonmee Yang (2017), a Vietnamese refugee poet, speaks powerfully about the frustration of being underrepresented and misrepresented in school curriculum. I feel the same way. As a kid, I scanned through school textbooks to find any information about people who looked like me. As you might guess, there were almost no Asian American stories, and the ones that were included were all about war. My schoolteachers have also not taught about or mentioned the histories and current issues Asian Americans face. From elementary school to 9th grade, my school education has centered white/European histories and perspectives. The teachers taught about Ellis Island but not Angel Island; the bombing of Pearl Harbor but not the Japanese American incarceration; the Vietnam War but not Southeast Asian refugees; the Spanish American War but not the four decades of US colonization of the Philippines; the Farmworkers Movement without Larry Itliong and Filipino farmworkers; women's suffrage without Mabel Lee and other suffragists of Color; school segregation without Mamie Tape and other children of Color who fought against unequal education; and civil rights movements without the Yellow, Red, Brown, and other Power Movements.

Because schools have not taught the long history of Asian migration to the United States, US/ Western imperialism and militarism in Asia as one of the larger structural forces behind Asian migration, and Asian American struggles and resistance against oppression, it should come as no surprise that one can sporadically hear loud conversations with hurtful stereotypes and discriminatory remarks. I often hear insensitive comments that can go from mocking someone's appearance to offensive words like the C-slur.

Truthfully, I was willing to live with these immature comments because it did not seem like there was any substantial harm done. However, that changed when the devastating Atlanta spa shootings took place just 10 miles away from where I live. On March 16, 2021, a 21-year-old white man traveled to multiple spa locations and killed six Asian immigrant women and two others. The tragedy was a horrifying event that shook me and our community. I couldn't stop thinking that it could have happened to me, my family, or my friends. I also could not help but think that perhaps, like me, his teachers failed to educate him about the history and humanity of Asian Americans. If the man had learned Asian American histories and built empathy for people who looked different from him, maybe this terrible incident could have been prevented.

To add salt to the wound, after the Atlanta shooting occurred, none of my teachers or principal addressed the tragedy. Classes continued as if nothing had happened, despite the shooting sites being located nearby. Only a few months later, however, when our hometown baseball team, the Atlanta Braves, won the World Series, my school and district were quick to celebrate. Less than 24 hours after the win, the school district announced that all schools in our school district would be

closed the following day to celebrate. The announcement was a disappointing reminder of my school's priorities and values.

This experience led me to find a way to use my pent-up frustration to do something more useful than complain and worry. I did not want to sit and wait for a better future to happen; instead, I wanted to help build it. So, I joined Asian American Voices for Education (AAVEd), a grassroots collective in Georgia whose mission is to promote Asian American studies and ethnic studies in Georgia's K-12 public schools. Formed right after the Atlanta spa shooting, AAVEd has been working to build a coalition with other grassroots groups and communities of Color to push the state's schools to teach inclusive and accurate histories.

As a student member at AAVEd, I started creating <u>weekly highlights</u> of Asian American history and sharing the information on social media (@aaved_org on Instagram). Although I enjoyed the work, I often felt like I was not doing enough. But then I received a thank-you letter from a teacher:

Yesterday, I introduced my class to Bee Nguyen during my Women's History Month Spotlight, and my Vietnamese American students' faces lit up, and the energy in the space was love, and everything was great! I used some of your weekly posts during my lessons, and I plan on introducing my students to Patsy Mink this week. I truly appreciate your work and I wanted you to know.

This letter reassured me that I was at least doing something right. I would be lying if I told you I was not smiling for the rest of the day.

Besides posting weekly highlights, I helped AAVEd's AAPI heritage month initiative. While the AAVEd parent team worked on creating resources for elementary teachers to celebrate AAPI heritage month in a way that is beyond a superficial food and festival approach, I led a high school student team where we created AAPI heritage month resources for middle school and high school teachers. The resources included <u>posters</u>, <u>PowerPoint slides</u>, <u>videos</u>, <u>and other tools</u> to teach and learn about Asian American histories and current issues. Unfortunately, we dreamed too big and had insufficient time. We were extremely busy in the months leading up to May as high school students dealing with a lot of homework, tests, finals, and extracurricular activities.

Even though I enjoyed creating content that finally incorporated the stories I desperately wished to learn in my social studies classes, I couldn't help but wish the lessons were already incorporated without our time and energy used to push for them. I agree with Mila C. C. Konomos (2023), a Korean poet and survivor of the global adoption trade, who said:

The observance of heritage months relies on extracting free labor from parents who are already overextended and at capacity. The truth is that ultimately heritage months cannot replace or compensate for the need to embed AANHPI representation within the curriculum standards. The burden, whether emotional or financial, should not fall on parents or students

to have to educate administrators and teachers about our histories. Heritage months would not be necessary if our narratives were already included in the standards.

Therefore, please consider including and advocating for Asian American studies in school curriculum. By providing students with a better understanding of Asian American histories and stories, we can foster empathy, break stereotypes, and build a more just and humane future. Your support and dedication to this cause can make a profound difference in the lives of young people. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Jacqueline

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Epilogue

Mark Kissling, SSJ Associate Editor

When I was an undergraduate student at Dartmouth College over two decades ago, getting certified to teach secondary Social Studies, I took Education 20, an introductory course focused on contemporary issues in education. There was no formal education major at Dartmouth, only a minor, but Ed 20 was one of the most popular courses on campus. Nearly everyone signed up for it because it was both engaging and novel, as must-take as any course at Dartmouth. One of my roommates enrolled as a senior; he didn't want to graduate without the experience.

Multiple times throughout the course, Ed 20 required students to participate in and pass 'reading checks' during which we met individually with a different teaching assistant (there were sometimes 20 or 30 TAs for the course when the student enrollment swelled to a few hundred) for an hour to discuss the readings for that part of the course. These checks generated strong and mixed emotions: they were terrifying and fun.

When I TAed Ed 20 the following year, Randy Testa, the wonderful professor teaching that semester's version of the course, encouraged us to conceive of and prepare students for reading checks as an opportunity to imagine the authors of the various assigned readings having a conversation. What would the Vivian Paley of <u>You Can't Say You Can't Play</u> think about Jonathan Kozol's <u>Savage Inequalities</u>, and vice versa? On what would they agree and disagree? What might they discover through discussion?

Over a decade later, while a doctoral student in education at Michigan State University, I participated in a seminar for graduate students ahead of the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. It was led by Bill Ayers, who, at that time, was the Vice President of AERA's curriculum studies division. It's a grand statement but my day-and-a-half in that seminar with Bill and about 12 other graduate students was a seminal experience in my doctoral and professional education.

On the morning of Day 2, Bill talked about how he approached the common parts of a dissertation. For the theoretical framing and literature review, he spoke about writing by putting the authors into conversation. So I started asking myself questions like, *What might emerge from a conversation among Vine Deloria, bell hooks, and Aldo Leopold about community, citizenship, and place?* This perspective was earth-shaking for me, even though, I see now, it wasn't far removed from those Ed 20 reading checks. In both cases, I became positioned at a table with the writers,

educators, and people who inspired me and stretched my imagination. I felt an exciting and dynamic community of possibility.

Now, years into working as a teacher educator, a common task that I ask my students to undertake is writing an imagined conversation between the Chimananda Ngozi Adichie of <u>"The Danger of a Single Story"</u> and the Howard Zinn of <u>You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train</u>. It's rare that our collective course inquiry into what it means to teach social studies isn't broadened and deepened through writing and sharing these conversations.

On my second read through the marvelous stories in this issue, I began asking questions that imagined the authors in conversation. Without coordination, the authors had raised all kinds of related topics, like teaching about national heritage months, finding inspiration from Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and wrestling with current and long-standing politics that contextualize education. As everything that I encounter immediately becomes potential material for my teaching, I thought about what questions I'd love to see my teacher education students ponder, in addition to their own, related to these stories.

I raise the questions below to invite you, dear reader and fellow social studies inquirer, into an imaginary salon with the story authors. I also encourage you to pose your own questions and explore what you think the authors might say.

- If all the authors-Casey, Chantelle, Colleen, Jacqueline, Kat & Paul, Kelly, Kim, Madeleine & Jen, Nell, and Walter-gathered for a discussion of their stories, what questions do you imagine they'd ask of each other? What commonalities and contrasts might they highlight and explore?
- As <u>Kat & Paul</u> prepare for their upcoming course focused on learning about and from Indigenous stories and knowledge, what advice might <u>Nell</u> give them based on her students' inquiries and discoveries at Randall's Island? And, thinking about Kat and Paul's school's land acknowledgement, has Nell's students/school written a land acknowledgement? If not, might they?
- <u>Colleen</u> wrote in her story about her students conducting anchor projects related to national heritage months. What suggestions might <u>Jacqueline</u>, given her work with Asian American Voices for Education, have for Colleen that could be incorporated into the anchor project?
- Although they are not the same age, do not live in the same state, and are not of the same race, <u>Jacqueline</u> and <u>Madeleine</u> share the common experience of being social studies students in the

2020s. What might a conversation between them look like? How might they learn from each other?

- Jen writes that she was in her 16th year of teaching 5th grade at the same school when her class' recess inquiry unfolded. She also notes that she has been teaching about local issues for years. What advice do you think she might give early-career teachers like Colleen and Kelly? In general, how easy-or hard-do you think it might be for newer teachers to conduct an inquiry like Jen's with their students? What attitudes, experiences, and support might (newer) teachers need to teach about local community issues?
- <u>Casey</u> earnestly laments how her seventh grade students "floundered" when given freedom to choose their own topics for inquiry. As students themselves, how might <u>Jacqueline</u> and <u>Madeleine</u> react to that experience; what insight might they have? How might the other teachers interpret what happened? Conversely, coming from a place of decades of writing about teaching, how might <u>Walter</u> understand what happened?
- <u>Kim</u> considers how educational responses to Covid-19 and German reunification compare while <u>Walter</u> writes of "the child" and "the curriculum" as well as "windows" and "mirrors"? What connections might they find among their writings?
- Imagine all the authors were in the front row of a poetry jam when <u>Chantelle</u> got up and performed "The 'Free' State of Florida." How might the authors react, individually and collectively, to hearing Chantelle's poem?
- <u>Kat and Paul</u> write, "We're nervous about this. We worry we'll say the wrong thing, we'll teach a problematic text, we'll mess up in some way or another"--and yet they move forward with conviction. If they were talking with <u>Chantelle</u> and <u>Madeleine</u>, what might the four of them discuss about courage, fear, and teaching/learning?
- <u>Kelly</u> addresses her positionality as a White educator teaching mostly Black and Brown students while <u>Kat and Paul</u> consider their positionalities as White educators teaching mostly White students. What kinds of experiences do you imagine each of these teachers have had in their-learning-to-teach journeys that have brought them to reflect critically on their positionalities?

- The first sentence of <u>Casey's</u> writing is, "It would be unsurprising if this article presents more questions than answers." <u>Nell</u> begins her story by sharing that when she takes her class to Randall's Island, "I do not go with an agenda." What might a conversation about teacher-decision making between Casey and Nell yield?
- <u>Walter</u> writes, "High school sophomores are children not adults, nor even young adults." From their school-related positionalities (e.g., student, teacher, teacher educator, etc.), how do you think the other authors would respond to this statement? How might it fit (or not) with their experiences?
- <u>Jacqueline</u> chose to share her story in the form of a letter to social studies teachers. What kinds of letters can you imagine the authors who are social studies teachers would write in response to Jacqueline?
- <u>Chantelle</u> calls out leadership in Florida in a time when teachers are under attack. How might Chantelle be encouraged or feel supported by <u>Jacqueline's</u> letter?
- All of the authors were vulnerable in sharing their stories, revealing something of themselves. What role does vulnerability play in the world of a teacher?

Issue Extension

Jessy and I have been so affected by the stories in this issue and the process of working with their authors that we have decided that we will bring the stories into our methods classes this fall and, inspired by them, ask our students to write and share their own SS Stories. Perhaps, even, the final assignment of each of our courses will be a collective one, in which we assemble our stories into a whole every bit as conversational and dynamic and inspiring as what's found in this issue. If you teach a methods course, or even if you teach a grade-school social studies class, might you do the same? If so, please write to us and let us know about it! And, upon reading your students' marvelous work, consider encouraging them to submit to future versions of the SS Stories column!