SECTION I

Building a Framework for Social Studies

Chapter 1. Defining Social Studies

Chapter 2. Celebrating Diversity in Social Studies Education

This section introduces and sets the stage for the overall discussion of elementary and middle school social studies. The chapters in this section define social studies, what is involved in social studies teaching and learning, and what makes up the social studies curriculum. You are also introduced to how social studies involves the human experience and how diversity relates to how and what students are able to learn in the classroom. This section provides the framework for the later sections in planning, assessment, instructional strategies, literacy, teaching subject area content, and enhancing democracy.

Chapter 1

Defining Social Studies

Thinking Ahead

1. What do you associate with or think of when you hear the words *social studies?*
2. What do you remember about your own social studies education in K–12 schools? What was most interesting? What would you have liked to learn more about? What was the least interesting?
3. In what ways are performance standards effective? In what ways might they detract from learning experiences?

What Is Social Studies?

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS; 1994), defines **social studies** as follows:

> Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (p. 3)

One meaning of the word *social* refers to humans interacting. By definition, then, social studies can be thought of as a study of humans interacting. As noted in the Introduction, social studies is not simply a body of knowledge or a set of skills. Instead, social studies is the process of using knowledge and skills to study humans as they interact in local, national, and world communities. Within this context, the NCSS (1994) definition describes two distinct features of social studies: It is designed to promote civic competence, and it integrates or incorporates many academic areas.

Social studies is the study of humans interacting.

Civic Competence

Civic competence means that the person is willing and able to contribute to and participate in a democratic society and the global community in ways that serve the common good. To this end, your students need to know about the basics of government, democracies, and democratic processes. They also need to have knowledge related to history, geography, economics, and other areas of the social sciences as a context for understanding the various forces affecting the many dimensions of human interaction. Civic competence also requires certain skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, inquiry, evaluating sources, listening, conflict resolution, collaborating, moral reasoning, and the ability to distinguish the personal good from the common good. Citizenship education, or educating for democracy, is designed to promote civic competence and is described in Chapter 13.

Integration

Social studies integrates knowledge and skills across academic areas. Science, mathematics, and the arts and humanities, as well as the social sciences, can all be used to study concepts in our social world (see How Is the Social Studies Curriculum Structured? on p. 10). This integration makes it possible to see things from multiple perspectives and to perceive the interconnections and relationships among a wide variety of peoples, cultures, and phenomena. Integrative approaches also help students to learn more deeply, to think more broadly, and to develop more meaningful understandings (Roberts & Kellough, 2000). Global education is another important form of integration. Here, the teacher seeks to integrate local and national issues with global concerns.

What Is Involved in Social Studies Teaching and Learning?

Given the defining features, how do you go about designing effective social studies instruction in your classroom? How do you create learning experiences that matter or have a positive impact on students? What elements need to be present to make your social studies classes interesting and engaging? This section attempts to answer these questions.

Creating Powerful Teaching and Learning Experiences

According to the NCSS (1994), powerful teaching and learning experiences are created when social studies is meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active. These five features are explained below.

1. **Social studies teaching and learning should be meaningful.** Instead of presenting students with disconnected bits of information, create learning experiences in which students are able to see how social studies concepts affect their lives or relate to their experiences. Invite them to make personal connections as well as conceptual connections with the subject matter.

EXAMPLE: Making Learning Meaningful

When studying the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* Ms. Eller asked her sixth-grade students to select the three articles from the Declaration they thought were most important and then to support their choices. This served to link their opinions and values with the areas to be studied. She also asked students to identify instances in the news or in their community that reflected a particular principle described in one of the articles of the *Declaration*. This helped them link the concepts to their personal experience. (Visit the UN Web site at www.un.org/rights.)

In a meaningful social studies curriculum, activities and assignments are not created to keep students busy or to get a wide dispersion of scores. Rather, they are designed to reinforce learning or to increase understanding. These activities make connections with students' own lives.

EXAMPLE: Making Connections With Students' Lives

After reading a biography about Andrew Jackson, Mr. Page creates a personal connection by asking his fourth-grade students to describe similar feelings, events, characters, or situations from their own lives. Also, instead of having students do worksheets as a post-reading activity for their social studies text, he sometimes makes social studies more meaningful by asking them to select three interesting or important ideas from the reading. Students then depict these ideas using words or pictures. In small groups, they brainstorm to find ideas as to how each might touch or connect with their lives.

2. **Social studies teaching and learning should be integrative.** As suggested above, social studies can be integrated across the curriculum (see integrative curriculum below). In reading class, find trade books, Internet sites, magazine articles, or other material about social studies concepts for students to read. Language arts, math, art, music, and science classes can also be used to explain, explore, or reinforce ideas from social studies class. Specific ideas for creating integrative studies are presented in Chapter 3.

   You can also integrate social studies across time. This means that you revisit and reinforce social studies concepts throughout the year and in ensuing years. We do not learn by being exposed to a concept only once. Rather, we learn by being exposed to concepts a number of times, in different ways, at successively more challenging levels.

3. **Social studies teaching and learning should be value based.** Invite your students to explore the ethical dimensions of social studies concepts. This is different from telling them what to value or pointing out right and wrong on the issues of the day. Instead, encourage your students to develop their own opinions and come to their own conclusions based on a set of principles (see Chapter 15). This sort of values-based instruction can occur through the use of cooperative learning, conflict resolution, role-playing, problem solving, critical thinking, discussions, debates, moral reasoning, value clarification, and other strategies where students are not expected to come to a predetermined conclusion or create a standardized product.

4. **Social studies teaching and learning should be challenging.** There are four ways to make social studies challenging:

   a. Design your lessons to address specific curricular goals and lesson plan objectives. This will help you create purposeful learning experiences.

b. Use open-ended activities and assignments that allow students to thoroughly explore ideas and concepts. In these activities, students are invited to share and support their opinions and employ creativity, imagination, and inferential thinking.
c. Create tiered activities and assignments at two or more levels in order to meet the varying ability levels of students in your class. (Chapter 6 offers examples of how to do this.)
d. Incorporate varying levels and types of thinking in your instruction and in the activities and assignments given to students. Use multiple intelligence theory, Bloom's taxonomy of thinking, and critical and creative thinking skills to design these (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Do not confuse challenging learning experiences with quantity or complexity. Assigning more homework does not challenge students or enhance their learning; it simply gives them more to do. Less homework that is thoughtfully designed is preferable to more homework given simply to measure progress. You create challenging learning experiences by having your students think deeply about a few things, not by having them think superficially about many things. Also, complexity that is at or above students' frustration level is not the same as challenge. Your activities and assignments should be designed to reinforce learning and extend students' thinking. Just giving them hard problems without instruction or support will frustrate most students and become a detriment to learning.

Finally, challenging students also refers to challenging their preconceived beliefs and assumptions. In your classroom, look to present ideas that are new to your students. Challenge traditional ways of seeing things through questions, discussions, and classroom activities. Use dialectical thinking activities in which students must support both sides of an issue. Invite them to look at issues from the perspective of people living in other parts of the world.

5. **Social studies teaching and learning should be active.** Students learn best when they are actively engaged in interesting activities that allow them to manipulate ideas and practice skills (Chapman, 2003). When you present new information in your social studies class, create interesting classroom activities that enable students to manipulate that information. Students learn more by doing and less by passively listening. Do not be afraid to go beyond the teacher's manual. Take field trips, use creative dramatics or role-playing, create small-group discussions, or use any of the many activities described in this textbook to get students to actively participate in their learning experiences.

Best Practice in Social Studies

In their book, *Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*, Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005) examine educational research related

to best practice in all subject areas. They describe the following research-based recommendations for best practice in teaching social studies:

Students of social studies should have regular opportunities to investigate topics in depth, and to participate in the choosing of these topics. Optimal learning does not occur in the 40- to 60-minute blocks we usually ascribe to teaching and learning in each of the subject areas. Most adults would have difficulties learning with these limited time restraints. Instead, you can enhance learning by creating instruction where your students are immersed in an idea over longer blocks of time. For example, use integrated instruction to blur the line between subject areas.

Choice is also a powerful element in learning of any kind. As adults, we are motivated when we are able to choose the topics we want to study. Students also need to be able to make these kinds of choices. This, however, does not mean total choice all the time. There are three kinds of topic choices that can be given to your students at various times:

1. Give them total choice of learning topics. Ask your students what they would like to study. What are they curious about? What have they always wondered about? What interests them? Then design units around their topics, or use inquiry learning to enable them to investigate their topics. Chapter 8 offers examples of inquiry learning.

2. Give students choices within a topic or theme. For example, if you are studying science, technology, and society, you might invite students to choose an area of technology for study. Both whole-class and inquiry learning could be used here as well.

3. The third type of choice is to allow students to select from a series of options that you offer. For example, in studying science, technology, and society at the turn of the last century, you might allow students to choose one of the following areas to study: (a) the effect of the telegraph on American society, (b) the effect of factories on American society, (c) the effect of radio on American society, (d) the effect of the automobile on American society, or (e) the effect of electricity on American society. Small learning groups then would be created around students' choices, and inquiry learning would be used to investigate their topics.

Social studies teaching should involve exploration of open questions that challenge students' thinking. You can enhance learning in your classroom by creating lessons and learning situations where students are not always led to a predetermined conclusion. This means that you ask questions or create inquiries for which you do not have the answers. A typical less-challenging activity would be to assign students to read a chapter or an article on some issue, and then give a homework assignment with comprehension-type questions that ask students to reiterate the ideas found in that article. This assignment would not challenge students' thinking, as it simply asks them to comprehend and restate the author's ideas so that you can evaluate their learning. Chapter 3 describes how to use Bloom's taxonomy, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and Robert Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence to create

challenging activities. As stated above, challenging students' thinking also refers to challenging stereotypes or preconceived beliefs and assumptions.

Social studies should involve students in active participation in the classroom and the wider community. Learning is enhanced when it is active and also when it extends beyond the classroom and connects to the community. You can create this community connection by inviting students to use problem-solving skills to address real-life community problems (Starko, 1995). Active involvement can be created through the use of service learning. In service learning, students learn by participating in service experiences designed to meet community needs (Bussler, 2002).

The online Student Study Site, www.sagepub.com/johnson2e, for Chapter 7 explores service learning in more detail.

Social studies should involve students both in independent inquiry and cooperative learning. In inquiry learning, students are taught how to ask their own questions, collect data, and use the data to answer their questions or come to their own conclusions. In cooperative learning, students are taught how to work cooperatively in groups to accomplish tasks. Inquiry learning and cooperative learning are taken up in Chapters 8 and 9, respectively. Both should be included in your social studies curriculum to enhance learning and develop important life skills.

Social studies should involve students in reading, writing, observing, discussing, and debating to ensure their active participation in learning. Teaching is far different from telling things to students. Instead, teaching is creating the conditions whereby students can learn, and students learn best when they are actively involved in the construction of knowledge. This can occur by using the best practices listed here as well as all the strategies and activities described in this book. These will also serve to enhance learning as well as to create interesting, multimodal learning experiences.

Students learn best when they are actively engaged.

Evaluation in social studies should be designed to value students' thinking and their preparation to become responsible citizens, rather than rewarding memorization of decontextualized facts. Evaluating students' learning only on the basis of scores on objective exams and homework assignments recognizes only a limited view of intelligence and learning and does little to prepare students for active participation in a democratic society. Instead, effective evaluation of learning recognizes and rewards many kinds of thinking and provides a variety of ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned. In your social studies classes, use authentic forms of assessment as well as more traditional forms to describe your students as learners. Authentic and alternative forms of assessment are subjects of Chapter 6.

HOW IS THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STRUCTURED?

Traditionally, social studies has used a "widening horizons" approach to curriculum, which starts with the child and expands outward in concentric circles as it moves up in grades (see Figure 1.1). This approach has been the dominant structure in social studies curriculum over the past 50 years. However, while it is appropriate that students first study things in their local environments before moving conceptually outward, there is no research to support the effectiveness of the widening horizons approach as an organizing curricular structure (Ellis, 2002). As a matter of fact, this approach runs contrary to what we know about how humans learn and could actually hamper learning, as it creates artificial borders around students' natural inquiry tendencies. Also, in the interconnected and interdependent world of the 21st century, it is appropriate and necessary for children in the early grades to examine world and national events in developmentally appropriate ways. In the same way, it is also appropriate and necessary for students in the middle and high school grades to continue to reflect upon and examine themselves in the context of their family, school, and community.

Another approach to curriculum is the spiral curriculum (see Figure 1.2). This approach is designed to introduce key concepts or themes in the early grades and to reinforce or expand them at successively higher levels as students move through the grades. The NCSS takes this approach in describing the 10 thematic strands that form the basis of their social studies standards (see further below). These are to be implemented across early grades, middle school, and high school. This invites students to address various themes at successively higher levels.

Similar to the spiral curriculum is the issues-centered curriculum (Wraga, 1999). Here, social studies curricula are centered around social issues. This approach has students using knowledge and skills from a variety of subject areas and incorporating many modes of thinking in coming to understand an issue. This also provides students with a more accurate picture of reality, as most real-world issues transcend specific subject matter boundaries. Issues here may include things

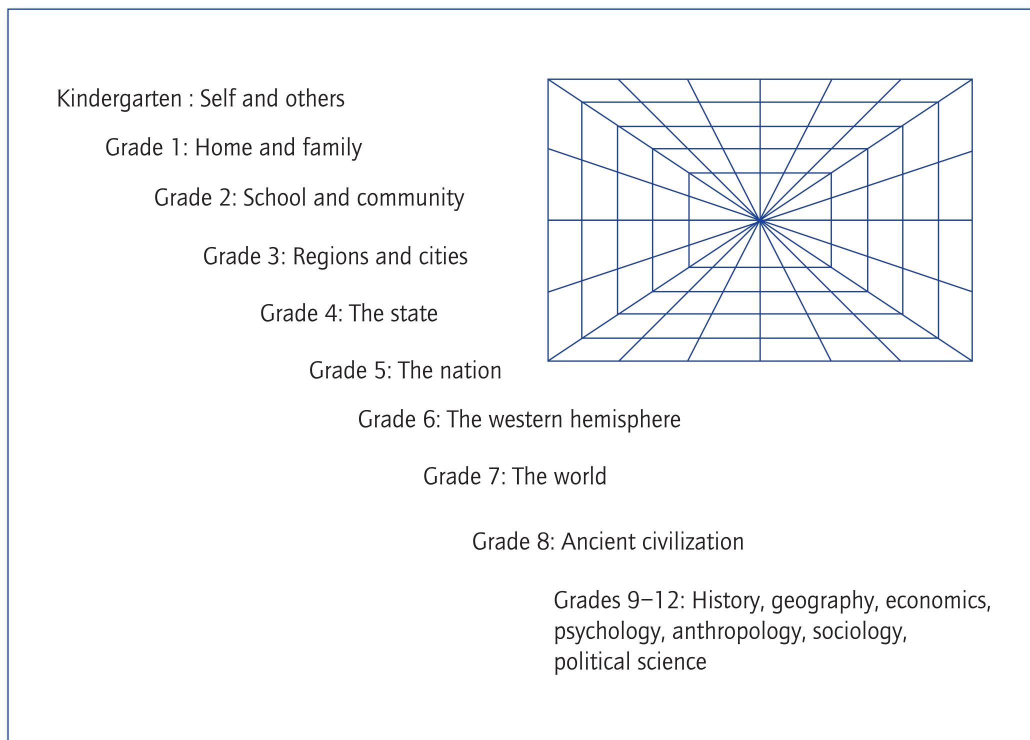

Figure 1.1 Typical widening horizons curriculum

such as world hunger, AIDS, population growth, taxation, health care, defense spending, the war in Iraq, global warming, energy, transportation, or environmental issues.

There are three forms an issues-centered curriculum might take (Wraga, 1998). First is the correlated curriculum. This uses two or more subjects to examine a specific topic, issue, or problem. The goal is to look for connections among subject areas and to develop a broader understanding. The second is the fused curriculum. This approach combines content from two or more traditional subject areas to examine a variety of issues. For example, a science-ethics-society course would look at a variety of issues and examine the implications relative to these three areas. Finally, there is the core curriculum. Here, students investigate personal and social issues that are meaningful to them. With this approach, students choose the issues to study. The teacher then introduces knowledge and skills from a variety of subject areas to help students understand each issue. The ideas in Chapter 3 related to integrated studies can be applied here.

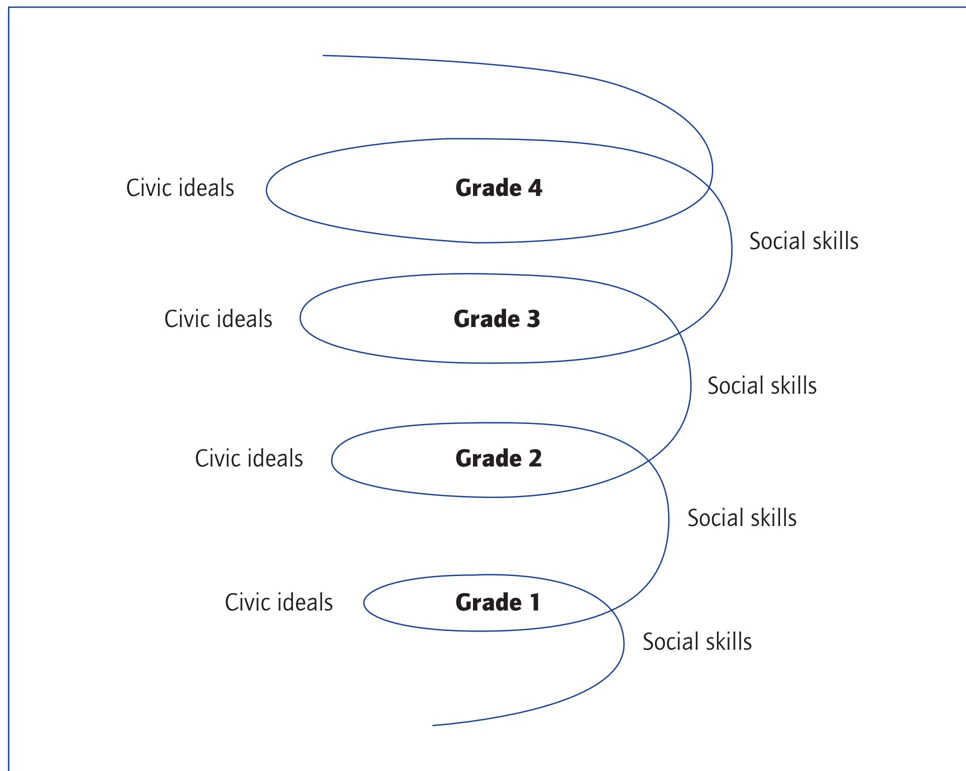

Figure 1.2 Spiral curriculum

The NCSS Standards

The complete NCSS disciplinary standards for history, geography, civics and government, and economics are found on the Student Study Site for Chapter 1, at www.sagepub.com/johnson2e.

Educational standards help to define what you are teaching and what you expect students to know and be able to do as a result of your instruction. Educational standards generally include defined bodies of knowledge and sets of skills that are used as criteria for advancement or evaluation. But standards are not the same as standardization. Standardization implies uniformity. However, teachers and students are not uniform products. You cannot expect to create standardized learning experiences with standardized outcomes. Thus, educational standards should describe the expectations but should not prescribe the experience.

The NCSS has two types of standards. The first are subject matter standards, which include both disciplinary standards and thematic standards. The second are pedagogical standards, which focus on the pedagogical knowledge, competence, and dispositions that teachers should possess for effective social studies instruction.

Disciplinary Standards

Disciplinary standards describe what students should know and be able to do in each of four subject areas related to elementary and middle school social studies: history, geography, civics and government, and economics. They have been developed and defined by those national organizations with particular expertise in their respective disciplines. These standards ensure that we are covering the main ideas and teaching important skills and concepts in each area.

The NCSS describes specific learner and teacher expectations along with school applications for each of the four discipline areas. These can be found on page 37 at http://downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf.

In the subsections below are Internet links to the national educational organizations in history, geography, civics and government, and economics. The disciplinary standards designed by these national organizations are also included on the Student Study Site for Chapters 12 and 13, **www.sagepub.com/johnson2e.** These standards provide a sense of the content that should be taught in each of these areas. Also included below are the NCSS teacher expectations in each of these subject areas.

History. The national standards for history were developed by the National Center for History in the Schools. This organization lists important historical thinking skills as well as topics related to U.S. and world history in a variety of eras for Grades K–4 and 5–12. Substandards, student expectations, and grade-level designation can be found at www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs/standards. Lesson plans, units, and other teacher resources can be found at www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs.

NCSS Learner Expectations for History

The study of history allows learners to understand their place in time and location. The knowledge base of historical content drawn from United States and world history provides the basis from which learners develop historical understanding and competence in ways of historical thinking. Historical thinking skills enable learners to evaluate evidence, develop comparative and causal analyses, interpret the historical record, and construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based. Historical understandings define what learners should know about the history of their nation and of the world. These understandings are drawn from the record of human aspirations, strivings, accomplishments, and failures in at least five spheres of human activity: the social, political, scientific/technological, economic, and cultural (philosophical/religious/aesthetic). They also provide learners the historical perspectives necessary to analyze contemporary issues and problems confronting citizens today.

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). This book may be purchased by calling 800-683-0812. Electronic copies of it are not available. http://downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf

Geography. The national geography standards were developed by the National Council for Geographic Education. Specific geographic skills related to these standards, as well as assessments, Internet resources, and activities related to geography can be found at www.ncge.org.

NCSS Learner Expectations for Geography

The study of geography allows learners to develop an understanding of the spatial contexts of people, places, and environments. It provides knowledge of the Earth's physical and human systems and the interdependency of living things and physical environments. Studying geography stimulates curiosity about the world and its diverse inhabitants and places, as well as about local, regional, and global issues. Geography allows learners to understand and make decisions about issues at the global as well as the local level.

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). This book may be purchased by calling 800-683-0812. Electronic copies of it are not available. http://downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf

Civics and Government. The National Standards for Civics and Government were developed by the Center for Civic Education. Curriculum, programs, teacher resources, and contact information can be found at www.civiced.org. The National Standards can be found at www.civiced.org/stds.html.

NCSS Learner Expectations for Civics and Government

The goal of education in civics and government is informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy. This effective and responsible participation requires the acquisition of a body of knowledge and of intellectual and participatory skills. Effective and responsible participation also is furthered by the development of certain dispositions or traits of character that enhance the individual's capacity to participate in the political process and contribute to the healthy functioning of the political system and improvement of society.

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). This book may be purchased by calling 800-683-0812. Electronic copies of it are not available. http://downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf

Economics. The voluntary national content standards in economics were developed by the Foundation for Teaching Economics. Specific information related to each standard, plus skills and grade-level benchmarks, can be found at www.fte.org/teachers/standards. Lesson plans, hot topics, and a teachers' forum can be found at www.fte.org.

NCSS Learner Expectations for Economics

The study of economics provides learners with basic information about how people attempt to satisfy their wants and needs and helps them employ logical reasoning in thinking about economic issues. It enables them to understand the economic issues that affect them every day, the roles they play as consumers and producers, and the costs and benefits associated with their personal decisions as well as governmental practice.

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). This book may be purchased by calling 800-683-0812. Electronic copies of it are not available. http://downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf

HOW DO I? Use the Disciplinary Standards

The NCSS disciplinary standards as well as the disciplinary standards described by each national educational organization can be used in three ways: to design units and lessons, to design curriculum, and to align curriculum with standards.

1. **To design units and lessons,** use the standards as an organizing structure. The structure will provide a general sense of the concepts and skills to teach. Select those standards that seem to be interesting and that reflect or are relevant to your teaching goals. You will then need to do additional research to get background information related to each standard. Organize this information into units or lessons (see Chapter 5). Design activities to manipulate the information presented in each lesson. Finally, look for ways to make personal connections in order to create a deeper, more meaningful learning experience.
2. **To design a curriculum,** assign standards to various grade levels. This is usually done at the level of the district or school. Look for a meaningful progression and an alignment with other curricular goals. Then, develop units and lessons around the standards assigned to that grade level. Note that most of the disciplinary standards do not tell you exactly what to teach; rather, they provide a guide as to the content and skills to be taught.
3. **To align a curriculum with the standards,** check the current curriculum to make sure all the described standards and skills are being addressed. Add and assign standards and skills where there are gaps.

The specific performance expectations for each thematic standard for early and middle grades are found on the Student Study Site for Chapter 1 at www.sagepub.com/johnson2e.

Thematic Standards

The NCSS thematic standards describe what students should be able to do as a result of social studies instruction. They do not prescribe a specific curriculum or a body of knowledge that students should study; rather, they describe important themes arising from the disciplinary standards. In so doing, they integrate knowledge and skills from a variety of academic disciplines and can be met across the curriculum. Figure 1.3 contains the 10 NCSS thematic standards. Teacher expectations, along with school applications for each thematic standard, can be found at www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands.

I. **Culture.** Social studies program should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

II. **Time, Continuity, and Change**. Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time.

III. **People, Places, and Environments.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

IV. **Individual Development and Identity.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

V. **Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

VI. **Power, Authority, and Governance.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

VII. **Production, Distribution, and Consumption.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

VIII. **Science, Technology, and Society.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of relationships among science, technology, and society.

IX. **Global Connections.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

X. **Civic Ideals and Practices.** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). This book may be purchased by calling 800-683-0812. Electronic copies of it are not available. http://downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf

Figure 1.3 NCSS thematic standards

HOW DO I? Teach to NCSS Thematic Standards

Because the NCSS thematic standards do not prescribe curriculum content, you can apply them to the social studies curriculum as well as other curricula that are currently in place. You can use the NCSS thematic standards in four ways.

1. **Formally adapt and incorporate them into a social studies curriculum.** This is usually a decision made on a school- or districtwide basis. Here, teachers or curriculums directors assign thematic standards to specific grade levels based on a curriculum already in place. They make sure that all standards are covered throughout the grade levels. Teachers then insert and teach to the assigned standards in their social studies and other classes. Performance-based measures are used to document the performance expectations for each standard.
2. **Use them to build a social studies curriculum.** Here, the standards are first assigned to specific grade levels. Then, a curriculum is designed around the thematic standards. Performance-based measures are also used here to document the performance expectations for each standard.
3. **Use them to guide your instruction.** Here, the thematic standards are used in a less formal manner to provide ideas related to content, skills, and activities to use as part of social studies instruction. For example, Mr. Elway's third-grade class was studying family histories. He used Thematic Standard II(c) for early grades to help him create an activity where students interviewed a grandparent or an older adult to get his or her version of a historic event. His students then wrote up a summary of the interview and compared that description to a newspaper article of the time or an Internet article describing the event. He also used the Performance Expectations III, People, Places, and Environments, to guide his instruction, and Performance Expectations IV, Individual Development and Identity, to create mapping activities related to the historic event.
4. **Use them to design integrated instruction.** Here, the thematic standards provide structure to use in creating thematic units or integrated instruction described in Chapter 5. For example, Ms. Plumber's eighth-grade class was studying colonial America before the Revolutionary War. She used performance expectations for each of the thematic standards to help her design the unit and create lessons and activities for her integrated unit.

Using Standards

Standards serve to enrich and enhance education, but only if they are used intelligently. A thoughtful application of standards informs the educational experience but does not define it. This means that standards should not be seen as replacing your ability to make the important decisions that affect students. Standards should also not interfere with your ability to design educational experiences that (a) are best suited to your students' interests, learning styles, and abilities; (b) are appropriate for your own teaching situation; and (c) enable you to utilize your own strengths, teaching style, and interests in the teaching of social studies and other subjects.

NCSS PEDAGOGICAL STANDARDS

The NCSS pedagogical standards focus on what teachers should know and be able to do in social studies instruction. There are nine standards, and a description of each is provided below along with the chapter in this textbook in which it is addressed in more detail (Figure 1.4). More detailed information can be found on page 51 at http://downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf.

Standards

Social studies teachers should possess the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions to do the following:

I. **Learning and Development.** Provide learning opportunities at the appropriate school levels that support learners' intellectual, social, and personal development.

II. **Differences in Learning Style.** Create at the appropriate school levels learning experiences that fit the different approaches to learning of diverse learners.

III. **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Performance Skills.** Use at the appropriate school levels a variety of instructional strategies to encourage student development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

IV. **Active Learning and Motivation.** Create at the appropriate school levels learning environments that encourage social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

V. **Inquiry, Collaboration, and Supportive Classroom Interaction.** Use at the appropriate school levels verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques that foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

VI. **Planning Instruction.** Plan instruction for the appropriate school levels based on understanding of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

VII. **Assessment.** Use formal and informal assessment strategies at the appropriate school levels to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of learners. Teachers should be able to assess student learning using various assessment formats, including performance assessment, fixed response, open-ended questions, and portfolio strategies.

VIII. **Reflection and Professional Growth.** Develop as reflective practitioners and continuous learners.

IX. **Professional Leadership.** Foster cross–subject matter collaboration and other positive relationships with school colleagues, and positive associations with parents and others in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

Figure 1.4 NCSS pedagogical standards

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). This book may be purchased by calling 800-683-0812. Electronic copies of it are not available. http:// downloads.ncss.org/NCSSTeacherStandardsV011-rev2004.pdf

NCSS Essential Skills for Social Studies

The NCSS Essential Skills for Social Studies is a list that describe those skills that students should know and be adept at as part of their social studies education. Figure 1.5 lists the three skill areas and the major skills in each area.

More detailed information related to these skills and a full list of the subskills and micro skills in each of these areas can be found on the Student Study Site for Chapter 1 at www.sagepub.com/johnson2e.

I. Acquiring Information

- A. Reading Skills
  1. Comprehension
  2. Vocabulary
  3. Rate of reading
- B. Study Skills
  1. Find information
  2. Arrange information in usable forms
- C. Reference and Information-Search Skills
  1. The library
  2. Special references
  3. Maps, globes, and graphics
  4. Community resources
- D. Technical Skills Unique to Electronic Devices
  1. Computer
  2. Telephone and television information networks

II. Organizing and Using Information

- A. Thinking Skills
  1. Classify information
  2. Interpret information
  3. Analyze information
  4. Summarize information
  5. Synthesize information
  6. Evaluate information
- B. Decision-Making Skills
- C. Metacognitive Skills

III. Relationships and Social Participation

- A. Personal Skills
- B. Group Interaction Skills
- C. Social and Political Participation

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). This book may be purchased by calling 800-683-0812. Electronic copies of it are not available.http://downloads.ncss.org /NCSSTeacherStandards V011-rev2004.pdf

Figure 1.5 NCSS essential skills for social studies

No Child Left Behind

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE; 2006) described the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as having failed to improve the education system for schools, teachers, students, and families. NCLB does nothing to improve the process of how we go about educating our children (Zemelman et al., 2005). Instead, it simply calls for more standardized tests, with penalties for schools that do poorly. These are the basics of this law:

- Students in Grades 3–8 are required to take a high-stakes test every year and once in high school. These are achievement tests that focus on lower-level reading and math skills. If a particular school scores poorly on these and thereafter does not make adequate yearly progress (AYP), it is designated as an underachieving school.
- After 2 years in an underachieving school, parents can transfer their children elsewhere within the school district. The school is thus required to spend its resources on transportation instead of education, even though underachieving schools tend to have fewer resources (G. Wood, 2004).
- After 3 years in an underachieving school, parents are eligible to receive supplemental services for their children. Again, the underachieving school is required to spend its scarce resources on private tutors or for-profit, after-school learning centers.
- If schools continue to do poorly, "corrective action" is taken. This corrective action can include replacing faculty members, ceding control of the school to the state, or having a private contractor take over the running of the school.

The Big Plan

There are no real educational innovations in NCLB, simply more tests and increased pressure to privatize education. Sadly, there is nothing to show that more testing enhances in any way the quality of teaching and learning (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2004; G. Wood, 2004). Researcher Linda Darling-Hammond (2004) says that NCLB mistakes *measuring* schools for *fixing* them. This increased emphasis on test scores is more apt to lead to corruption of the process and cheating by teachers and administrators (Nichols & Berliner, 2006).

Some Specific Problems With NCLB

It is not possible to do a full analysis of this law here. However, analyses of seven problematic elements are described below.

1. NCLB is not research based. Ironically, NCLB acknowledges the importance of making decisions based on what a body of research has determined to be sound educational practice.

> The NCLB Act puts a special emphasis on determining what educational programs and practices have been clearly demonstrated to be effective through rigorous scientific research. Federal funding will be targeted to support these programs and teaching methods the improve student learning and achievement. (http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/page_pg3.html)

It would be reasonable to conclude that NCLB was based on sound educational research or research-based theory and that what this law asks for would be supported by "scientifically based research." But this is not the case. Important research was left out when designing NCLB (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). In regard to what research was included and how it was interpreted, the federal government, not educational researchers, made those decisions (Allington, 2006; Pressley, Duke, & Boling, 2004). Thus, the "research-based" education policy NCLB purports to promote is not really research based at all.

2. NCLB would have the federal government make local decisions. Under NCLB, the federal government is intruding on matters that have traditionally been left to state governments and local school boards to determine (Allington, 2006; Berlak, 2005; NCTE, 2002; Sizer, 2004; Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006). Instead of teachers deciding which instructional methods work best for their students, the federal government is making these decisions for them. Schools are bullied into using particular instructional approaches through the leveraging of grants and other funding, regardless of whether these approaches best meet their needs.

3. NCLB promotes a parochial view of American history. NCLB calls for the teaching of "traditional American history" (see Figure 1.6). Is it healthy for a democracy to have some perspectives promoted while others are suppressed?

NCLB Law: Subpart 4. Teaching of Traditional American History

SEC. 2351. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL—The Secretary may establish and implement a program to be known as the Teaching American History Grant Program, under which the Secretary shall award grants on a competitive basis to local educational agencies—
   (1) to carry out activities to promote the teaching of traditional American history in elementary schools and secondary schools as a separate academic subject (not as a component of social studies); and
   (2) for the development, implementation, and strengthening of programs to teach traditional American history as a separate academic subject (not as a component of social studies) within elementary school and secondary school curricula, including the implementation of activities—
      (A) to improve the quality of instruction; and
      (B) to provide professional development and teacher education activities with respect to American history.

Figure 1.6 NCLB mandates for teaching traditional American history

Describing a "traditional" approach to American history infers that there is one tradition or one view of history to which all must subscribe. But whose tradition are we talking about? In the past, these code words have usually referred to a white, Eurocentric, Judeo-Christian tradition. But what about the Native American tradition? The African American tradition? The labor or trade union tradition? The religious pluralist's tradition? The environmental tradition? The reform tradition? Whose traditions are we referring to when we call for traditional American history? What parts of American history are attended to? Which parts are left out? Whose viewpoint is included? Which experiences are deemed not important, and who gets to make these decisions?

4. NCLB narrows the curriculum and reduces learning. The emphasis solely on standardized test scores has narrowed the curriculum (Allington, 2006; G. Wood, 2004). Schools have resorted to teaching to the test (Nichols et al., 2004). And who can blame them? Test scores are made public, resulting in a form of public humiliation for those "underachieving" schools. And since these annual assessments are primarily in reading and math, other subjects (like social studies) get less emphasis (Nichols & Berliner, 2006). This means that the testing corporations are essentially designing school curricula (Bracey, 2005). For-profit organizations such as the Educational Testing Services (ETS), NCS Pearson, ACT, McGraw-Hill, Houghton Mifflin, and the Psychological Corporation are deciding what is taught in our schools.

5. Social studies is being squeezed out of the curriculum because of NCLB. A strong case can be made for social studies education as being the most important part of the curriculum. It can be used to help students understand themselves and to live harmoniously in the world with others and the environment. Also, as will be demonstrated elsewhere in this book, social studies can be used to enhance literacy, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, decision making, and other curricular areas.

On March 6, 2008, NCSS sent the House Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) Education Appropriations Subcommittee a letter urging the adequate investment in programs vital to social studies educators. An excerpt is included below:

> In its February, 2008, report, the Center for Education Policy documented a grave consequence of the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): 72% of districts surveyed are increasing time for language arts or math in elementary schools at the expense of social studies and other subjects. Specifically, 53% of those districts cut instructional time for social studies by at least 75 minutes per week. Inadequate or nonexistent social studies programming at the elementary level compounds the challenges facing our nation's secondary schools.
>
> Our country needs its citizens to understand their civic responsibilities, and it is important to recognize that young people are taught crucial 21st Century skills, including historical understanding, global awareness, and civic and financial

> literacy, through their K–12 social studies classes. (http://www.procon.org/source files/51.NCSS.pdf)

Other articles related to NCLB and social studies can be found on the NCSS Web site.

6. NCLB does not focus on or promote quality teaching and learning. NCLB does not hold teachers accountable for quality teaching, only for standardized test scores. These scores have little to do with what they actually do in the classroom or how much learning takes place (Popham, 2001). Yet, standardized tests are used to assess the effectiveness of schools and teachers.

7. NCLB promotes mono-language learning only, instead of bilingual education for English learners (EL). This de-emphasis and subtle discrimination starts with the language used in NCLB. Most often, the terms used today are English language learners (ELLs) or students who are English-as-a-second-language (ESL) learners. NCLB uses the term Limited English Proficient (LEP) as a label to describe students only in terms of a perceived deficiency.

> Transforming Bilingual Education Programs: . . . [c]ompletely changes the focus of bilingual education programs from programs teaching limited English proficient (LEP) children primarily in their native languages to programs focused on helping LEP children learn English. (http://republicans.edlabor.house.gov/PRArticle.aspx?NewsID=218)

As you will see in the next chapter, bilingual education is effective for ELLs or ESL students. Rigorous scientific research shows that students who are taught to read in their native language first, make much more significant gains in learning to read and write in English (Hudelson, Poynor, & Wolfe, 2003; Padilla, 2006). Further, substantial use of and instruction in their first language does not impeded English language acquisition and contributes to later academic achievement (Hudelson, Poynor, & Wolfe, 2003; Padilla, 2006). Simply put, instruction in their first language (bilingual education) enables English language learners to learn more, makes them less apt to fail, and helps them make the transition to English more quickly.

NCLB Final Thoughts

Many in the popular media, politics, and conservative think tanks have joined the chorus in declaring the great failure of American public education. However, this great crisis has largely been overstated (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bracey, 2003; McQuillan, 1998). To support these claims, studies have been reported inaccurately, statistics interpreted incorrectly, and the results have been purposely distorted (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bracey, 2006).

This does not mean that our schools and education do not need to be improved. However, much of the research describing the "failures" of American public schools and calling for drastic change is what Gerald Bracey (2006) describes as *pseudo-research*. Pseudoresearch, or pseudoscience (A. Johnson, 2006), is where you start with the answer, and then look for data to support it. Real science (rigorous scientific research) starts with the question and then looks for data to answer it.

Chapter Review: Key Points

- Social studies is the process of using knowledge and skill to study humans interacting.
- Effective social studies instruction should allow for in-depth investigation of topics and should involve choice, open questions, independent inquiry, cooperative learning, and active participation.
- Standards define what we are teaching and what we expect students to know and be able to do as a result of instruction.
- NCSS thematic standards describe what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction; they go across subject areas.
- NCSS disciplinary standards describe what experts believe learners should know in each of the social studies subject areas.
- NCSS pedagogical standards describe what teachers of social studies should know and be able to do.
- NCSS essential skills describe what students should know and be able to do as part of social studies education.
- NCLB has resulted in an increase in standardized tests, unfunded federal mandates, and pressure to privatize education, but has failed to improve public education.

Making Connections

1. Describe one idea from this chapter that you would like to try in your classroom. What will it look like?
2. What is your definition of a good citizen? Compare your definition with three others and look for common elements.
3. Find a social studies teacher's manual. Choose one lesson and use the thematic standards to augment the lesson, create activities, or design related lessons.
4. Do a quick survey of three to six friends outside of education. What is their general impression of NCLB? Give the same survey to three to six teachers. What differences did you find?